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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1993-94

COMPRISING PERIOD
7 February - 18 February 1994

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OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 237**

FIFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1993-94

House of Commons

Monday 7 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism (London)

1. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what initiatives his Department is taking to promote tourism in London.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): Government support for tourism is channelled through the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board. Through the English tourist board, support is also made available to the 11 regional boards, including the London tourist board.

Only last week, my right hon. Friend co-hosted the reception to launch the inaugural London arts season. This ETB/BTA-led initiative, in conjunction with several of my Department's sponsor bodies, will help to boost tourism at a traditionally slack time of year.

Mr. Hughes: I thank the Minister for that answer. Is not our greatest tourist asset our capital city? The people whose job it is to promote the capital and to guarantee the huge amounts of revenue that flow from tourism feel at a disadvantage because of the lack of coherence and structure that govern their ability to present London as a city. Will the Minister look at ways to ensure that, in future, we can present the tourism potential of London strategically rather than piecemeal?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point, because 54 per cent. of foreigners who visit this country come to London and tourism is responsible for more than 200,000 jobs and £4·8 billion in revenue. He is entirely right to stress the importance of tourism. I also accept that bringing all the tourism effort together is an important consideration, but it is not always appropriate to have one body to deal with everything. London First has been launched to try to improve the quality of life for Londoners and the London tourist board is primarily responsible for tourists. Those organisations meet and we certainly try to achieve the maximum co-ordination.

Mr. Jessell: As tourists come to London not for our weather but because London is one of the arts capitals of the world, with an unparalleled range of opera, ballet, concerts, museums, historic buildings and heritage, not to mention the monarchy and our royal family, are not those the things which we should continue most to promote among tourists?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, my hon. Friend is entirely right: London is the arts capital of the world nowadays. I entirely accept what my hon. Friend has said and, through the British Tourist Authority, the English tourist board and the London tourist board, we shall do everything possible to do what he wishes.

Mr. Cohen: Was not London so far behind in the race to host the Commonwealth games that it was humiliating? If London had won, that would have brought in a lot of tourists. That bid was put forward by a quango that had been set up by the Government, of which no one in London had ever heard. Is not it about time that the Government admitted their mistake and re-established a Londonwide authority to represent London properly?

Mr. Sproat: I think that the whole House will congratulate Manchester, including even those hon.

Members who represent London and Sheffield, which did not win. We certainly do not want to return to one body like the former Greater London council.

Competitive Sport

2. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to encourage greater participation by children in competitive sport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: I am talking to a number of organisations and practitioners about ways of promoting competitive sport more widely, and will be holding a consultative seminar on this issue very shortly.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Was not the positive response from many leading sports bodies to the report produced by the Conservative Back-Bench committee on sport extremely welcome? Will my hon. Friend be having further discussions with our ministerial colleagues at the Department for Education about enhancing the opportunities for competitive sports in our schools?

Mr. Sproat: I congratulate my hon. Friend and all those who produced the report "Team Games and Competitive Sport in Schools". It is an extremely valuable contribution to an important debate. The Department for Education is well aware of the importance of team games and competitive sports. I hope that, together, we can produce a plan for even more team games and competitive sport in schools.

Mr. Pendry: If the Minister genuinely wants to encourage more competitive team sport in schools, had not he better start winning some battles with the Department for Education? For instance, is there to be one hour a day for physical education in the national curriculum, as the Minister advocated to sports writers last month, or is there to be the totally inadequate time of one hour a week, as advocated by Sir Ron Dearing? Is the Minister battling with the Secretary of State for Education to scrap regulation 909, which resulted in £70,000-worth of playing fields being sold off every day of last year? Unless that regulation is scrapped, few playing fields for any sports will be left. Unless the Minister's tough words are matched by strong ministerial action, his credibility in the sporting world will decline even faster, and that is saying a lot.

Mr. Sproat: I am having no battles with the Department for Education, just a series of friendly and genial conversations. I hope that, in the end, much more time will be given to physical education in schools, by which I mean not just lectures on the history of sport but team games and competitive sports.

The point about playing fields is important. I hate to see playing fields sold off, but I understand the pressures. The hon. Gentleman will know that, since December, we have for the first time a register of all playing fields in the country. It is a good move forward, which I hope will help us with the problems that he described.

Mr. John Carlisle: After England's magnificent and comprehensive victory against the Scots on Saturday, will my hon. Friend take time to consider encouraging the playing of rugby union in schools? Will he also support the many local junior clubs that encourage and coach the youngsters, often in the parents' spare time and on a voluntary basis? If he encourages them, may not we hope for even more magnificent victories at Twickenham in the future?

Mr. Sproat: Having seen the match, I thought that England was very lucky to win and it was a heart-breaking result. None the less, I congratulate rugby union on what it has done for those youth sports. It has made tremendous strides. All the home countries can learn from rugby union's promotion of rugby among young people.

"News At Ten"

3. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent discussions he has had with the ITV Association over proposals to move the timing of "News at Ten".

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): None. The scheduling of news programmes is a matter for the ITV companies and the Independent Television Commission.

Mr. Patchett: Does the Minister recall the Government's stated commitment in the Broadcasting Act 1990 to the importance of national and world news? Will he now make it clear that he backs the Prime Minister in objecting to plans to move "News at Ten" to a much earlier time slot?

Mr. Brooke: The matter that the hon. Gentleman raises has latterly gone on the back burner. Following the exchanges between the ITC and Channel 3 licensees, the ITC has made it clear that "News at Ten" will continue to be broadcast at 10 o'clock.

Mr. Fabricant: I welcome my right hon. Friend's comments and am glad that he accepts that it is primarily a matter for the independent television contractors. Does he agree that, were it not for a Conservative Government, we would have neither ITV nor "Sky News", because the Labour party voted against the formation of independent television and the implementation of satellite television?

Mr. Brooke: As a Conservative, I pay close attention to history, and I share my hon. Friend's view that the Opposition occasionally suffer from amnesia about what has gone before.

Mr. Corbett: Is not it clear that ITV beat only a tactical withdrawal from its plans to move "News at Ten" to an earlier slot last year, the better to counter the livelier scheduling of Channel 4—which runs its news between 7 and 8 pm and which can therefore get its evening film on earlier—and the better to attract the audience that it needs? Is the Secretary of State simply going to let the provisions of the Broadcasting Act be tinkered with in a piecemeal way, as he did with ownership? Would not it make more sense to announce a review of the Act, to sort out the sorry mess that it is creating?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman speaks of a "tactical withdrawal". The fact remains that the rescheduling of "News at Ten" would require the ITC's approval if all the regional licensees are to remain in compliance with their general licence conditions. Given that that is how the Act stands, it sounds to me as though we are better off with the Act than with what the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Rugby

4. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met representatives of the Rugby Football League to discuss rugby matters.

Mr. Sproat: I met representatives of the Rugby Football League on 22 November 1993 and discussed a number of issues with them. I was also pleased to attend the annual dinner of the all-party rugby league group on 13 December.

Mr. McCartney: I thank the Minister for that answer. I am also pleased that he did not give us a detailed report of what went on at the dinner of the all-party rugby league group.

What negotiations and discussions has the hon. Gentleman had with the Ministry of Defence about that Ministry's continued determination, which has lasted for 99 years, to exclude the playing of rugby league by the armed forces? Last time the matter was raised in the House, the Minister gave us a commitment that he would hold discussions and said that he hoped to produce a report which would mean that, for the first time in nearly a century, the game could be played without the interference of civil servants or senior officers in the affairs of those squaddies and others who want to play the game.

Mr. Sproat: I had a meeting with the Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence on 16 December and wrote him a letter following up the meeting. I told him that I wanted a new and fair deal for rugby league in the armed services. He gave me what I thought was an extremely positive and helpful reply. He is now conducting a review of the way in which not just rugby league but all sports are financed and dealt with in the armed services. I very much hope to have an answer on the results of that review by Easter.

Mr. Waller: That is a helpful reply. I welcome my hon. Friend's sustained efforts to reconcile the two codes of rugby—at the local level, co-operation, not conflict, is generally the rule.

Can my hon. Friend report any progress in his efforts to ensure that the stringent regulations governing safety at sports grounds do not unduly hamper rugby league clubs, given that the crowds at such games tend to be very disciplined and well behaved?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. Although all sports grounds, whatever sports are played on them, need to be safe, most of the regulations that have to be observed came about as a result of the fact that soccer grounds generally have much larger and ooccasionally much more obstreperous crowds than do rugby league grounds, where people are well behaved and average crowds tend to be much smaller. So the rugby league grounds are paying the price of that. I am trying to find new ways to avoid financially disadvantaging rugby league as a result of what happens at soccer grounds.

National Lottery

5. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what criteria he would expect to be used in deciding the location of the national lottery operation.

Mr. Brooke: The location of the national lottery operation is a matter for the applicants for the main licence to operate the lottery to consider in making their applications to the director general. I cannot comment on the criteria that they might use in making their decision.

Mr. Tyler: Does the Secretary of State agree that the national lottery will be a success only if, as well as distributing its funds to good causes, national economic and employment objectives are met? Does he agree with the view of the Minister at the Department of Employment, who said this week that there are sound labour market reasons for locating the headquarters of the lottery in Cornwall? Does he accept the view of all the people of Cornwall, of all parties, backed by the county council which took the initiative, that this should be a case of Cornwall first?

Mr. Brooke: Some of my hon. Friends might think that the hon. Gentleman was leading with his chin by asking that question, as his party and his colleagues voted against the Bill on Second and Third Readings. Having said that, I recognise that he has joined my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) to press Cornwall's cause.

I have issued directions to the director general that, consistent with his duties under section 4 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993, location must be taken into account in assessing any bids. I dare say that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary would have sound labour reasons for the lottery being located in a number of different places in the kingdom.

Mr. Waterson: Will not many new jobs be created by the establishment of the national lottery headquarters? When making recommendations about the relevant criteria, will my right hon. Friend be able to suggest that they entirely exclude the constituencies of Members such as the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), who asked the question and is a member of a party which was against the idea? Also, will he consider including Eastbourne in the list of potential sites?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to the contribution that the national lottery will make to the economy. To be fair to the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), he avoided voting on the matter on Second and Third Readings. His is yet another of those cases to which I have referred of running with the hare and then apologising to the hounds when they catch up.

Ms Eagle: Will the Secretary of State consider carefully Merseyside's claims to be the home for the national lottery, in recognition of the high unemployment rates in the region and especially as the House had long and important debates about the effect that the lottery will have on employment in the football pools industry?

Mr. Brooke: The case that the hon. Lady raises was mentioned frequently during our debates. The Act states that it is for the director general to decide on the site, but contractors who are bidding to run the lottery will no doubt take the considerations that she mentioned into account when formulating their bids.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Besides excluding the constituencies of hon. Members who have demonstrated their opposition to the national lottery, would not it be sensible to consider areas of the country where there is a reasonable chance of finding staff trained in information technology

and which have good communication links with London? Can he think of any other criteria that I might suggest to help with Swindon's bid?

Mr. Brooke: I said in my original answer that it was for the bidders to make their decisions, but my hon. Friend is right about the scale of the opportunity. I have been criticised for making conservative forecasts of how successful the lottery will be and I am delighted that other people think that it will be still more successful.

Ms Mowlam: As the Secretary of State has made it clear that he will abdicate on the criteria for the location of the lottery and as he is clearly going to abdicate on the criteria under which the five funds that have been set up will allocate the money, will he at least assure the House that, when the announcements are made for the Millennium Commission in the near future, we will not get the sort of sleaze that we have had with other quangos and that the commission will not have a majority of Tory sympathisers?

Mr. Brooke: I found the language in the first part of the hon. Lady's question slightly curious, given the way in which the Act is drawn. It is all very well for the hon. Lady to say that I am abdicating my responsibility. The Act makes it perfectly clear where the responsibility lies and that is with the director general.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that those who work for the national lottery will tend to be doing office jobs and that London is the part of the country where people have the greatest experience of office work? The logical place for the headquarters of the national lottery is therefore London.

Mr. Brooke: It is difficult for me to find another form of words to say that those matters are not my responsibility. The invitation to apply reflects the intent of the directions that I have issued to the director general, by drawing attention to the importance of location because of its effect on operating costs and therefore on the contributions to the national lottery distribution fund.

Departmental Efficiency

7. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to improve the efficiency of his Department.

Mr. Brooke: My Department has contracted out nearly all its new central services and installed a departmental-wide computer network. Those and other arrangements will support improvements in departmental efficiency.

Mr. Thurnham: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the steps that he has taken. Will he ensure that the national lottery is run efficiently and effectively? Does not the country expect the highest standards of efficiency from its public services?

Mr. Brooke: Section 4 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 makes clear the responsibilities that fall to the director general. I am confident that he will fulfil them in making the lottery a tremendous success. I share the view that my hon. Friend expressed in the second half of his question.

Mr. Callaghan: In terms of the efficiency of his Department, will the Secretary of State tell the House when he will reply to the two submissions from the Select Committee on National Heritage—one on the BBC and one on the invasion of privacy by the press? Those reports have been with him for some considerable time. When will he report to the House?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman has asked two fair questions. I hope to issue a White Paper on the press shortly, in response to the Select Committee's report. The Select Committee will recall that it asked me to delay any action on my side until it had a chance of reporting. As to the BBC, my duties flow out of a consultation paper that we issued last year. It has been helpful to have the Select Committee's observations on that as well. It might be a bit later before I reply to the report on the BBC.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Has not the time come for my right hon. Friend to exercise closer supervision over the activities of the Arts Council?

Mr. Brooke: The examination that Price Waterhouse conducted of the Arts Council last year, at my suggestion, made a number of suggestions on how the Department and the Arts Council might behave. One of the matters to which my hon. Friend may have been referring was increasing the sense of accountability of the Arts Council. The Arts Council has come forward with suggestions of ways in which that accountability might be made more public.

Film Industry

8. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when an announcement will be made on the Government's policy toward the British film industry.

Mr. Brooke: I shall make an announcement when conclusions have been reached on the various options that emerged from last year's consultation round with representatives of the industry. It is unlikely to be before Easter.

Ms Lynne: Would not accelerating tax relief on film production costs encourage more films to be produced in this country and thereby, in the long term, put more money into the Treasury coffers?

Mr. Brooke: That suggestion was made to us during the consultation period. The specific question is for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but we shall discuss with other Departments our overall response to the consultations.

Sir Anthony Durant: Will my right hon. Friend reassure the film industry that, in the disbursement of the lottery money, which I believe will be done by the Arts Council, its wishes will not be ignored?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend is right to raise that question. The guidance afforded by myself to the Arts Council includes reference to film and the need for the Arts Council not only to take film into account in its decisions about distribution but to decide how it will receive expert advice on those decisions.

Play Facilities

11. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the annual expenditure of his Department on children's play facilities.

Mr. Sproat: The Sports Council, which we fund, provides a central support service on children's play. The 1993-94 budget for that work is £300,000. In addition, the Sports Council's Trust Company has this year given a grant of £25,000 to the National Voluntary Council for Children's Play.

Mrs. Golding: Is the Minister aware that the National Playing Fields Association estimates that for every £100 that his Department spends on adult leisure activities, only 3p is spent on children's play? Given that 20 per cent. of the population of this country is probably under the age of 16, he cannot agree that that is a fair distribution of money. What will he do about it?

Mr. Sproat: I was not aware of that statistic. It is interesting and I will look at it. I am currently looking at the way that the Sports Council, which has taken over the matter from the Play Board and the Play Unit, is handling children's play. The facts that the hon. Lady has put forward will be part of that consideration.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: In recognition of the important role of the Sports Council—and, indeed, other independent organisations such as the Foundation for Sport and the Arts—in funding children's play and sporting activities, will my hon. Friend repeat the advice that he recently gave the foundation? He said that it should take more cognisance of competitive sport in schools when allocating grants; a by-product of that would be its ability to give greater priority to the important regional sports facility between Kidderminster and Stourport, in my constituency.

Mr. Sproat: I do not think it appropriate to comment on the specific example given by my hon. Friend, for which I know that he is working very hard. However, I think it extremely important for the Foundation for Sport and the Arts to take account of the need for young people to engage much more in team games and competitive sports.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that every pit village contains at least one miners' welfare facility? There are children's play facilities, as well as football grounds and cricket pitches. It is now being suggested, however, that under the Coal Industry Bill, the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, which runs those facilities, will be either taken over by the Government or split into God knows how many parts. Will the Minister give an assurance that CISWO will remain intact, whatever happens to the Bill, so that all those amenities can be retained?

Mr. Sproat: I am acutely aware of the importance of the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised. Last week, I went through a list of all the sports facilities attached to all the collieries, and I agree that it is an impressive list.

The details of the Coal Industry Bill are a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry, but I have been in touch with the Minister for Energy and have emphasised the importance of facilities such as playing fields and brass bands, which have been raised before. I take the matter very seriously and will do all that I can to ensure that those facilities suffer no disadvantage.

Press Complaints Commission

15. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the current operation of the Press Complaints Commission.

Mr. Brooke: We welcome the further improvements in press self-regulation announced by the Press Complaints Commission on 20 January.

Mr. Streeter: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is widespread public concern about the way in which the commission currently deals with its own affairs? Will he join me in urging it to consider appointing its own voluntary ombudsman?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the current concern about the way in which the Press Complaints Commission works, as now constituted. However, I welcome the appointment of one of its lay members, Professor Pinker, as privacy commissioner. It is up to the industry to ensure that Professor Pinker is given the powers and backing that he needs to be fully effective in performing his duties and capable of commanding the confidence of Parliament and the public.

Mr. Soley: Does the Secretary of State accept that the commission makes changes only as a result of pressure from hon. Members or outside events? Could it not make a significant step forward if it were more willing to initiate complaints itself, and to follow up cases such as the recent Germaine Greer case, in which it appears that journalists gained access to her home without her consent and then ran inaccurate stories? Should not the commission take the initiative in such instances, rather than waiting for people to complain and thus being set up as a sort of defence counsel for the press?

Mr. Brooke: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman would be gracious enough to include me among the Members of Parliament to whom he referred. I think, however, that all hon. Members will welcome the movement and adjustment that the commission has achieved over the past year, although some may feel that it has not gone far enough. As for the specific case raised by the hon. Gentleman, such cases occur from time to time and I think that the commission will be judged according to how it deals with them.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would make sense for editors, publishers and proprietors to copy the BBC by publishing and making available to the public the standards by which it hopes that its staff and freelancers will abide?

Mr. Brooke: There is something in my hon. Friend's suggestion, but he will be aware that the Press Complaints Commission is itself responsible for producing a voluntary code that it devised for itself.

Tourist Sector (Deregulation)

16. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many regulations affecting the hotel and catering industries in the tourist sector will be dispensed with during the current Session of Parliament.

Mr. Sproat: My Department will be formally consulting the tourism industry about the two tourism-related regulations for which it is directly responsible. In

addition, each of the seven main areas of regulation identified during my Department's inquiries as being of the greatest concern to the tourism industry, is being examined by the Departments responsible with a view to reducing the burdens they impose. It is too early to say how many regulations will be dispensed with altogether, but I am confident that we shall achieve significant deregulatory gains for the hotel and catering sector and other tourism-related businesses.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his vigorous attempts to reduce the regulations affecting the tourist industry. Does he agree that the performance of music by more than two players in pubs and restaurants should be encourged? Will he ensure that local authorities do not instigate punitive registration fees and that regulations are modified to make it easier for there to be live music on licensed premises?

Mr. Sproat: The answer to my hon. Friend's first question is yes. The answer to his second question is that I will certainly do my best.

Mr. Tony Banks: In reviewing the various regulations relating to the hotel and catering industry, will the Minister make it clear that the Government do not intend to throw everything out? A number of regulations need to be maintained. We do not want a wholly deregulated industry, but one that resembles more the well-run hotel and catering industries found on the continent. Will the Minister ensure in discussions with the Minister for Transport in London that hotels do not call private minicabs rather than black cabs late at night? That is another danger which worries people in London.

Mr. Sproat: Of course we shall keep whatever regulations are sensible. Where they are stupid, we shall stop them. As to the cab problem, I shall certainly be in touch with my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London to find out what he thinks is the situation.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend examine in particular all the forms that hoteliers have to complete and the records that they have to keep? Will he ensure that the industry can operate according to best practice rather than having a lot of inspectors going around checking records?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Frind makes an extremely important and sensible point. I will seek to do what he requires.

Arts Council Funding

18. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his estimate of the loss of jobs resulting from the announced levels of Arts Council funding to clients for 1994-95.

Mr. Brooke: I have made no such estimate.

Mr. Gunnell: The Secretary of State will be aware that arts organisations throughout the country have to decide between those whom they employ and the performances and services that they offer the public. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that for the sake of a small saving to the Exchequer great damage is being done to arts enterprises throughout the country? That policy short changes not only the public but the country because of the shortage of arts provision. It is a disgrace.

Mr. Brooke: I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's point about the small saving to the Exchequer—but my Department, like every other, is subject to the country's overall economic and financial conditions. The grant that the Arts Council will receive from my Department next year will still be 11 per cent. larger in real terms than that of five years ago.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to welcome Opera North to London this week, with two performances of its brilliant production of "Gloriana" tonight and on Thursday? Does he agree that that demonstrates the value of supporting through the Arts Council regional opera companies such as Opera North? Will he see to it that Opera North is not disadvantaged by comparison with the Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera, which receive extra money from the Welsh Office and the Scottish Office?

Mr. Brooke: I join my hon. Friend in welcoming Opera North to the royal opera house in my constituency. I am particularly delighted that Opera North was the first arts performance that I saw on taking my present office. My hon. Friend referred to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales—my hon. Friend asked in particular about Wales—having larger budgets from which to find funding. I hope very much that we shall be able to resume the upward rise in Arts Council funding in the near future.

Brass Bands

20. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding Government support for brass bands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: I have received a number of letters about brass bands. As I made clear in my reply to my hon. Friend on 3 February at columns *844-45*, I see brass bands as an extremely important part of our artistic and cultural heritage.

Mr. Greenway: Has my hon. Friend ever heard "The Flight of the Bumble Bee" or other similarly exciting tunes played by brass bands or other bands? Does he agree that brass bands and other bands are not confined to the north of England and that they are valuable in the opportunity that they offer to the public to attend concerts and to players to play in concerts? Will he do all that he can for brass bands?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I certainly will. I have not heard "The Flight of the Bumble Bee" played by a brass band, but I look forward to it. My hon. Friend makes the extremely important point that we should not allow what we consider to be the cultural and artistic part of our heritage to be too narrow or rarefied, as occasionally happens in certain artistic circles.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Drugs (Importation)

28. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Attorney-General what involvement his Department has had with Customs and Excise and the police since 1991 in combating criminal importation of drugs.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): My Department has contributed fully to the development of the comprehensive range of measures introduced by the Government to combat drug trafficking. As Attorney-General, I also have a general responsibility when matters are properly brought to my notice in relation to the fairness and effectiveness of the prosecution process.

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the Attorney-General explain the extraordinary circumstances in which he agreed, along with the Solicitor-General, to meet counsel for a Mr. Charrington, who was in custody on serious drug charges on 21 December 1992? What was so different about that case, as distinct from the cases of all the other people awaiting trial, what was the involvement of the Customs and Excise and why were the charges almost immediately dropped following that meeting?

The Attorney-General: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman, who has taken some interest in the matter, has not bothered to read the detailed answer that I gave on 26 January at column *246* to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris). I made it perfectly clear that leading counsel for the defence made an application to see me about the case because he felt that, in the special circumstances of the case, his client was not necessarily being treated as he should. I arranged for a meeting which was attended by counsel for the prosecution. The independent prosecuting authority was the Customs and Excise. The matter was discussed and explained. Customs and Excise said that it was already reconsidering certain aspects of the evidence. It went away and considered the matter further. The decision to discontinue the case against Mr. Charrington was taken entirely by the commissioners of Customs and Excise on the advice of their leading counsel without any further reference to me.

Mr. Rathbone: Irrespective of the facts of that peculiar case, may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend whether, as the Government's chief Law Officer, he pays special care and attention to the prosecutions that Customs and Excise wishes to bring and those that the Crown Prosecution Service wishes to bring and makes certain that there is no conflict of interest between those two prosecuting authorities?

The Attorney-General: As my hon. Friend may realise, there is a distinction between the position of the Crown Prosecution Service and that of the Customs and Excise as an independent prosecuting authority. Under statute, I superintend the Director of Public Prosecutions, who is responsible for the Crown Prosecution Service. I do not have the same statutory relationship with the Customs and Excise. I have an overall purview in relation to the prosecution process, but I can become involved in cases by other independent prosecuting authorities only if those cases are properly brought to my notice.

Mr. Fraser: I am sure that the Attorney-General will concede that the circumstances of that conference were extremely unusual. What was the involvement of the Attorney-General's Parliamentary Private Secretary in the matter? Why, as reported, did he try to suppress a report that the meeting had taken place? Did he have anything to do with the leak or any other connection with the case? Does the Attorney-General have any advice to offer about the liaison between the police, as a prosecuting authority, and Customs and Excise? It seems extraordinary that the case should have proceeded for several months with one hand not knowing what the other hand was doing.

The Attorney-General: There are a number of different strands, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want to be confused about them. Liaison between Customs and Excise and the police is an operational matter for the heads of those two organisations, who doubtless take liaison matters extremely seriously; such matters are not for me. As for the specific meeting, although such meetings are not regular, they are not exceptionally unusual. From time to time, such worries about cases are properly raised with me. The one that we are discussing was such an example. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) had no involvement in that consultation, and no involvement in the case vis-à-vis my Department. I was not aware of his constituency involvement until after the matter appeared in the press.

Crown Prosecution Service

29. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Attorney-General what information is required by the Crown Prosecution Service from the police in relation to guilty pleas in the magistrates court.

The Attorney-General: In cases where the defendant has indicated that he will plead guilty, the Crown Prosecution Service requires only sufficient information from the police to be satisfied that the charge is appropriate and to provide the court with the information necessary to sentence.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his reply. Will he confirm that the arrangements made were fully discussed with the police? My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the great concern felt about any danger of over-bureaucracy or over-complication of bureaucracy in such matters.

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend raises a good point. I am aware of the concern that we should not have over-bureaucracy. My hon. Friend's question gives me the opportunity to say that the forms used by the police in relation to the Crown Prosecution Service were designed by the police with the assistance of the Home Office and the Crown Prosecution Service, and were agreed by the Crown Prosecution Service but not initiated by it. There is an important distinction between what is required in relation to guilty and not-guilty pleas. In a not-guilty case, it is necessary to take statements from all the witnesses required for the trial. In the case of a guilty plea, it is necessary to have a statement only from the victim, as well as any other statements that have already been taken.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Attorney-General agree that, wherever possible, the views of the victim should be obtained as a matter of course whenever it is intended to accept a plea of guilty to an offence lesser than the charge and whenever it is intended to drop the case?

The Attorney-General: It is important to try to involve the victim in those circumstances. The victim does not have a right to be consulted. The Crown Prosecution Service must stand back and consider the matter objectively. The Director of Public Prosecutions and I are

keen that there should be good liaison between the Crown Prosecution Service and police at headquarters level, right through to the officer on the beat and the victim so that all understand what is being done and why.

Over-lenient Sentences

30. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Attorney-General how many sentences were referred to the Court of Appeal as being over-lenient in 1993; and how many of these resulted in an increased sentence.

The Attorney-General: During 1993, I sought leave to refer 29 cases to the Court of Appeal, including one to the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland. Of the 18 cases decided to date, in which leave was granted in every case, 14 have resulted in an increase of sentence.

Mr. Clappison: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those 14 cases show how important a part that power plays in ensuring that the punishment fits the crime in every case? Is he aware that a warm welcome has been given to the extension of that power to a wider category of cases? Would he care to reflect that if we had listened to the view of the Opposition on criminal justice we would never have had that power at all?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is right. The Opposition opposed the power, but never mind: there is more joy in heaven over sinners who repent, and so on. Opposition Members also recognise that the Court of Appeal has been given a valuable power. Its objective is to seek to ensure that cases are sentenced in the range that the Court of Appeal criminal division regards as proper.

Mr. Flynn: What does the Minister think of the decision to give a penalty of community service to Roger Levitt for stealing millions of pounds from his own clients? Is his advice to fraudsters that if they want to steal they should steal big?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not proper for any Minister to make a comment on a judicial decision on sentence in any individual case. The House will be aware that the question of the power to refer sentences to the Court of Appeal as being unduly lenient in cases of serious and complex fraud is under active consideration.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Students (Training)

38. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of possible economic benefits to United Kingdom industry from the provision of funds for the training of students from developing countries in United Kingdom colleges.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The main purpose of providing training under the aid programme is to benefit developing countries. I believe that schemes such as the British Chevening scholarships will also bring valuable economic benefits to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fabricant: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Does he agree that it would be wrong to be seduced by those siren voices who would argue against providing places for people from overseas countries to study at British institutions of further and higher education? Does he also agree that educational links with overseas countries more often result in enduring trade links? Will he give some indication of how many foreign students are currently studying in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I agree with the tenor of my hon. Friend's question. There are two main schemes for bringing students here—the Foreign Office scheme and the Overseas Development Administration scheme. Combining the two, about 21,000 students in all are studying in Britain at any one time, at a cost of £160 million. That is money well spent and my hon. Friend is right that it ultimately leads to the enhancement of our trade potential.

Mr. Watson: Will the Minister comment on the position of the British Council, which is heavily involved in many of the areas—aid, trade and education—to which he has referred? May I highlight the example of the Scottish international resource project, which is proving beneficial to many overseas students? What guarantees can he give that the funding for such projects and for the other work of the British Council will be maintained in years to come?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I cannot comment specifically on the hon. Gentleman's point about the Scottish international resource project because I do not have the facts at my fingertips, but I can tell him that, wherever possible, we expand schemes that bring people to the United Kingdom. I can also tell him that the British Council has had enhanced funding in the past year for its activities.

Spending Balance

39. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the balance of spending as between *(a)* bilateral and *(b)* multilateral aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1992-93, multilateral aid was 44 per cent. of our total aid to developing countries.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Has not the trend increasingly moved in the direction of multilateral aid? Is there not a feeling in many parts of the House that that should be stopped and reversed?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is true that over years the trend has been increasing, but it fluctuates from year to year; how significant the increase has been over the past three years, I cannot say. Much of our multilateral expenditure is by agreement with other parties—it is not entirely determined by ourselves. For that reason, we must accommodate it if we wish to remain in forums such as the United Nations, international institutions and other areas where there is multilateral spending. The most important thing is to ensure that multilateral spending is money well spent. We certainly take a great deal of trouble with the European Community to assist in that process: for example, the "Horizon 2000" declaration, which was agreed in December 1992, set out procedures to improve

the way in which EC funds were spent and we currently have five officials seconded to the Commission to try to improve its spending plans.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister accept that the reputation of Britain's bilateral aid programme has been sullied by the decision to fund the Pergau dam project in Malaysia when his own civil servants and colleagues advised against it? Is not £234 million of British taxpayers' money being wasted in Pergau with the sole purpose of boosting the arms trade? Does the Minister agree with Sir Timothy Lankester that that was an outrageous abuse of our aid programme?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the matter will be fully discussed by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, but I must make one or two points. First, our aid programme is not, and will not be, linked to arms sales. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman says that our reputation is sullied, but British aid has contributed to Malaysia's rapid economic development and to the productive relationship that we have with Malaysia in many spheres of activity, including trade. Our trade today is three times what it was in 1988.

Mr. Lester: Does my hon. Friend agree that this question is a matter for the aid and trade provision? Should it not be made clear that the aid and trade provision is a system of soft loans and has nothing to do with our basic aid programme—our bilateral aid programme—which is based on helping the poorest countries first?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is right. I should add that the aid and trade provision is about 5 per cent. of our total aid programme and, under new procedures, is to be directed to help the poorest countries. I remind the House that the aid and trade provision was invented by the Labour party.

Angola

41. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received about the delivery and distribution of aid to those most in need in Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Britain's contribution of £10 million to the international humanitarian effort has been widely welcomed.

Ms Hoey: I am sure that the Minister is aware of the information coming out of Angola about the scale of the tragedy there: hundreds of thousands of people are starving and hundreds of thousands are going to starve. Does the Minister really believe that this country is doing enough, not only in terms of the amount of aid but in ensuring that it is distributed fairly? Is the co-ordination between the United Nations agencies and the voluntary agencies which are doing such good work there ensuring that the aid is getting to the people who need it and not being diverted to the armed soldiers of UNITA?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I know that the hon. Lady is familiar with Angola and is an expert on this subject. She does the House a service by drawing our attention to the tragedy there, which is quite as bad as that of former Yugoslavia, or perhaps worse in terms of deaths. Since October last year, there has been better access to the provinces to deliver aid and, as a result, we are now providing £400,000 to finance two field officers to assist the in-country office of the United Nations department of humanitarian affairs and to help with the distribution of aid.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Bearing in mind the neglect and destruction that have occurred in Angola as a result of years of Marxist rule followed by civil war, would not one of the major contributions that we can make to Angola's redevelopment once the conflict has come to an end be to rebuild the infrastructure for which our country's engineering expertise is so well suited?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have no doubt that that will be so in due course, but at the moment our priority is to provide emergency assistance—food, health care and nutrition. They must be the demands of the moment.

Russia

42. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the United Kingdom and the Group of Seven leading industrial countries are providing to promote economic reform in Russia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom has consistently supported the process of reform. To date, about £1·2 billion of United Kingdom funds has been pledged. The G7 programme of phased support linked to progress on reform is worth more than $46 billion.

Mrs. Gillan: With the increasing reports of problems of Russian companies and organisations, one of which manifested itself in relation to Aeroflot flight SU242 when citizens' lives were put in danger by an apparent disregard for international safety rules, does the Minister agree that we should do even more to help the economic reforms and the transition to a market economy in Russia?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I agree with my hon. Friend that without the successful transition to a market economy in Russia all the political developments that have taken place in recent years will be threatened and as naught. In our large overall programme of bilateral support to Russia, we are giving quite a lot of help through technical assistance, as Russia's biggest challenge is to acquire the necessary expertise in that area. Our present funding of about £140 million per annum will be very helpful in that direction.

Bosnia

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland) (*by private notice*): To ask the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, whether he will make a statement about the weekend's tragic events in Sarajevo and about what action Her Majesty's Government intend to recommend to Britain's partners and allies as a consequence.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): The whole House will share a feeling of horror and outrage about the massacre at Sarajevo on 5 February. The Government condemn that brutal and senseless act. Over the weekend, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed the response of the international community with the United States Secretary of State, with the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Spain and Canada, and with Lord Owen. My right hon. Friend is now attending a meeting of European Union Foreign Ministers in Brussels.

The events of the weekend again emphasise the vital importance of negotiations between the parties to reach a political settlement as soon as possible. The Government reiterate their full support for the efforts of Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg to that end, and call on the parties to show maximum flexibility at the scheduled talks in Geneva on 10 February.

However, action over Sarajevo cannot await an overall settlement. It is essential that the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation should consider immediately practical means for halting the bombardment of civilians there. The demilitarisation and international administration of Sarajevo are also being pursued by the two co-chairmen.

The Government welcome the United Nations Secretary-General's letter, asking NATO to authorise its military command to be ready to use air power on request from the United Nations. The Government support an early meeting of the North Atlantic Council to give that authority. The United Nations and NATO, taking into account military advice, will thereafter seek to achieve a ceasefire around Sarajevo. The Government remain determined that everything possible is done to ensure that that appalling conflict is brought to an end as soon as possible.

Dr. Cunningham: I associate my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself with the condemnation of that appalling atrocity in Sarajevo. Does not the recent history of the former Yugoslavia show that western policy about those problems is in disarray? The record is one of failure to prevent atrocities, resulting in the wanton slaughter that shocked the world this weekend. The record also, sadly, shows that resolutions of the Security Council of the United Nations, declarations by the Council of Ministers of the European Union and decisions of the NATO summit have never been implemented.

Those decisions and declarations are regarded by the Serbs and Croatians as empty threats, so their aggression and the carnage continue. Indecision about Britain's proposed troop withdrawal has further encouraged Serbs and Croatians to believe that their aggression would not only be ignored, but be rewarded by territorial gain. Tragically for all of us, the European Union bears the principal responsibility for that catastrophe.

What, specifically, does the Prime Minister mean when he says that he wants to see

"urgent, effective and more muscular action in Bosnia"?

Will the Government immediately press for the opening of Tuzla airport, for the lifting of the siege of Sarajevo and for the proper implementation of the UN Security Council resolution defining safe areas, as set out in resolution 824 adopted in May 1993—almost one year ago? Do the Government agree that if the Serbs and Croatians do not immediately accept and allow the implementation of those decisions of the international community, they should be enforced by the use of the vastly superior air power of NATO?

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for joining in the condemnation of what has taken place. As usual, he is longer on analyses than on solutions to the problem. We are looking for effective action—if necessary, muscular action—to protect the civilian population of Sarajevo. They have been subjected to mortar attacks from both Serbian and Bosnian forces. The UNPROFOR command, with NATO support, must apply the pressure necessary to halt the attacks. If the military commanders advise that this requires tactical air support, we shall back their judgment; that has always been our position and remains so.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned Tuzla. It is, of course, essential that Tuzla airport is reopened. The NATO summit expressed readiness to support UNPROFOR in Srebrenica and in Tuzla, where it was being obstructed. NATO air power is available if needed. Pressure is being exerted on the Serbs over Tuzla airport. The United Nations is discussing plans with troop contributors in that theatre.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned air strikes. There is a distinction between strategic air strikes and tactical air strikes. Military commanders, whether in NATO, the United Nations or the United Kingdom, have consistently advised that a generalised policy of strategic air strikes would not end the war. It could make the situation worse by bringing the United Nations into the conflict and disrupting humanitarian relief. In specific situations, the tactical use of air power can help to achieve defined objectives. NATO will consider on Wednesday how that air power might be used to reinforce UNPROFOR's efforts to end the Sarajevo bombardment. We await the assessment of the military commanders, but we are fully prepared to see air power used if it will improve the situation. We want UNPROFOR to take strong action to help civilians in Sarajevo and to increase pressure on the parties to end the war.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the United Nations is involved in this conflict and that it is rapidly losing all its credibility? Will he further accept that the vacillation and the indecision have gone on for far too long? It is essential that, by the end of this week, proper steps are taken—with an ultimatum delivered with a threat of real force behind it—so that the siege of Sarajevo will be lifted and the heavy weaponry will be removed from the hills around the city. Will my right hon. Friend further accept that the United Kingdom is uniquely placed to take a lead in this? Can that lead now be taken?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend, who takes a close interest in the matter, will be aware that at the NATO

summit it was the British Prime Minister who took the lead, together with Mr. Balladur, in proposing that NATO urge UNPROFOR to draw up plans for Tuzla airport. We have made it clear that NATO air power will be available. I hope that the consultations that are taking place this week will achieve the ends for which we and my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) earnestly hope.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Is the Minister aware that most hon. Members commend the question that has just been asked? It is, nevertheless, true that military action is much more hazardous now than it was when we advocated it during the siege of Ozijek. Does the Minister agree, therefore, that it is clear that the continued indiscriminate shelling of Sarajevo is bound to reproduce horrors such as occurred on Saturday—indeed, the shelling is now almost worse in Mostar—which means that the civilised community demands that clear, specific military action to defend Sarajevo, Mostar and Tuzla, which United Nations resolutions permit us to take, should now be taken?

Mr. Goodlad: It is irresponsible of the Liberal Democrats' spokesman to play politics over the tragic situation in Bosnia. If the half-baked, half-measures advocated by the Liberal Democrats had been adopted, we would be no nearer a solution, but United Nations troops would very likely have become participants in the conflict. The ex-post facto wisdom of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) is preposterous. It was even more preposterous for him to have asserted that he reflects the general wish of British troops that the United Nations mandate should be changed. He has been challenged by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to substantiate that assertion. He has failed to do so—precisely because, as he knows, he does not reflect the views of our commanders.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): The Bosnian conflict is littered with tragedy and atrocities. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it would be wrong for the Government and the United Nations to change their policy because of the latest appalling tragedy in Sarajevo? Will he further confirm that we will not change those policies until we can secure the safety of our troops who are involved with the humanitarian effort and in humanitarian aid? If there is to be any change of policy by the United Nations, will he please ensure that we put our troops and humanitarian aid workers in a place of safety before we embark on an act of aggression that will make us participants in the conflict?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is right to advance that argument. The commanders of UNPROFOR and of the British contingent will, of course, take full account of the need to ensure the safety of civilian aid workers and UNPROFOR troops. That is an important element. Aid is vital to Sarajevo, but it is also vital to stop the bombardment. The United Nations objective must be an effective plan to protect Sarajevo and to create a better environment for humanitarian relief work.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is not it clear, even to this Government, that Saturday's butchery, in which nearly 70 people were murdered, occurred because, as with previous atrocities, the Serbian warlords believed, to a large extent, that they were secure from any form of western intervention and retaliation? Is the Minister aware of the feeling of deep betrayal that is felt by people in Bosnia, who believe that they have been let down by the United Nations and by western Governments and are the innocent victims of aggression? Unlike what happened with the Gulf war, in which action was rightly taken, the Bosnian people are being allowed to be murdered without any intervention from the western community and international organisations.

Mr. Goodlad: The Serbian warlords have no grounds for holding the beliefs ascribed to them by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Winnick: Not much.

Mr. Goodlad: Despite what the hon. Gentleman says, the international community will continue its efforts to bring an end to this tragic conflict.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there has been enough prevarication on air strikes in the past six months to a year? Does he further agree that it is utterly hypocritical for Labour Front-Bench spokesmen to believe that the European Union is responsible, when the real reason why it is impossible to make that organisation take any decision is that, under title 5 of the Maastricht treaty, with which Labour Members agreed, it is impossible to arrive at a proper line of control and command?

Mr. Goodlad: I cannot agree with my hon. Friend that there has been prevarication over air strikes, which have been authorised and are being considered in the context which I described to the House. I do not find myself with any surprise at hypocrisy on the part of the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is increasing concern and anger throughout all the Muslim communities in the world at the appalling lack of decision of the European Union Governments and that, more particularly, there is considerable dismay at Britain's craven conduct in these matters—this country is the leader of the "don't let's do anythings"—under a Christian Foreign Secretary and a Jewish Minister of Defence?

Mr. Goodlad: I understand the feelings in the Muslim communities throughout the world. I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman, whose question was unworthy of him, that there has been anything craven on the part of the British contribution. Our aid workers and troops in Bosnia, whom I visited, have behaved throughout with enormous courage.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Is not the basic decision for the Government either to play our full part in humanitarian relief work in that tragic country or to become a party to the dispute by taking air strikes against Serb weapon positions?

Mr. Goodlad: We have never ruled out the use of tactical air strikes. Military advice is being taken at the moment, and no doubt decisions will be taken in due course.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): The Minister has spoken this afternoon of "muscular action". May I ask how and when?

Mr. Goodlad: As I have told the House, the European Council of Ministers is meeting this afternoon. NATO is taking counsel from its military advice, and announcements will be made after that process is completed.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that surgical air strikes may sound grand, but not if the objective is to deter? The only way that deterrence will work will be if the United States is committed in the air and on the ground, as it was in the Gulf. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, without that commitment, surgical air strikes will only escalate the conflict and will not produce the desired result?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend points his finger at some extremely important considerations, and, of course, the deployment of ground troops has not been ruled out.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Following the tragedy at the weekend, the Minister has used the word "muscular", as my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) said. The right hon. Gentleman did not explain what the new muscular attitude—rather than the wind power which we have had so far—amounts to. Will the Minister, for instance, support the new UN commander if he decides to use force to ensure that our humanitarian aid gets through? Will action be taken then?

Mr. Goodlad: The House can congratulate General Rose on the start that he has made. The troops are guaranteed our full support, and the commanders have not asked for the rules of engagement to change.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that everyone wants the negotiated settlement about which he speaks? What are the statistical chances of getting such a negotiated settlement when negotiations have failed to achieve one during the past two years, when one side in the dispute has overwhelming weapon power and when the UN has so far shown itself to be a paper tiger?

Mr. Goodlad: I do not know what the statistical prospects of a settlement are. The parties are at the negotiating table, and they have received a clear message that a Bosnian settlement should include one third of territory and access to the sea for the Muslims. The details of the territorial exchange and the arrangements for access to the sea remain the key differences. Those are matters for the parties to solve with the co-chairmen, and that can only be done at the negotiating table.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Can the Minister say exactly what was in the UNPROFOR report concerning the criminal act on Saturday? What offers of co-operation have been forthcoming from the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims towards setting up an investigating commission to see precisely what did happen?

Mr. Goodlad: It is almost certain that the shell came from Serb positions, but there is no absolute certainty about it. I will certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's suggestions to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Accepting the Minister's statement that air strikes might relieve the pressure but could not end the war, and remembering the experience of air strikes in Vietnam and in the Gulf war, when they were unable to find and remove military targets on the ground, and also remembering the ability, nowadays, of troops to live underground and to move at night, can he tell us whether there has been any military advice to suggest that air strikes could make a significant difference to the tragic situation in Sarajevo and in other places?

Mr. Goodlad: As always, my right hon. Friend brings great wisdom to bear on the situation. It has not hitherto been military advice that air strikes would help the situation, because of some of the considerations which my right hon. Friend has drawn to the attention of the House. As I have said, the matter is continually being assessed by the military commanders. The intention must be to improve the situation, not to make it worse.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Minister aware that the caution that has been shown up to now is much wiser than may be thought to be the case from some of the comments made across the Floor of the House? If air strikes were undertaken, not only would all humanitarian aid come to an end, which could lead to far, far greater loss of life, but British and other United Nations troops could be endangered and the peacekeeping attempts made by Lord Owen and others could terminate. That could lead to the long-term involvement by Britain and other countries in a Balkan war, the outcome of which could not be foreseen. Those possibilities raise political and not just military questions.

Is the right hon. Gentleman also aware that the point made by the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) about the uncertainty of so-called surgical strikes, as a means of bringing to an end a war that has a deep history and is the source of great bitterness, raises grounds for considerable caution? Were the Government to be cautious on the matter, they would receive far greater support than might be apparent from some of the comments made in the House today.

Mr. Goodlad: The right hon. Gentleman, again, focuses the attention of the House on the points that he has made in this context previously. As I said earlier, we await the assessment of the military commanders as to whether air strikes would improve the situation, but, as the right hon. Gentleman has said, some complicated factors must be taken into account.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does not it follow, as night follows day, that if my right hon. Friend were to take the advice of the leaders of the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, the United Nations would be committed as a participant in this war, which would then further escalate the United Nations' military commitment and, therefore, that of this country? Following that, it would be impossible to deliver the aid that we are currently delivering to the starving and very badly treated people of Bosnia.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend makes some extremely shrewd points.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): The weekend actrocity underlines the extent to which the Muslims in Bosnia have suffered from Serb aggression. Is not it the case, however, that the Muslim army has been trying to compensate for the losses it has suffered through Serbian aggression by driving Croats from their homeland in

central Bosnia? Can the Government impress on the Bosnian Government that such action makes it more difficult for people to help them?

Mr. Goodlad: It is inherent in a situation of civil war that events such as those described by the hon. Gentleman will take place. For that reason, our efforts will continue to be directed towards bringing that civil war to an end.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Does my right hon. Friend agree that international organisations should concentrate on the long-term strategic objectives, which they have not yet done with sufficient clarity? Does he further agree that decisions on the ground in Bosnia should be left to local commanders, whose advice will clearly be that air strikes against any of the three sides in Bosnia will render the humanitarian effort impossible and place our troops in great danger?

Mr. Goodlad: Once again, my hon. Friend points to some of the difficulties that face the military commanders in advising on air strikes.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): While the Minister is rightly listening to the advice of military personnel, does he accept that the western world has a clear moral and political responsibility to deal with the issues now facing us in the Balkans which, after all, have been going on for two years? Does he therefore accept that Sarajevo is specifically under threat from the Serbs? In that context, what recommendations are his Department and the Government making to the meetings of the NATO and European Union allies? Are the Government prepared clearly to state that they accept that moral responsibility and will take action when necessary?

Mr. Goodlad: It is precisely because we take that responsibility that, since the most recent manifestations of the dispute have been apparent to us, we have been involved in seeking not only to deliver humanitarian aid to Bosnia but to bring about an end to the civil war. The situation in Bosnia requires a more robust response than hitherto by the United Nations and NATO, but its purpose must be to improve the position in Sarajevo and contribute to pressure on the parties to end the war and reach a negotiated settlement. As has been pointed out by Members on both sides of the House, the plan must take account of the importance of the relief operation and the safety of soldiers and civilians running it. This week's discussions are taking place precisely to achieve that plan.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): While I welcome the fact that the possibility of more muscular action to alleviate the suffering of Sarajevo is being considered, does my right hon. Friend agree that the downside of such a policy depends on how much humanitarian aid is getting through? Has he seen recent reports that Larry Hollingworth, a former British Army officer and the head of the UN High Commission for Refugees in Zenica, estimates that only 10 per cent. of humanitarian aid is getting through to central Bosnia? That figure is borne out by the World Health Organisation.

Mr. Goodlad: I have seen that report, but most reports on the amount of aid getting through give much higher estimates—a figure of 70 per cent. has been mentioned. More than 1,000 flights and most of the convoys have got through, so the figure that my hon. Friend mentions is probably not realistic.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Minister appreciate that western Governments are partly to blame for all the slaughter on the streets of Sarajevo? Does he agree that when former Yugoslavia was in the throes of splitting up, Germany wanted to recognise Croatia? That was confirmed by Lord Carrington at the time and since. The Government and the House were wary of the possibility of that happening. Bosnia followed because Germany twisted the British Government's arm and a quid pro quo deal was done on the two opt-outs for Maastricht, and we have finished up with this mess. If there is any guilt —there is a lot of guilt around the conflict in the Balkans —does the Minister agree that the Government's hands are not clean?

Mr. Goodlad: Not for the first time, I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's contribution—in this case, in the form of a history lesson of his usual inaccuracy—takes the situation no further forward.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): May I put it to my right hon. Friend that when he spells out the political aims—in the short term, humanitarian; in the long term, getting a settlement—he will enjoy the support of all who judge their politics by the week, not by the day?

Mr. Goodlad: I am extremely grateful for my hon. Friend's sensible remarks.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): Will the Minister agree that the west does have a policy towards Bosnia—that it does not stand neutrally by? Will he remind the House that the two pillars of that policy are, first, waiting for the three sides in the combat to fight themselves to a standstill; and, secondly, denying the legitimate Government of Bosnia the right and the means to defend their people and their capital?

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Gentleman does less than justice to the efforts of this Government and of the international community to assist the parties to reach an agreement at the table. They are at the table; that is where an agreement must be reached. The hon. Gentleman should face up to that.

The majority of the European Union countries, the co-chairmen, and the United Nations agencies are all opposed to lifting the embargo. We have never ruled that out, if all else fails, but we believe that it would do much more harm than good in Bosnia. It would escalate the fighting and seriously jeopardise the relief effort. It could also draw others in and lead to a widening of the conflict. I do not think that that is what the hon. Gentleman wants. I therefore suggest that he ceases suggesting it.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if bombing raids are undertaken under the UN flag, the neutral, peacekeeping role of the United Nations will be wholly undermined and, in future, people will view the UN in a wholly different light? It will no longer be seen as an agency facilitating the bringing of aid to the people who need it.

Mr. Goodlad: I note my hon. Friend's view. It is a consideration which must be borne in mind.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): If the Government are unwilling to lift the Bosnian arms embargo—I think that there is a strong case for lifting it—what is their view of extending sanctions

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

against Croatia and providing financial assistance to the countries that are bearing the greatest burden in respect of the enforcement of the sanctions?

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Gentleman should bear it in mind that getting an agreement on sanctions against Croatia would have implications, for instance, for the position of our troops and of the United Nations relief workers in Split and on the road up to Vitez. So it is not entirely a straightforward matter.

Madam Speaker: We must now move on. Unfortunately, we shall no doubt return to this subject again.

Points of Order

4.3 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you been approached by the Minister for Transport in London asking to make a statement about today's announcement by Network SouthEast that it intends to close London's oldest railway terminus, Fenchurch Street station, for seven months from the end of July? You will appreciate that that will have an enormous impact on thousands of commuters from Essex and on the people of east London, and that there will be, as a result, additional strain on the underground and more traffic congestion in Essex and east London. I should be horrified to learn that the Minister did not intend to make an early statement on the consequences of that announcement.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. If you ask the Minister to come and make a statement, will you ask him to make it clear that the closure is to take place in order to implement a £83 million resignalling scheme?

Madam Speaker: There is no point in putting arguments to me. Members should put points of order to me concerning our Standing Orders or breaches of our practice—they do not arise in this case.

To answer the orginal question: no, the Minister has not told me that he wants to make a statement on the matter.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You have in the past been harsh with the Government about their press releases and press conferences. I believe that the House has been further slighted today. Although we have had a statement on the serious matter of the atrocity in Sarajevo, each week in Britain 35 times the number of those killed in that atrocity die as a result of smoking.

Today, instead of a statement to the House, there was a press conference on the Government's policy on tobacco advertising. In my constituency this weekend, one tobacco company revived an advertisement which it admits has an appeal to children.

We cannot trust the tobacco industry on this matter and when the Government make statements on such serious matters, the House should be given the chance to give them full scrutiny.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman realises that that is not a point of order.

If I might correct his original statement—the Minister did not make a statement. It was a private notice question, which I thought it necessary for the House to debate because of the seriousness of the situation.

Scottish Democracy

4.5 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I beg to move,

That this House notes the undemocratic influence and power of transnational and multinational companies in the economic life of Scotland and the deliberate erosion of the rights of Scottish workers by the imposition of legal shackles on trade unions and on their ability to defend workers' living standards by industrial action and collective strength; further notes the weakening of democratic life in Scotland by the centralisation of power and decision-making in unelected quangos, such as the Scottish Enterprise network of companies, Scottish Homes and NHS trusts; condemns the dismantling of local government democracy proposed in the Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Bill currently before the House; censures the Government for the continuing denial of a directly-elected Scottish Parliament, for which huge majorities of Scottish electors have voted in successive elections; recognises that the future of Scottish democracy depends upon giving effect to the sovereign right of the Scottish people to decide for themselves how and by whom they are governed; and therefore calls for the holding of a multi-option referendum in which people living in Scotland can decide democratically the form of government best suited to their needs.

I welcome at least four of Scotland's five Tory Back-Bench Members to the debate and I am delighted that they are taking such an interest in the future of Scottish democracy. If the debate serves no other purpose than to instruct the Scottish Tories on the Conservative Benches, it will have been very useful.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I find the hon. Gentleman's words puzzling. Scottish Tory Members have a very good record of attending Scottish Grand Committees and the like. I do not understand the point that he is trying to make. Perhaps he could clarify the matter.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Member would have done better to wait to hear what I was going to say before making that intervention. If he is more patient and allows me to develop even one line of my argument, he might get on better in this debate.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McAllion: We seem to have evidence that Conservative Members are organising a filibuster before I can even start the debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am responding to the hon. Gentleman's comments about the number of Scottish Conservative Members present. Perhaps he would care to look behind him and along the Opposition Benches and note the number of hon. Members supporting him.

Mr. McAllion: If the hon. Member had listened, he would have heard me welcoming the large presence of Scottish Tory Back-Benchers. I am delighted to see them here and I hope that they will listen attentively as they may learn something, which may not merely be in their interests, but will be of benefit to their constituents for whom I am much more concerned.

For the third time, may I begin by saying that the debate focuses on two related questions. The first is what has become known in Scotland as the national question—the right of Scotland to self-determination and self-government. The second question is that of democracy and the idea that in a nation—no one in the House can deny that Scotland is a nation—the people must not merely have their say, but have their way. Those two questions are completely inseparable. In the words of the song,

"You can't have one without the other."

The reality to date is that Scotland does not have self-government and cannot be described as a democracy. I do not say that merely through personal convictions because such convictions are not always in touch with reality, as membership of the House should prove to any hon. Member. I say so because the Scottish people voted overwhelmingly—by three to one—in a democratic election to assert their sovereignty and to set up their own parliament in Scotland. The fact that they are still being denied that parliament nearly two years on by a Government for whom they did not vote makes a mockery of the Government's claim to be democratic. As the Government are sustained in office by this House, it also makes a mockery of its claim to be democratic. Indeed, it makes a mockery of its claim to be the mother of western democracies.

I therefore make no apology for raising the question of Scottish democracy in this debate, although I know that many people, including many Scots, will be deeply suspicious of the nationalist side of the debate. After a weekend when we witnessed the worst excesses of nationalism—when taken to its ethnic extremes—in Sarajevo, I can understand why people might think that way. They are right to feel a general and deep unease about those who beat the nationalist drum and who, in the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), think with their blood.

We are learning to our great cost in Europe today just how evil extreme nationalism can be, not only in the nationalist wars in Yugoslavia, but the resurgent nationalism in Germany, which is reviving racism and even nazism there, as well as the election in this country of an extreme British nationalist, against a background of rising racist attacks on Asian minorities in our cities, often by people who wrap themselves in the Union Jack and claim to be British nationalists. In Scotland, there is the disturbing emergence of Scotland Watch and Settler Watch. It does not matter whether they do it consciously or otherwise; they are stoking the fires of anti-English sentiment and resentment in our country.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House would agree that there can be no toleration of the kind of nationalism that defines us by emphasising the difference between us and them. There should be no tolerance in the House for those who attempt to define us in Scotland by emphasising the difference between us and English Members who represent other constituencies. If I refer to Scotland, the Scottish nation or Scottish people, I am simply referring to those who have chosen to settle and live in Scotland, irrespective of their ethnic, religious or national background.

As a direct descendant of immigrants to Scotland from Ireland in the previous century, I recognise more than most that Scottish culture is not threatened in any sense by immigration from outside. Indeed, quite the opposite is true. It is greatly enriched and strengthened by immigrants from other countries. The Scottish author, William McIlvanney, never said a truer word when he said that the Scots are a mongrel people and all the better for it.

Long may we continue to be a mongrel people, because our mongrel nature is one of our great national strengths. Having said that, we are none the less a nation. The right

[Mr. McAllion]

hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) described Scotland as one of the oldest historic nations in Europe. The right hon. Gentleman is not only one of the most experienced, but one of the wisest Members of the House. His words should be listened to.

We should never lose sight, especially in the Opposition, of the positive side of our nationalism and that of other countries. For example, few socialists would quarrel with the aspiration of the Palestinian people to national self-determination. Even fewer did not or would not support the nationalist struggles in Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua and elsewhere in the third world against the domination by American imperialism. Few hon. Members, on both sides of the House, would not accept the legitimacy of the nationalist goal of a united Ireland, so long as it is pursued by democratic means and is brought about by the democratic consent of the people north and south in Ireland.

The point that I am trying to make is that nationalism can be, and often is, a progressive and liberating force in the modern world. I believe that Scottish nationalism is and can be such a force if it is properly channelled. Indeed, for most of this century, the cause of Scottish nationalism has been the cause of the Scottish Labour movement. Keir Hardie, who founded the Labour party, was a lifelong advocate of Scottish home rule. John McLean, who, perhaps, was Scotland's foremost revolutionary socialist, campaigned all his life for what he called the Scottish socialist workers' republic. Red Clydeside's Jimmy Maxton fought for what he described as the Scottish socialist commonwealth.

In the general election of 1918, the Labour party in Scotland drew up its election manifesto, which had only three distinctively Scottish commitments. The first was the prohibition of alcohol. The second was proportional representation. The third was a Scottish parliament. It is interesting to note that, more than 75 years on, some of us are still campaigning for at least two of those three commitments.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Which two?

Mr. McAllion: It certainly is not the prohibition of alcohol. I speak as the secretary of the all-party Scotch whisky group when I say that.

Although Labour subsequently dropped its commitment to Scottish home rule in the 1950s and 1960s, it eventually returned to it, placing it at the very heart of its "Agenda for Scotland" through our support for a claim of right for Scotland and for the Scottish Convention scheme for a Scottish parliament. Opposition Members do not hesitate to proclaim Scotland's right to self-determination and to home rule and its own parliament. These are basic democratic demands, supported by a minimum of three out of four Scottish voters. I believe that the potential exists for a common agenda for three of Scotland's four major constitutional parties; I hope that, by the end of the debate, Conservative Members will have been convinced as well.

There is plenty to form the basis of a democratic critique of Scottish government: God knows enough is wrong with it nowadays. The current housing crisis, for instance, is related to the lack of democracy in Scotland. Homelessness is now at record levels, having increased by a staggering 145 per cent. in the 1980s. According to reports in this morning's Scottish press, in just four areas some 8,500 women are not only homeless but hidden out of sight, not recognised as homeless. God knows what the national figure is.

The first national housing condition survey, completed in 1992, revealed that no fewer than 423,000 Scottish dwellings were affected by damp, severe condensation, mould or, in some cases, a combination of all three. We all know areas in our constituencies which are euphemistically described as "areas of low demand". Housing in such areas consists of damp-ridden boxes and unemployment is at 40, 50 or even 60 per cent; crime and vandalism are rife; the streets are not safe for mothers to walk or children to play in; and drug abuse is common, with hedges and stairwells littered with discarded syringes. Those areas are little better than hellholes, but people cannot escape from them: they have no alternative accommodation because of the housing crisis.

That is a national disgrace, but we have not the democratic means to do anything about it. Not so long ago, locally elected councils were responsible for Scotland's housing. Those councils were accountable to their electorate; if local people were not satisfied with their performance, they could vote them out at regular elections. Now, every local housing scene is dominated by the quango Scottish Homes, whose financial muscle cannot be matched by individual councils. In 1993-94, Scottish Homes has a massive £372 million to invest in housing; with resources on such a scale, it will call the shots. Without an agreement with Scottish Homes to bring part of that £372 million into its area, no council can really be in the housing business.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that some 42 strategic agreements have been made with local authorities and that two more are about to be made? In the vast majority of cases—if not all—local authorities have nomination rights in relation to Scottish Homes housing.

Mr. McAllion: The Minister should have been patient and waited until I had finished. I was pointing out that councils were not in the housing business unless they had secured such agreements.

Locally elected councils had to negotiate their agreements with Scottish Homes and in those negotiations all the muscle, power and influence were on one side. Councils are now being forced to submit to a housing agenda that is increasingly being set by the unelected Scottish Homes agency—an agenda whose priority is more home ownership, tenure change and encouragement of the private sector at the expense of the public sector. That agenda largely ignores those who are trapped in the worst housing, who have the fewest private resources and who are least able to look after themselves. That has arisen because housing in Scotland is dominated by non-elected quangos such as Scottish Homes at the expense of the input of elected local authorities, which used to be the main players on the housing scene before Scottish Homes.

That is true also of the Scottish Enterprise network, which has brought into being a whole new family of quangos in the form of local enterprise companies throughout Scotland. Their influence on economic development, training, business support and development grants completely dwarfs local council planning and

economic development departments. In my own area, Scottish Enterprise Tayside has an annual budget of about £25 million to spend on local economic development, compared with a combined budget for Tayside regional council's planning and economic development departments of less than £4 million.

To whom are Scottish Enterprise and other agencies accountable? Certainly not to the people of Tayside, local councils or Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies. They are accountable only to the Secretary of State for Scotland—and that must and does lead to abuses. In the past few weeks in my local enterprise company, two senior members were forced to resign because of a conflict of interest between their role as private business men and as heads of what is essentially a public agency. That situation cannot be tolerated and it should be snuffed out as soon as possible.

The same argument can be made in respect of national health service trusts, the new water boards and the host of new quangos that have come into existence under the present leadership of the Conservative party in Scotland. They are a law unto themselves and to their master—the Secretary of State for Scotland. Little wonder that he is prepared to defend quangos—as he did earlier today. They are in effect his own flesh and blood. He forms quangos, packs their membership with Conservative party supporters and sets their agendas—and the quangos do his bidding. The Secretary of State and the quangos are running Scotland without the democratic consent of the Scottish people. Although the people of Scotland fund those quangos, they have no say in them and are treated with contempt.

Many other aspects of Scottish life are equally intolerable.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): To emphasise the rottenness of quango appointments I should point out the appointment to the chairmanship of Inverclyde Royal hospital trust of a local employer who pays among the lowest wages in the whole Inverclyde area. Surely that augurs badly for the people who give their best service to patients of the Inverclyde Royal hospital group.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend makes a fair point and that is not an isolated example. The Secretary of State for Scotland recently visited Dundee, but not in his ministerial capacity. In fact, he did not even advise my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) that he was to visit the constituency. The right hon. Gentleman did so in his role as a member of the Conservative party, to raise funds for his party at a secret dinner held at the Invercastle hotel in Dundee—to which was invited the chairman of the Dundee NHS trust, as a Conservative party supporter, together with the chairman-designate of Scottish Enterprise Tayside.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Sleaze.

Mr. McAllion: That is exactly right. We are concerned with the country being run democratically and it is not democratic for Scotland to be run by people appointed purely on the basis that they give money to the Conservative party—which was roundly defeated in the last local and general elections.

In the past month, we have seen how Westminster-style democracy deals with Scottish affairs. A Government who had been defeated in the polls in Scotland introduced a Bill on local government which relates exclusively to Scotland and the people who live there. Members of Parliament who were elected to represent Scottish interests voted overwhelmingly against that Bill. The House simply shrugged off what Scotland thinks about Scottish legislation and voted to give the Bill a Second Reading. Indeed, it ensured that in the Committee stage there would be a built-in Government majority, against the wishes of the Scottish people.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The hon. Gentleman may have been in the House on 18 November last year when the leader of the Labour party made a complaint about English Conservatives being put on to the Committee which considered that Bill. He was certainly in the House last Tuesday when the Scottish spokesperson of the Labour party defended the right of English Tories to sit on the Committee. Which leader does the hon. Gentleman follow in that argument?

Mr. McAllion: This is a serious debate. It is unfortunate that it has to be dragged down into the gutter by the interventions of the hon. Gentleman. I am making a serious speech about the future of democracy. If the hon. Gentleman cannot recognise the national interest when it stares him in the face, he would do better renaming his party. It certainly does not act in Scotland's national interest.

Mr. Bill Walker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I, for one, do not doubt the integrity of his view. I do not agree with it, as he knows, but I do not doubt his integrity. Will he clarify an important point of principle and detail? If a future Labour Government did not have a majority of Members in England, would it be right and proper for that Government to pass legislation affecting England which was opposed by the majority?

Mr. McAllion: As the hon. Gentleman knows, Labour is committed to a radical rehaul of the constitutional set-up in the United Kingdom. The start of that will be the establishment of a Scottish parliament with direct responsibility for Scottish affairs. Inevitably, the establishment of that Scottish parliament must change the very nature of this House. It is only a matter of time until we have a Welsh parliament and either regional assemblies or an English parliament—as the English people might decide under a federal constitution for the United Kingdom. That is the future and the way forward for the House. The hon. Gentleman had better recognise that it is the way forward for everyone in this country.

In the handling of the local government Bill by the Westminster Parliament we saw how Westminster-style democracy turns a minority view in Scotland into Government diktat. We saw it discount and disable the views of the democratic majority in Scotland. Yet we are asked to accept that that deeply undemocratic process is in our best interests and represents, in the Government's words, "A Partnership for Good".

Conservative Members argue that theirs is the democratic way while, at the same time, arguing that the democratic views of the Scottish people ultimately do not count in Scottish legislation. They argue that the role of Scotland in the partnership must always be defined for us by a bigger partner. They argue that democracy in Scotland means being governed by those whom we did not elect.

[Mr. McAllion]

When they make those arguments, they stand on the verge of George Orwell's nightmare world of doublethink. Conservative Members are asked to hold two contradictory views simultaneously. If Conservative Members are not worried about the internal contradictions of their claims to be democratic in a Scottish sense, they should be. Everyone else is beginning to recognise just how unsustainable is the Tory position on Scottish democracy.

I am often struck by the religious fervour with which defenders of the current Union argue their case. It is almost as if Tories believe that history and God are on their side. That came across clearly in the most recent Government White Paper "Scotland in the Union—A Partnership for Good". In the introduction to the White Paper, the Prime Minister speaks about his faith in a Union which has lasted almost 300 years. The Secretary of State for Scotland waxes eloquent about the joys of a single market which has transcended almost three centuries.

The White Paper is almost awestruck when it speaks about the approaching 400th anniversary of the Union of the crowns of England and Scotland. There is about the document an air of historical inevitability—almost of destiny. It is almost as if 1707 is as important to Scottish Unionists as 1690 is to Ulster Unionists. Yet nothing in life is inevitable. The only constant factor in history is change —states come and go and unions come and go. In 1984, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was one of two world super-powers that bestrode the globe; it no longer exists.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point, which I hope to develop later if I am able to make my speech. Therefore, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the Union has survived for 300 years due to its ability to change. It is a dynamic force; the Union of 1994 is not the same one as that of 1707. It has changed to meet changing circumstances and will continue to do so. That is why it lasts.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman has already admitted the case for change in the Union that exists in Scotland. The significant aspect of the Conservative party's attitude to the Union over most of the past 300 years has been its refusal to countenance any substantial changes in the Union. The hon. Gentleman is not guilty of that—I am pleased that he has joined us in our calls for changes to the existing Union and no longer tries to defend the Unionist status quo, as his hon. Friends do.

It is important for Conservative Members to understand that unions come and go. Not long ago, Yugoslavia was a powerful unitary state. Now, it has descended into the nationalists' nightmare in Bosnia, about which we are all concerned. As old unions have gone, new ones have come into existence. The European Union was designed by the Maastricht treaty and came into existence this year. In the spring of this year, the new democratic and non-racist South African Union will come into force. The lesson to be learnt from such developments is that nothing is permanent or sacrosanct about unions, including the United Kingdom.

The fact that the United Kingdom has existed for nearly 300 years is no argument or reason for the Union to continue. Recent history suggests that, as we approach the end of the 20th century, those political unions that are unsustainable are multinational, but based on a unitary state that makes no allowance for that multinational dimension. Such unions are highly centralised and authoritarian, without local autonomy. Those unions are essentially undemocratic, where words such as "subsidiarity" and "decentralisation" are regarded as dirty. The United Kingdom has become like those unions under successive Tory Governments since 1979.

If the Union is in danger today, it is because of the activities, not of Opposition Members, but of Conservative Members. Those who would defend the Union argue that such arguments are merely constitutional points and that, ultimately, there is an economic case for defending the existing Union. They say that the Scottish economy is inextricably linked to the United Kingdom economy and it would be impossible to change that. Such arguments are essentially political. They try to underscore the importance of Scotland remaining part of the United Kingdom, and part of a much larger and more powerful economy, but they merely state the obvious.

Those who advance such arguments might as well say that the Scottish economy is inextricably linked to the European or global economy. Economic interdependence, not independence, is the watchword at the end of the 20th century. What happens in the rest of this island, the rest of the continent and the rest of the world matters greatly and has a powerful effect on the people of Scotland.

Scotland cannot step outside history and live in splendid tartan isolation, although some hon. Members want to see that happen. It needs to belong to a range of multinational entities and to a radically reformed, federal, decentralised and democratic United Kingdom. Scotland should belong to a different sort of European Union, which is genuinely democratic and has at its heart the interests of the peoples of Europe, not multinational companies. Scotland should belong to a United Nations that is an effective force for peace, not merely an observer of wars, as it has become on too many occasions.

Scottish sovereignty is not something which Scotland can keep exclusively to itself. We need to pool our sovereignty with other nations where it is in our common interest to do so. However, the decision to pool that sovereignty must be a Scottish decision. We must decide how much of our sovereignty we are prepared to pool and decide with which other countries we wish to place that sovereignty and how much we shall keep to ourselves. The present Union is unacceptable because we are not allowed to make that decision. We are denied the opportunity to decide how much sovereignty we share with the other nations of the United Kingdom. That is why the Union is profoundly undemocratic and why it is ultimately doomed until it learns to transform itself into the decentralised, democratic and reformed Union to which I have referred and which the Labour party intends to implement after the next election. The debate is a matter of the utmost importance to the people who live in Scotland for those reasons and also because of the questions that it asks about the democratic credentials of the Westminster parliamentary system. It is not just a dry, constitutional matter.

An article appeared in the *New Statesman* 18 months to two years ago. It was about life on the battle front—the derelict housing schemes on the edge of Glasgow—and described the life of a man who was separated from his wife. It said:

"last night's meal was potatoes mashed with half an onion, and a tin of peas. In the fridge, there is a can of lager and some long-life milk . . . He can afford to heat only one room in the flat,

so the bedroom remains unused. He sleeps on the sofa under a foam duvet, his coat serving as a pillow. In any case, he sleeps very little . . . The TV plays all night; at five in the morning, he falls asleep in front of women's golf or motorcycle racing in Florida sunshine. He is too demoralised even to get undressed. There is no hot water: a splash of cold tap water in a bathroom where the breath hangs in a mushroom of vapour."

Far too many of our countrymen are forced to live in such conditions in this day and age. That is partly to do with global and economic issues which are beyond Scotland's control, but it is partly because Scotland does not have the democratic means of changing those conditions. We live in a country which is rich in resources and which has enough wealth to ensure that none of our citizens has to live in such conditions.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Will the hon. Gentleman be good enough to explain how that person managed to watch golf from Florida at 5 o'clock in the morning? Would not that mean that he had a satellite dish? He obviously had a television set. How many such things did one have in the average household of some years ago?

Mr. McAllion: That is not the point. The hon. Gentleman may have satellite television, but I have not and I can watch golf from Florida at 5 o'clock in the morning if I choose to do so. The general description of the person living in that derelict scheme should have caused the hon. Gentleman concern and he should have been worried that some of his fellow citizens are living in such conditions. Something should be done about it by the people who represent Scotland in the House.

Dr. Godman: Before my hon. Friend ends his fine speech, may I point out that in speaking as an honest apologist for the Union, the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kinoch) is part of a long tradition? At the time of the Union, when Daniel Defoe was acting as a secret agent for the English Government, he said that it was a marriage of convenience, not of the heart. Conservative Members are part of that tradition.

Mr. McAllion: That is a good point. The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside is certainly not a secret agent, but an open agent of the party which governs in Scotland. People do not have to live in the conditions that I have described in this modern age in a wealthy country such as ours. Part of the reason for those conditions is that we have lost the democratic means by which we can do something about them. Restoring the democratic means to the Scottish people is and should be the first priority of every Member who represents a Scottish constituency.

I refer hon. Members to the last few lines of the motion, which recognises that

"the future of Scottish democracy depends upon giving effect to the sovereign right of the Scottish people to decide for themselves how and by whom they are governed; and therefore calls for the holding of a multi-option referendum in which the people living in Scotland can decide democratically the form of government best suited to their needs."

Everyone in Scotland should unite behind that theme. If we are genuine democrats, we have nothing to fear from the democratic decision of the Scottish people. Those who run away from that decision are those who fear the judgment of the Scottish people at the ballot box.

4.39 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and I are in complete agreement about one matter—we do not support the prohibition of alcohol. Having said that, I must now say where and why I disagree with him on other issues. I have always made it clear to him that I do not doubt the integrity with which he holds his views, but I believe sincerely that were his views to be examined critically and positively by the Scottish people they would be rejected. I hope to be able to tell him why.

First, the hon. Gentleman talked about the Scots and, to use his words, the people who live in Scotland, from wherever they came. As he must know, with his name and background, his family came from one of the other islands off the coast of Europe. I speak as one whose family, as far as one can trace, has always lived in Scotland. In fact, I think that I am the first member of my family to have married a non-Scot—my wife is English, but that does not mean that her view of the well-being of Scotland is any less honest than that of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that I am also married to an English woman and she, like me, is a citizen of Scotland and entitled to participate fully in Scottish democracy.

Mr. Walker: I can say that she participates with credit and distinction.

If I understood the hon. Gentleman correctly, he was saying that the Scots—the people who live in Scotland—are not properly or adequately represented in this unitary Parliament. He was referring to the Scots who live north of the border. Less than 9 per cent. of the United Kingdom's population live in Scotland—no one can deny that; it is a statement of fact. Eighty-three per cent. of the people who live in these islands live in England. How do the Scots in Scotland regard their representation in this place?

The Scots form less than 9 per cent. of the population, but constitute more than 12 per cent. of the total number of Members of Parliament. In all modern Cabinets—certainly those in the post-war years—the Scots have always enjoyed about 20 per cent. or more of Cabinet posts. In the present Cabinet, the Lord Chancellor, who is in charge of English legal matters and law, is a Scot. I wonder what would happen if we were to have an Englishman appointed as Lord Advocate—I can just see the reaction in Scotland. However, we have a distinguished Scot, the Lord Chancellor, in the Cabinet. The Secretary of State for Transport is a native Scot, as are the Secretary of State for Defence and, of course, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland who is here today. In other words, four of the 22 members of the Cabinet are Scots and, until recently, there were five Scots. As for Labour, if by some misfortune we were to have a Labour Government after the next election, there is no question but that the Scots would hold more than 20 per cent. of the posts.

By my reckoning, we have more hon. Members representing Scotland than we should have on a percentage basis of the population and, despite constituting only 9 per cent. of the population, the Scots have more than 9 per cent. of non-Cabinet positions of all levels.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): The hon. Gentleman clearly received a pocket calculator as a Christmas present and has only just discovered how to use

[Mr. Mike Watson]

it. In view of his percentage calculations, would he like to comment on the fact that, at the previous election, his party received about 25 per cent. of the vote and took 16 per cent. of the seats but 100 per cent. of the power? What lesson can we learn from that?

Mr. Walker: I am sorry to hear my hon. Friend say that —he is my friend because he is my pair, when the arrangements are working. Clearly, he has not heard me arguing my case before. I have always argued—consistently, I hope—that Scotland and Scottish interests are well looked after in this place because we have always enjoyed more than our percentage share of posts and influence. It is not only in this place——

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East) *rose*——

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Walker: I am answering my hon. Friend—at least, I hope that he will one day be my friend again so that we can get away from this place from time to time.

I have always argued—consistently, I hope—that in the spheres of science, arts and education, among others, the Scots have always enjoyed more than 9 per cent. of the key positions within the United Kingdom establishments.

Mr. Salmond: I have followed the hon. Gentleman's argument, which is not always the case. He is saying that the individual success of individual Scots will do some national good. Did the fact that the Secretary of State for Defence is a Scot help Rosyth last year?

Mr. Walker: In the short term, the answer is yes. I do not wish to digress and talk about Rosyth, but I am happy to debate the details with the hon. Member at any time. I think that I know more about the case than he does, but in the short term the answer is yes.

I was developing my argument——

Mr. Connarty: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for accepting an intervention. Instead of talking about personalities and the few people who make a difference, will he instead talk about the subject of today's debate which is about the lack of democracy in Scotland, the fact that the positions of power in Scotland are given to adherents of the Government's politics and the fact that they are, as it were, chosen by the Secretary of State, not by the people of Scotland?

Mr. Walker: If the hon. Gentleman will wait, I hope to develop my argument and deal with that point later. I shall not duck the issue, unlike the hon. Member for Dundee, East who failed to answer my question about what the next Labour Government would do. I try to answer questions, which sometimes upsets people. I occasionally upset my friends, but I try to answer so that the following week I do not have to try to remember what I said. It is best to answer honestly and objectively.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): It is very good of the hon. Gentleman to give way. I wish to follow the question put by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). He asked whether the fact that the Secretary of State for Defence is a Scot was of advantage to Rosyth. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said yes. Does that mean that had the Secretary of State for Defence been an Englishman it would have been of benefit to Tynemouth or that had he been a Welshman it would have been of benefit to some establishment in Wales?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman constantly talks about his being reasonable and moderate and other lovely adjectives. Let me put it this way: has he ever been a member of a body, at whatever level, in which common interest did not assist in decision making? It is true in golf clubs; it is true in Cabinets; it is true everywhere else. I got into terrible trouble before for suggesting what a good thing it was to have more than one Scot in the Cabinet. I believe that it is a massive advantage to Scotland to have Members representing Scottish constituencies in the Cabinet in addition to the Secretary of State. That is true in defence and in other sectors.

I wish to develop that argument with regard to Scotland's interests. The hon. Gentleman said that the Labour party's objective was to create a Scottish parliament, a Welsh parliament, and regional parliaments in England. Is that correct?

Mr. McAllion: What happens in England is a matter for the people of England. I would not dare to tell them how to run their domestic affairs and I do not think that they should tell us in Scotland how to run our domestic affairs.

Mr. Walker: I asked the hon. Gentleman about the policy and the likely practice of the next Labour Government. I will now discuss that, because I believe that it has some importance and significance for the basis of his argument. As I understand it, it is the policy of the next Labour Government to give the Scots their parliament, and to get that measure through the House on the basis that England will have regional assemblies. That is, as I understand it, the logic of the Labour party's case. Let me discuss that, because it is important to consider the situation.

We would have a number of regional assemblies in England—I do not know how many, but let us assume that there are five. That is not an unrealistic assumption. With 83 per cent. of the population, there could be as many as eight, but let us assume that there are five or six. Let us assume that there are six regional assemblies in England, one in Scotland and one in Wales, giving a total of eight. The views of Scotland would constitute one eighth of the views to be listened to at the centre, because the centre would be under the federal structure that the hon. Gentleman spoke about. There would still be a federal structure in the United Kingdom, in London, in whatever form, and therefore Scotland would have a one eighth contribution instead of the approximately one fifth contribution—at its worst—that it enjoys now.

Currently, there is a Scottish Secretary of State and at least one other Scottish member of the Cabinet, and they take decisions that affect the whole of the United Kingdom. That would change if the Labour party's proposals were implemented. We would adopt a system in which Members of Parliament for Scottish constituencies would represent the same numbers of constituents as Members of Parliament with constituencies elsewhere in the United Kingdom, so that Scotland would lose its parliamentary representation and its power. Scotland would have less influence under the new system, because it would not be an equal.

I shall put it to the hon. Gentleman in simple language. I have listened to him argue his case and it has always seemed to me that he recognises that Scotland has less than 9 per cent. of the population, but he reckons that it has 50 per cent. of the equity in the United Kingdom. That, I think, is generally his view—that Scotland should have an equal say and an equal voice.

Mr. Gallie: I think that a point that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) raised with my hon. Friend should not go unchallenged. The hon. Member suggested to my hon. Friend that he was not interested in English affairs. However, if I recall correctly, he voted during the passage of the Criminal Justice Act 1993, which dealt with many English matters. He voted, I understand, during the passage of the Cardiff Bay Barrage (Hybrid) Act 1993, which was about Welsh affairs. If the hon. Member for Dundee, East is suggesting that he is not interested in other parts of the Union, it is not represented, to my mind, in his voting record.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend. Yes; it seems to me that Opposition Members are trying to have their cake and eat it. They are trying to claim that, because they will have that representation and their own parliament in Edinburgh, they will continue to have the same power and influence as they currently enjoy under the Westminster situation.

That case will be put to the Scottish people. I believe that, in whatever form it is put, they will reject the proposals. When we voted in Scotland on the question of the Scotland Act 1978, it was fairly clear that, when the matter came out into the public domain, the people of Scotland thought, "Hold on a minute; we do not want to pay for a talking shop simply because it will be there." One third of them rejected it; one third said, "Yes, we will support it"; but, critically, one third did not bother to vote. The people who did not vote "didnae care", and they "didnae care" because they had been told that if they absented themselves that would be the equivalent of a no vote. On the basis that that was how it was sold to the people during the referendum campaign, at least two thirds of the Scottish people either did not care or opposed the proposals. I reckon that one could add them together.

The hon. Gentleman speaks about the so-called "democratic deficit" and what it appears to have done, but he glibly proceeds to discuss "pooling sovereignty". It is wonderful the way in which we pull out of the sky lovely phrases to suit any circumstances. What is meant by "pooling sovereignty"? My views about the constitution are well known to everyone and I will not describe them today, but I took my stand because I have strong views about the so-called "pooling of sovereignty".

The hon. Gentleman glibly uses it as a throw-away line. It is not that simple, as the hon. Gentleman should know, because it impinges on all other activities; I agree with him about that. Wealth generation, job creation, the way in which we deal with dampness in housing and all such matters have much to do with our economic performance —and when I say, "our economic performance", I make no apologies for saying that I mean the United Kingdom's economic performance.

I believe, sincerely, that the Union has benefited the Scots and the English out of all proportion to the sum of the two parts coming together. It is much greater than that. That is why I think that when we speak about the "pooling of sovereignty", we must examine carefully what we are prepared to give or not to give.

The hon. Gentleman glibly skated around that. His hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), an Englishman—I do not hold that against him —spoke about a "marriage of convenience". He is obviously a student of history. If he is, he will know that many marriages of convenience have produced surprising results—very good results. If it was a marriage of convenience, using his description, he and others cannot deny that the ability to move anywhere in the United Kingdom seeking jobs, following one's career whether one is an artisan or a politician—in the hon. Gentleman's case, a politician—has been of enormous benefit to the people of the Clyde, because they have him as their hon. Member and, obviously, that has been a great benefit to him and to them. At least, being generous to him, I assume that it is. Therefore, he must accept that the Union, however it came about, has been of considerable benefit to him and to his constituents.

The economy is often critical to discussion of this subject. Has Scotland benefited from the Union? First, I will discuss Scotch whisky, about which I know that I will not get any argument from the hon. Member for Dundee, East. Has the Scotch whisky industry benefited from the Union? Yes, it has, because the Union created a substantial marketplace, a home market from which it was possible to expand into a world market that is the envy of many other industries. It is to the benefit of the Scotch whisky industry. The hon. Member for Dundee, East has argued that point many times.

We want a good home base so that the export markets can be maximised. The home base for which we have always asked is the United Kingdom home base. When we argue on behalf of the home base, we are not talking about the consumption of Scotch whisky in Scotland alone. The hon. Gentleman and I agree that the Union has been beneficial for the home base of the Scotch whisky industry.

How about the economy generally? Between 1979 and 1991, the Scottish economy grew on average by 1·7 per cent.

Mr. Watson: Did the hon. Gentleman get a calculator for Christmas?

Mr. Walker: I have a calculator, but I did not get it this Christmas.

By comparison—this is an important point—the economy grew on average by less than 1 per cent. between 1974 and 1979. I do not pick those years by accident; they are the years of a Labour Administration. It is possible that under the enlightened Labour Administration to which the hon. Member for Dundee, East looks forward, the Scottish economy could fare worse. It is a possibility, because that is what happened before; I do not put it any higher than that. What about living standards in Scotland? Gross domestic product per head increased by 30 per cent. between 1981 and 1991. That was brought about through the Union.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East and his hon. Friends talk about the "political deficit". What they are really talking about is the fact that the Labour party cannot get its hands on the levers of power. They are not talking about democracy. I do not doubt the integrity of the hon. Member for Dundee, East, as he knows. I was, therefore, astonished

[Mr. Walker]

that his right hon. and hon. Friends had managed to buy him off. How have they done it? What quango post have they given him? What have they promised him? What job has he been given? How has he been bought? Immediately following the general election, the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends——

Mr. McAllion: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I was not bought off with the price of Kevin Kelly's resignation.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has obviously been shut up somehow and told to line up with the rest of the troops, so he has stopped rocking the boat so violently. His approach to the problems of the Scottish democratic deficit is the Scotland United approach, which he does not deny. That is not the approach of Labour Front-Bench Members. We have at least managed to ascertain that their views are different from the hon. Gentleman's. When the hon. Gentleman says that he is speaking on behalf of the Opposition—excluding the narrow nationalists and the Liberal Democrat nationalists—he is actually speaking on behalf of his friends in Scotland United. Labour Front-Bench Members have a different view.

That fact does not surprise me. Labour Front-Bench Members think, "Gosh, we shall have a lot of Scots in the next Cabinet." They do not want to rock the boat because people in England may say, "Hold on! There are too many Scots in key positions." That is the backlash that one gets if one attempts to push too hard the business of "We poor Scots are downtrodden and we do not get things our way." Some 83 per cent. of the population of these islands live in England. A backlash would not, therefore, be in the best interests of the hon. Member for Dundee, East, of the House or of the Scottish people.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East talks about dire threats caused by the views taken by people such as myself. I am well aware of the risks and hazards of the road ahead; that is why I have spent so much of my life in politics and in Parliament trying to address that. I have put forward ideas which, as is the case with the hon. Gentleman, have not always been well received by Front-Bench colleagues. However, one has to look carefully at the risks of the route that one proposes. I have never accepted that the Union is cast in concrete or that it cannot be modified. That is why I have suggested changes.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East referred to appointments to non-elected bodies. I have been asked to address that point and I do not want somebody to say, "You have not addressed that point, Mr. Walker." We must be careful about excluding anyone from statutory bodies. My personal view is that there should be fewer statutory bodies, but I believe that as long as the bodies exist, we must be careful not to say, "You cannot be a member of a statutory body because you are a trade unionist" or, "You cannot be a member of a statutory body because you are a business man."

There have been two resignations from Scottish Enterprise Tayside. The chairman-designate properly took the view that there was a conflict of interests. It was not a conflict of interests that would have damaged the interests of the people of Tayside, but the chairman-designate honestly believed that, as chairman of a company, he could not be seen to be promoting the interests of other companies. He was probably right. However, if we are to get the best people for the jobs—that is all that we should look for—we should not exclude someone because his trade union interests will inevitably conflict with others.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raises the point at this stage. Everyone on Tayside was sickened to hear that James Miller had decided not to accept the chairmanship of Scottish Enterprise Tayside. He was eminently suited to taking on that task. Our objection was on the basis that he was appointed without any consultation. He was appointed by Scottish Enterprise Tayside, which is directly answerable to Scottish Enterprise, which is, in turn, directly answerable to the Secretary of State. That is a rather convoluted formula.

When the Secretary of State for Employment announced the formation of the training and enterprise councils and the local enterprise companies, I, as a member of the Select Committee on Employment, pointed out the problem to him, as the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) will recall. We raised the conundrum with the Secretary of State. There must be a conflict of interests when the head of one company takes decisions about promoting other companies, which will affect his company. That is bound to happen.

Mr. Walker: Any director of a company who accepts an appointment to a quango must understand that there is a real possibility that he will face a conflict of interests. I accept that, and I equally accept that a trade unionist would be put in the same position. That is not a reason for condemning such individuals and it is not a reason for excluding them.

Like the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), I was bitterly disappointed by the resignation of the chairman-designate because I thought that he was eminently suited to the position. He was the ideal chap to follow Bill Low, a constituent of mine who did a good job.

That shows that those of us who are involved in political life should be careful when we comment on who should be a member of a quango. Quangos should be open to the best people, whoever they are and wherever they come from. The system for appointments must ensure that interests are declared. We have largely achieved that—we have certainly done so in the House, where the Register of Members' Interests is available for public inspection.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dundee, East raised that subject in the debate. Although it is an important subject, this is neither the right context nor the right debate in which to raise such a matter.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The other resignation has more alarming consequences for democracy in Scotland and needs to be dealt with by the Secretary of State for Scotland. The person who resigned was, in effect, a civil servant with business interests. That conflict led to his resignation. The Secretary of State needs to take account of that. Could hon. Members imagine the chief executive of Tayside region or of Dundee district council being allowed to be a business person? A conflict of interest would arise immediately. That needs to be dealt with. Will the hon. Member comment on that?

Mr. Walker: I have already publicly commented on the matter and I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not aware of that.

People who are paid substantial salaries to be involved in the distribution of public assets should not allow themselves to get into a position where a conflict of interest could arise and affect their judgment. Hon. Members, councillors or anyone else in public office face such a problem in their public lives. Chief executives of regions, district councils or enterprise companies should not allow themselves to be put into a position where they could be considered to have a conflict of interest, which would raise doubts about their integrity. The integrity of those in charge of such organisations should never be in doubt.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East spoke of people being appointed to quangos. A quango will operate effectively only if it has the right mix of talents, which, I have always believed, requires trade union input. Under our democratic process, one must be prepared to accept that there should always be an avenue of expression for another view, even if one does not agree with it.

That is why I believe that it is good that the hon. Member for Dundee, East speaks on such matters in the House; it gives him the opportunity to express his concerns and doubts. If nothing else, he will persuade the Unionists sitting behind and in front of him that he is wrong and that people such as myself are perhaps more right than he is.

Several hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. One hour and 48 minutes are available for debate and no fewer than 10 hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. I hope that hon. Members will bear that in mind.

5.13 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I shall be brief.

May I join those who, earlier in the debate, sought to establish their credentials? I seem to be the first Member to speak tonight who is married to a Scot. It will interest you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to learn that I am the only Yorkshire-born Scots Member in the House, and I hope to be here for a long time. My wife could regard me as a foreigner, of course, but she also sees me as a fellow Scot.

I am grateful for, and readily acknowledge, the honest statements of the hon. Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) that the Union is subject to change. They would not deny that it is legitimate to examine and criticise the governance of a country and to suggest, by way of prescriptions, a better way of governing it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) made an excellent speech, although I have one or two reservations about it. I understand why he is critical of multinational companies and of their role in the Scottish economy, but I am sure that he will agree that some of them are a damn sight better than indigenous employers. A local employer in my constituency is to become chairman of the Inverclyde Royal hospital trust, but the wages he pays his employees are among the lowest in the region.

I am pleased to say that IBM is in my constituency—my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) sometimes thinks that it is in his constituency. It is the biggest private employer, and gives good terms and conditions of employment.

BMW's takeover of Rover was announced last week. I wish that BMW were locating in my constituency, because I know from my knowledge of German industrial relations that it would have to introduce a Scottish mitbestimmung. Workers at BMW plants in Scotland would be given formal, effective trade union representation. Moreover, employment directives passed in Brussels would be implemented in Greenock or wherever a company such as BMW decided to locate. There are advantages to multinationals, and I should love more to locate in my constituency.

It is right to question the way in which Scotland is governed. I am a federalist, and I want to see a federalist European Union with its foreign and security policies. I want Scotland to be a federal nation in a federal system. It is wrong that Scotland is part of a multinational state that is overwhelmingly determined and shaped by London—by metropolitan thinking and decision-making.

Soon, members of the Scottish Prison Officers Association, who do a first-class job, often in difficult circumstances, will have their right to industrial action removed. Prisons will be privatised under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which is now in Committee. There are only two Scottish Members on that Committee, despite the fact that 40 per cent. of its content relates partially or exclusively to Scotland.

Tomorrow morning, the Committee will debate a legal concept that is new to Scotland—trespassory assembly. With his legal training, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will know more about it than me. He may smile, but I have already received representations from anglers, hill walkers and even Monro baggers, not that I am one myself, about clauses 44 to 55 of that largely English Bill. They have made those representations because the clauses are aimed at sorting out hunt saboteurs, new age travellers and those who organise raves. I have already asked the Minister at what point a rave becomes a ceilidh.

By and large, we do not face such problems in Scotland. I was talking to an old friend of mine, Jimmy Harvie, an 84-year-old ex-Glasgow bricklayer. He and his late lovely wife, Pearl, walked Scotland's hills for more than 60 years. People like Jimmy Harvie and other walkers, ramblers and fishermen are to be excluded from their favourite haunts. That is utterly scandalous, and those clauses should not refer to Scottish pastimes at all. The average hill walker in Scotland is extremely fastidious—one does not find much litter on Schiehallion, Lochnagar, Ben Ledi or Ben Vorlich. People are careful on the hills in terms of protecting the environment.

As for fishermen, there should be public access to all our rivers. The rich perhaps should be dumped in the rivers —where the rivers are shallow, of course. There should not be the shackling by the new lairds who come in and buy up estates. Those people seem to have a curious idea of the existing law of trespass.

Mr. Gallie: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there are many small fishing clubs in Scotland with a membership who certainly are not rich? The members of those clubs stock the rivers and ensure that people can enjoy fishing. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that their rights on the river should not be acknowledged?

Dr. Godman: That is an important point. I am a member of two such clubs—the Port Glasgow club and the Newark angling club. Both clubs have many unemployed and retired members, and they are deeply concerned about the Government's plans for the management of Scotland's waterways. It is a complicated problem.

[Dr. Godman]

The Scottish element of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill should have formed an exclusive Scottish Bill, so that we could scrutinise and seek to amend it. It should not have been lumped in with an English Bill which is aimed at problems south of the border. That is an absurdity.

We have spent hours and hours talking about the abolition of the right to silence, but the right to silence is not affected in Scotland. That is an English matter. The right to silence remains in the police stations and the courts in Scotland, and that is how it should be. Scottish issues should not be lumped in with English issues on Standing Committees. It is disgraceful.

That is one reason why I will always argue for a Scottish Parliament. Those matters could be argued among Members who would be elected by a different electoral system. The one we have is a "rotten borough" kind of system.

Does the Minister agree that one element of a parliamentary democracy is the ease of access given to representatives of local communities for meetings with Ministers? If he does, when will he respond to invitations given to him by way of the editor of the *Greenock Telegraph* and representatives from the east end of Greenock to visit that area? Despite the valiant efforts of Inverclyde district council, the east end still suffers severe blight in terms of rotten, lousy, damp and cold houses which are lived in by people who simply do not have the financial means to escape that kind of housing imprisonment. Will the Minister come to the east end of Greenock to see that for himself?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will accept the hon. Gentleman's invitation to visit Greenock, as I have done with all invitations from Opposition Members.

Dr. Godman: I am extremely grateful to the Minister. I was too modest to mention it, but I sent my own invitation a couple of weeks ago. I am delighted that the Minister has accepted with his characteristic generosity.

The critics of radical change on the Government Benches seem to accept some form of stilted evolutionary change to the Union. Judging by what constituents of all ages say to me when I do my walkabouts—that is a horrible word—they are deeply disenchanted and discontented with the present system for the governance of Scotland. The overwhelming majority of people in Scotland would welcome the setting up of a multi-option referendum. We could then determine whether it is those who share my view who are closer to the hearts and minds of the people in Scotland, or the honest apologists for the Union on the Government Benches.

I have mentioned Defoe, that English secret agent from all those years ago. He talked about the Union as a marriage of convenience which would best suit English interests and, by and large, that still holds today. However, it will change. We are extremely fortunate that the secessionist movement in Scotland is so honourably peaceable. The change will come, and the best way to help bring it about is to set up a multi-option referendum.

5.25 pm

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): The motion before the House is wide, and I found it difficult to decide what aspect to address.

We have heard the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) talking about a multinational company within his constituency and the amount it contributes, presumably to the economy of his constituency. Yet the motion talks about

"the undemocratic influence and power of transnational and multinational companies in the economic life of Scotland".

I have to tell the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) that I am happy that a significant amount is given by multinational and transnational oil companies to my area and to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson). Without them, the economy of our area would be that much poorer. I find it strange that the hon. Member for Dundee, East uses those terms, as I know that his area also contains a significant number of multinational companies.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman may recall that the Timex multinational company had a long association with Dundee. However, it ripped off its Dundee workers and walked away to make its profits elsewhere in the world. I warn the hon. Gentleman that multinational companies could do that in his constituency.

Mr. Kynoch: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman introduced Timex into the debate, as I was just about to refer to that company. I had hoped that the kind of industrial relations which were prevalent at Timex were behind us. I am not saying that it was the fault of one side or the other, because the faults clearly lay with employers and employees.

I can remember what industrial relations were like before the Government came to power in 1979, and I clearly remember the coal strike of the late 1970s. Pickets were standing at our factory gates when we had no grievance with any of our suppliers, but they prevented coal from being delivered to our company, and therefore affected the output and the economy of the area.

Thankfully, the Conservative Government came to power with a clear remit to reform union relations and to ensure that greater flexibility and accountability were given to employees, so that they could work in peace and harmony with their employers.

I am sorry to say that that did not work at Timex. The so-called picket line, which I understood was legally meant to consist of no more than five or six people, was supplemented by a demonstration of several hundred people. That was taking full advantage of the law, and it made a mockery of the law. I hope that, as time goes on, that can be clarified and tightened. Multinational and transnational companies can contribute a significant amount to the economy of Scotland, and I will return to that subject.

I would like to talk about some of the quangos which have been referred to in the motion. There is a direct reference to NHS trusts, and to

"the Scottish Enterprise network of companies".

I worked closely with the Scottish Development Agency when I was in the textile trade, and I continued to do so when it became Scottish Enterprise and set up local enterprise companies. I subsequently became one of the founder directors of Moray, Badennoch and Strathspey local enterprise company. We welcomed a trade union representative on the board of that company, as well as representatives from local government and businesses throughout the area.

That board reflected the geographical spread of local companies. That great strength had been lacking under the previous SDA set-up, because, in the north-east corner of Scotland, it was felt that the SDA was a Glasgow-based organisation. Although it had a regional office in Aberdeen, it was geared towards oil, and it was felt that the indigenous industries were a second thought to the SDA. By devolving the functions of the SDA and incorporating the training agency, the local enterprise companies democratised a system that did a lot of good for Scotland at the time.

I pay tribute to the significant benefits given to local people by Grampian Enterprise and the subcontractor in my area, the Kincardine and Deeside enterprise trust. The people who sit on the board of Grampian Enterprise give of their best and of their experience to ensure the balanced delivery of services in Grampian. It is insulting for those people that they are dismissed as Government placemen by the hon. Member for Dundee, East, because I know that they give of their time willingly, and without any recompense, to the benefit of the region.

I sat on the board of a local enterprise company, and I know what happened when a conflict of interest arose. The directors simply declared their interest, and either left the room or stayed to answer the relevant questions of other board members, without participating in the debate. That is the normal practice when any conflict of interest arises.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East has also described national health trusts as another Government quango. In the run-up to the award of trust status to the Aberdeen Royal hospitals NHS trust, I was politically unique in the north-east, because I supported the bid. I know that Opposition Members, of whichever party, were against it, and I suspect that certain of my colleagues had great reservations.

That trust, however, has provided greater flexibility and greater accountability in the delivery of health care in the area. It has meant that the delivery of health care has been brought closer and is more appropriate to the people. It offers more flexibility than was available in directly managed units.

According to the hon. Member for Dundee, East, that so-called quango is destroying democracy in Scotland, but it is worth considering what it has achieved in its first year of operation, 1992-93. According to the trust's annual report:

"A record number of patients were treated in 1992-93
over 2,500 more in-patients were treated
over 8,900 more out-patients attendances
over 1,900 more day cases
over 800 more operations.
The Trust has waiting time guarantees for in-patients of 12 months, and less for specific procedures."

Those figures prove that trust status has been successful. It has been welcomed by local people.

Mr. Gallie: My hon. Friend will be interested to know that South Ayrshire Trust, which is adjacent to my constituency, can boast of similar rates of success. The chairman of that trust, who has done a remarkable job, was certainly not seen as a friend of the Conservative party in the past. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a perfect response to the challenge from Opposition Members who constantly carp about Conservative appointees?

Mr. Kynoch: I welcome that intervention from my hon. Friend. I am well aware that trust members are appointed because of the experience that they bring to their local areas. Those representatives may be trade unionists, employers, employees, male, female and members of whatever political party, as long as they can contribute to the well-being of the trust. I believe that is absolutely right.

It is important to remember that half of any NHS trust board is made up of medically qualified people. Non-executive members from outside the medical profession do not make up the majority on any trust board.

When the Aberdeen Royal Hospitals NHS Trust was established, it was argued that it would be opposed from within and that there would be appalling employee-employer relations. It was argued that it would lead to the downfall of the NHS in the north-east, but the exact opposite has occurred. In the first year of its operation, the trust has improved employee-employer relations through an effective staff board, which discusses staffing issues. I can quote a specific example of such an improvement from the trust's annual report, which says of junior doctors' hours of work:

"Staff at all levels—medical, nursing and para-medical—have helped in the substantial efforts made to reduce Junior Doctors' hours."

That objective of the Conservative party has been brought about by the trust through partnership rather than conflict.

The trust should not be knocked by the Opposition as a quango, because it has already made significant developments in the delivery of clinical care. Bone marrow transplantations are now available in Aberdeen and that specialist form of medicine has been greatly welcomed. The trust has also taken delivery of a new magnetic resonance imaging scanner, which is better known as an MRI scanner. The trust also offers a local lithotripsy service, provided by a mobile unit, to get rid of kidney stones.

All those benefits have been brought about by a so-called quango, which has also increased the number of cardiac operations, which is pertinent to the Scottish population because of the incidence of heart disease. I do not believe that we should knock trust status; we should welcome it because of the benefits that it has brought to the health service.

I suspect that the hon. Member for Dundee, East also believes that that quango is more remote from the people than the old system of health care, but he should take note of what the trust's annual report has said about bringing health services closer to patients. It stated:

"Over the year we cared for 82,245 in-patients and 388,001 out-patients. All users of our services are encouraged to tell us what they think of our services—whether good or bad"

Those people were encouraged to comment on the delivery of services and the trust received just 440 formal complaints. That means that fewer than one in 1,000 patients made a complaint. Something must be going right with that quango. I believe that those benefits demonstrate the advantages of flexibility within the NHS and of involving local people in the running of the health service.

The motion tabled by the hon. Member for Dundee, East also refers to local government reform. We are currently considering the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill in Committee. I am amused when I hear Opposition Members claim that that reform will diminish the power of local democracy in Scotland. In recent weeks I have read a number of newspaper articles about the Labour-controlled council of Monklands. It is alleged that the council operates in a fashion that is far from democratic. Apparently, at the end of last week, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)

[Mr. Kynoch]

at long last entered the debate and is now asking my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to investigate some of the allegations. I think that that is right and that we should try to achieve the democratic delivery of local services.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Is the hon. Gentleman also asking the Secretary of State to institute an inquiry, or is he simply leaving it to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)? Does he associate the name of the Secretary of State for National Heritage, the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), with Westminster council in the same way as he so glibly associates my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East with Monklands council?

Mr. Kynoch: I shall not be drawn down that path because we are discussing the future of democracy in Scotland. Unless we intend to take over the future of Westminster, we must contain our comments to Scotland. The hon. Gentleman's intervention, however, makes my point clear.

In my part of Scotland, the population desperately wants single-tier authorities as soon as possible. Although there are queries about some of the proposed boundaries, such fine detail will soon be debated fully in Committee. People want to rationalise and reduce the overheads of local government and bring local democracy closer to the people.

As I said on Second Reading of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, it is interesting to note that all the Opposition parties advocate single-tier authorities. But the big difference is that they also want a Scottish parliament, which would be an extra and more costly tier. According to 1994-95 figures, Government-supported spending per capita in Scotland is some 34 per cent. higher than in England. Perhaps I should say that quietly as the Secretary of State's Parliamentary Private Secretary has an English constituency and might be upset to learn that. Scotland gets 26 per cent. more than Wales. I must therefore assume that, if we had a Scottish parliament as the Opposition advocate, such spending would not be allowed to continue and Scotland would have to make up the shortfall.

I hope that the Scottish electorate is aware of the Opposition parties' proposals on local government reform and a Scottish parliament. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) referred to the number of Opposition Members with aspirations for a Cabinet position, who would then have to decide whether to sit in a Scottish Cabinet or a Cabinet in London. That might cause some interesting problems for the Opposition.

The motion does not make its point. I feel proud and positive about many aspects of government, trusts, Scottish Enterprise and LECs, which have made a positive contribution towards Scotland's economy.

5.43 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on initiating the debate. Unfortunately, it is difficult to have a balanced debate if the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) takes advantage of the limited time available to us. He spoke for 34 minutes and then disappeared. That is unreasonable behaviour. I hope to speak for less than 10 minutes.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East began by saying that people "must have their say and their way". He pointed out that the Scottish people had voted three to one in favour of some form of Scottish self-government. He did not, however, feel it necessary to mention that it was wrong for Labour to have 68 per cent. of Scottish seats in exchange for 39 per cent. of the vote. We do not have a fair voting system so that people can have their say and their way.

Mr. McAllion: I am happy to associate myself with the hon. Gentleman's remarks. As vice-chairman of the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform, I am a long-term supporter of proportional representation both for a Scottish parliament and at the level of the United Kingdom.

Sir Russell Johnston: I welcome what the hon. Gentleman said, which has the added bonus of shortening my speech. I no longer need to make a long statement about the value of proportional representation, as he accepts it. That also affects patronage and other matters, which I need not go through.

Without federalism within the United Kingdom, subsidiarity in the European Community is a sham. The Government see it not as decentralisation or enabling more citizens directly to influence decisions that affect them, but as a way of defending Whitehall. The Government will oppose progressive social and environmental change agreed consensually in Brussels and Strasbourg, such as is contained in the motion that will be debated later today. But, on the basis of a quarter of the vote, they will impose on Scotland educational change, changes in the health service, changes in the ownership of public utilities, and changes in local government which the majority do not want. That makes no sense whatever.

I was astonished that the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) leapt to the defence of quangos, saying that they were marvellous, closer in touch with the people, enormously politically balanced, fair and great. He justified that by saying that the Aberdeen Royal hospital's NHS trust had done more cardiac operations. I have no doubt that people under communist regimes said that, and that Franco built a lot of hospitals. If that is the hon. Gentleman's criterion of whether democracy is desirable, he does not understand the issue.

Mr. Kynoch: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that I said that half the members of the trust board were medical staff? Under the previous system of directly managed units, the medical staff had no say in the running of their hospital. They can now have an input and allow local flexibility in the delivery of services to achieve the positive results to which I referred.

Sir Russell Johnston: If the hon. Gentleman is saying that the new quangos are better than the old quangos, that is one argument. I simply do not like quangos, so my argument is different.

On local government reform, older Members may remember that, from 1966-69, I served on the Wheatley commission, appointed by the late—it would be fair to say great—Willie Ross, later Lord Ross of Marnock. It was a balanced commission, on which the late Betty Harvie Anderson, who was certainly no socialist, also sat.

Ultimately, it produced a consensual agreement on the way forward. The essense of what was said then was that we wanted stronger, more effective local government, which was less in thrall to central Government. If it could not stand up to central Government, it was no longer local. There is no justification for changes which no one has sought. They have been determined within a party which represents only a quarter of the Scottish electorate, and are clearly designed to strengthen central Government and weaken local government. That is the result of more authorities, in my view. My view is not entirely in line with my party's view, but as one gets older one is allowed more freedom in these matters.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Hear, hear.

Sir Russell Johnston: I never used to get cheers from the hon. Gentleman—it is very encouraging.

I must tell the hon. Member for Dundee, East, much of whose speech I agreed with, that the hope of achieving Scottish home rule has persisted for a long time. It goes back to Gladstone and to the Bill that Asquith brought as far as Second Reading in 1914. The Bill fell. After the second world war, the idea was partly responsible for the growth of the Liberal party and of the Scottish National party in Scotland.

The Labour party was converted—or rather, reconverted, since Keir Hardie believed in it—to home rule in time. We can therefore assert in all fairness that there is an established and stable demand for self-government in Scotland. That more than justifies the call for a multi-option referendum to establish openly and officially the attitudes of the Scottish people. I hope that the Scottish political parties will then be able to base an agreed solution on the result.

5.50 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): This has been an important debate, and it is a debate which will continue. It is also a timely debate. I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) not only on winning the debate but on advancing, with his characteristic passion, the need for a Scottish parliament. He will have only a few years to wait until we have a Labour Government setting up a Scottish parliament in Edinburgh to tackle some of the real problems that the present Government have ignored because of their obsession with centralisation, contracting out and a market philosophy.

Quangos are at the top of the Scottish political agenda nowadays, and they clearly embarrass the Government. The issue disconcerts the business community because the public interest is now playing second fiddle to private and vested interests. Over the past few weeks and months, fraud, corruption and the woeful misuse of public funds seem to have been high on the agenda of a certain minority.

The Secretary of State for Scotland seems unconcerned, sitting idly by while these activities unfold. He seems either unwilling or unable to intervene. A new era is unfolding in Scotland in which the promotion of the culture of closet croneyism is well to the fore. Nearly 5,000 people behind closed doors spend almost £7 billion of public money, with only tenuous lines of accountability to the Scottish Office, Parliament, the press or the public.

It is important to use this opportunity to offer our response to a speech that the Secretary of State made in Scotland today, ostensibly to set the record straight on quangos. The speech offered him a chance to come clean and to accept the widespread criticism of quangos. Tragically, that did not happen. The Secretary of State deliberately attempted to distort the debate on quangos by asserting that the number of executive public bodies had declined from 84 in 1980 to less than half that number now.

The real issue, of course, is why there are 167 quangos in Scotland. Was the right hon. Gentleman being disingenuous? Was he trying to distort the debate? Those 167 organisations operate outwith the usual realms of public scrutiny. It is not only their numbers that cause concern, but the fact that their powers have been rapidly extended. They spend an extraordinary amount of the Scottish public expenditure budget. We should also remember that in 1992 the Scottish Office had more executive bodies than did any other Department in the United Kingdom.

As quoted in the *Evening Times*, the Secretary of State attacked his critics as follows:

"What nonsense! The number of public bodies has actually fallen over the past decade, as the Government made services work better and with more thought for the taxpayer's wallet."

That clearly shows that the right hon. Gentleman does not understand what a quango is. Either that, or he has attempted to mislead the Scots in a major speech today. Meanwhile, I challenge the Minister to explain whether the Secretary of State is right and I am wrong about the increasing number of quangos.

In the same article the Secretary of State is quoted as saying:

"Many Health Boards and hospital trusts have meetings open to the public and I would like to see the rest follow their lead."

What an extraordinary statement. We argue for open government, while the Secretary of State says that he would like more public meetings held by these bodies. Why does the Secretary of State not open up all these quangos to scrutiny by press and public?

It is clear that the Secretary of State is complacent about quangos. He has whitewashed the deplorable record of some of them in the past few months, and he is trying to shift the blame away from his appointments and to lay it on the Opposition parties in Scotland, which are demanding firm action to clean up the quangos before we hear more stories of sleaze and corruption in Scottish public life.

The Secretary of State has also been back-pedalling on reforms that he promised in this House—minimal reforms to improve the handling of Scottish business. If we can believe the article in *The Scotsman* of 5 February, that much becomes apparent. We agreed that the reforms should come before the House, so what is the right hon. Gentleman doing about that? It appears that he is running scared. After the fiasco of the Peterken affair in Glasgow, surely he does not want Lord Fraser to come and answer questions in the Committee. Why are the Government back-pedalling on such an important issue?

Last week, the right hon. Gentleman withdrew from the Scottish local government Committee. Is his commitment to this form of democracy in Scotland waning? Has he no stomach for a fight?

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman has been unfair, suggesting that the Secretary of State is backing away from a fight and is not meeting his obligations. My right hon. Friend promised Scotland single-tier local government and

[Mr. Gallie]

he is going to give it that. His absence from the Committee has to do with parliamentary procedures and a lack of co-operation on the part of Opposition Members.

Mr. McLeish: It is typical of the humbug of Conservative Members that they want the Secretary of State to proceed with the only thing that Scotland does not want—the reorganisation of local government. What about corruption in quangos? What about the right hon. Gentleman's back-pedalling on fundamental reforms to improve the government of Scotland at Westminster? If this is such a flagship policy, why does the Secretary of State run away from appearing in the Committee and dealing with his own business? It is pathetic. He seems to be getting bored with his brief and to want to give up his involvement in much of Scottish affairs.

Quite apart from trying to defend the indefensible—quangos—the right hon. Gentleman should apologise for introducing the most centralised state in the western world to Scotland. Other countries in Europe and in eastern Europe are trying to reform their democracies and to decentralise. Our Government are secretive and are massively centralising every power that belongs to local authorities.

Finally, the Secretary of State is also gerrymandering. This Secretary of State makes Westminster and Wandsworth look like a tea party. The biggest and most expensive vote-rigging exercise in Scottish history is being enacted in Committee. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities suggests that it could cost up to £700 million for a set of organisations that no one wants but which the Scots will have to pay for. If that is not expensive vote rigging, I do not know what is.

This evening, we have mentioned taking stock, the Government reneging on their commitment, quangos and the Secretary of State not having the guts to face up to some of the endemic corruption within those organisations. We have also mentioned the cost of vote rigging in the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill. The real tragedy, however, is that when—and if—the measure is passed nearly 100 extra statutory committees and quangos will be created.

The Secretary of State said in Scotland today that he is hunting down quangos to slay them. What nonsense. Who is he trying to deceive? Any Conservative Member who has read the Bill will realise that from the three super water quangos downwards it is not about single-tier but about multi-tier authorities and about centralisation, quangos and statutory committees before we get to gerrymandered authorities which cannot provide services.

Why is the Secretary of State so afraid of democracy and its institutions? Is it because the ballot box in Scotland has not delivered for the Tories? Is it because they are obsessed with the free market ideology, which requires the destruction of accountable institutions and public organisations? Or is the Secretary of State merely wedded to centralisation and elective dictatorship? Is it not simply that the Government have been in office far too long and are complacent and contemptuous of public opinion to the extent that any idea of listening or responding has been thrown out of the window?

We need to rebuild Scotland's democracy and to recreate the conditions in which our democratic institutions can fight back. We need to reassert our commitment to rein back the rapidly expanding frontiers of the unelected state and instead renew our commitment to elected government and all the institutions associated with that.

Scotland does not want falling standards in public life, or waste, or the sleaze that is undermining public confidence. It wants a Government who are committed to scrutinising effectively nearly £7 billion of public expenditure.

The Under-Secretary of State should set up a public inquiry to study the functions of quangos in Scotland. He should also set up an independent review of the corruption that daily unfolds in our newspapers and on television. He should stop the asset stripping of local democracy that will result from the nonsense that we are calling the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill. He should dedicate himself to renewing democratic principles and he should stop lambasting local councillors while his Secretary of State unashamedly praises people who are not worthy of that praise.

6.2 pm

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Until last week, I never realised that, in his armoury, the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) possessed the ability to predict the future. When he chose the debate he could not have known how timely it would be. Last week we witnessed the constitutional capers of the Scottish National party—showing the usual maturity of a primary seven mock election—and later in the week the constitutional contradictions and contortions of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and the right hon. and learned member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

At the beginning of last week, the hon. Member for Hamilton attempted to polish up his Unionist credentials and then put them on display for all to see as he set about defending the rights of English Members of Parliament to serve on Scottish Standing Committees. He did so seemingly oblivious of the fact that that was in direct contradiction to his leader, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East who, during the debate on the Loyal Address, said:

> "An overwhelming majority of the hon. Members who represent Scottish and Welsh constituencies are against the Bills that will only be carried by the votes of English Conservatives who do not represent the people in the countries concerned."—[*Official Report*, 18 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 24.]

Last Thursday, the hon. Member for Hamilton was in turn contradicted by his leader who said that it was "wrong" for constitutional parallels to be drawn between Scotland and Northern Ireland, ignoring the fact that his shadow Secretary of State had written to the Prime Minister only weeks before arguing exactly the opposite.

It is unfortunate that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) did not tell us whether it was the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East or the hon. Member for Hamilton—who had said completely contradictory things—who won that battle. I should gladly give way to the hon. Member for Fife, Central if he wished to tell us who won the battle, but I see that he does not want to intervene. The issues raise many questions but none more fundamental than who is deciding Labour's constitutional policy.

Today's debate is very welcome to Conservative Members. All the Opposition parties have refused to learn the lessons of the April 1992 general election. Let me remind them that at that election only the Scottish

Conservatives were able to increase their votes and their representation in the House. The nationalists never received their mandate for independence and lost two seats.

While preparing for today's debate I happened to chance on the leaflet issued by the SNP at that election, which was called, "Six Steps to Independence". It is worth while mentioning the first steps, if only to inject some humour into our proceedings. According to the SNP:

"Step One: You vote for the only party honestly offering to bring real power back to Scotland.

Step Two: We win the majority of Scottish seats at the election. That gives us the mandate to negotiate Independence."

How the nationalists' slogan of "Scotland free by '93" must haunt them. I see that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) at least has the good grace to cringe when that is mentioned.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Robertson: The Labour party did not fare any better as its neo-separatist bandwagon was derailed and in classic marginal seats, such as mine, the electorate swung behind the Unionist cause and rejected Labour's plans to play fast and loose with the constitution.

The Liberals were also marginalised as a force—albeit a small one—in Scottish politics. They lost one seat and came close to losing four others. However, some Liberals have learnt their lesson. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was widely quoted last year when he mentioned the dangers to his party in Scotland that would be unleashed by a close association with the Labour party in the constitutional convention.

The Opposition parties have all failed in their own way to learn the lesson of April 1992.

Mrs. Ewing: What about the Conservatives?

Mr. Robertson: When we went into that election we Conservatives were not embarrassed by our Unionist credentials. We did not keep them quiet in case anyone noticed that we were fundamentally and unequivocally different from every other political party contesting the election in Scotland. The courageous decision by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Scotland to put the question of Scotland's place in the United Kingdom at the centre of our appeal was crucial and proved decisive. Only we stood, and still stand, full square behind the Union. At that election, only the Conservatives offered Scotland the chance to continue to be a full and equal partner in the United Kingdom and the Scottish people duly responded to that message.

Two years later the Opposition parties cannot resist refighting battles that they have long since lost. Bluntly, they are nothing more than constitutional masochists, intent on settling old scores in pursuit of something that they desire for their political ends but that the Scottish people continually reject. I do not usually quote the hon. Member for Dunfermline East, (Mr. Brown), but he summed it up last year when he said in a lecture at Edinburgh university:

"I think we are making a mistake if we just assume there is a huge enthusiasm for home rule in Scotland."

For once, the shadow Chancellor was right.

The Scottish people want the sort of devolution that the Government have been delivering. For 15 years, the Government have been giving the Scottish people power over the homes that they live in, the schools that they send their children to, the utilities that deliver the key services that they use and—most importantly—the power to play their full part in the United Kingdom.

The reform of local government empowers the Scottish people even further, because there will no longer be buck passing from district to region and vice versa. The electorate will no longer have to deal with two sets of councillors and be passed from pillar to post and back again. The reforms that we are debating in the Standing Committee on the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill will lead to greater accountability, enhanced sensitivity to local needs and to much more local local government for every voter and service user in Scotland.

We all know Labour's views on local government. Members of the Standing Committee will no doubt hear them again and again during the coming weeks and months. Labour Members want to strip local government of its responsibilities and invest them in an Edinburgh-based, Glasgow-run Scottish assembly. Or, as councillor Jean McFadden, Labour president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, said:

"There may well be a tendency for the Scottish Parliament to suck up power from below."

Given the shower opposite, I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there most certainly would be such a tendency. That is the bottom line.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): At the end of the day, Scottish local government is run by people elected at the ballot box. They are overwhelmingly Labour. I accept that the people reject the nobodies in the SNP, and they certainly reject the Conservative party, but, overwhelmingly, they elect Labour Members. Surely they are qualified to speak on behalf of local government in a way that the hon. Gentleman is not.

Mr. Robertson: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman realises what Councillor McFadden said; a Scottish assembly would "suck up power" from local councils and strip local authorities throughout Scotland of powers. It is not me saying that but the hon. Gentleman's party.

Mr. Norman Hogg: I accept that the hon. Gentleman is probably correct. There is a very real possibility that the Scottish parliament would find it difficult to reorganise Scottish local government because of resistance within local government. That stems from a fear of all government, because of the way that local government has been treated over the years, most notably by the Conservative Government, who have sought to destroy democratic control.

Mr. Robertson: We have had a real confession here today. Believe me, the hon. Gentleman's words will come back to haunt him.

The bottom line of the Labour-Liberal assembly proposals is to concentrate all power in Edinburgh and have that power dominated by the central belt, to the detriment of every other part of Scotland. The Labour party doubts its ability to win power at Westminster; it keeps losing the match, so it wants to change the game. We hear much about gerrymandering from the Labour party, but that is the real gerrymandering that the people of Scotland face.

As the party of the Union, we have never been frightened to question how the Union is working. As I said earlier, we have never failed to look at its failings as well as its strengths. Unionism is not blind, dogmatic adherence

[Mr. Robertson]

to the present constitutional arrangements, to what Opposition parties all call the status quo. The Union that we have in 1994 is not the Union of 1707—indeed, how could it possibly be so? It has constantly adapted to changing circumstances, moved with the times and been flexible. That is where the Opposition parties get it helplessly and utterly wrong. In denying the dynamism of the Union, they deny history itself.

To listen to Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Dundee, East who moved the motion, the House would be forgiven for thinking that Scotland's history ended in 1707 and its nationhood ceased to exist with the signing of the Act of Union. Nothing could be further from the truth. Scotland has had its best days since 1707—in culture, commerce and influence. Let us never forget that it was as part of the Union that our literature became world famous: Robert Louis Stevenson wrote "Treasure Island"; Robert Burns, "Tam O'Shanter"; Sir Walter Scott, the Waverley novels; Conan Doyle, "Sherlock Holmes"; and Adam Smith, "Wealth of Nations".

As part of the Union, Edinburgh became known as the Athens of the north, where the Scottish enlightenment took place. It was as part of the Union that Scottish soldiers fought for the Crown against Napoleon in one century and in two world wars in the next. It was as part of the Union that Clyde-built ships became masters of the seas and trade routes. It is as part of the Union that, in the 20th century, one in 10 of all the world's personal computers is made in Scotland. It was as part of the Union that Scottish inventiveness gave the world the steam engine, penicillin, television, telephone and the pneumatic tyre. It was as part of the Union that Scottish education was the first to be free and compulsory.

In Robert Owen, we led the way in social reform at New Lanark. It was as part of the Union that Scottish Christian missionaries pioneered in the mission fields of Africa and the far east. It was as part of the Union—my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) will like this—that my noble Friend Lord Mackay, a Scottish lawyer with no English legal training, became Lord Chancellor of Great Britain.

That heritage is far too precious to throw away. Scottish culture today is just as distinct and proud as it has ever been. We have unique ways of doing things: in visible and tangible ways such as our legal system, our education system and our Church and in less obvious ways such as our acceptance of a shared inheritance and broadly similar attitudes and values. Those ways are just as pronounced and obvious, and are still cherished as much today, as they were all those centuries ago.

Far from destroying the character of the Scot and compromising his unique national characteristics, Unionism has enhanced them. They have been a powerful force in forging the destiny of the United Kingdom and, through the United Kingdom, the wider world. Far from creating a Britain of uniform Britons, the Union has benefited from encouraging the diversity of its people.

Nobody should forget that it was the Conservative party which continually updated Scotland's institutions and constitution and a Conservative Government who first established the Scottish Office and upgraded the office of Secretary for Scotland to a full Secretary of State within the Cabinet. It was in that proud tradition that "Partnership for Good" was written and presented to the House—the next milestone in the continuing evolution of the Union. That is why the Union is ready to face up to, and meet head on, the challenges of the 21st century and will celebrate its 300th anniversary in great shape.

Curiously, as the hon. Member for Dundee, East rightly said, the union of the old Soviet Union died after 70 years because it had none of that. The Soviet Union imposed uniformity and demanded conformity, suppressed culture and nationhood and survived by constantly rewriting history. In complete contrast, our Union positively encourages diversity and can accommodate nationalism. The events at Murrayfield on Saturday were testimony to that, although hon. Members will forgive me if I do not dwell on that encounter for too long.

In conclusion, Scotland's place is as a full and equal partner in the United Kingdom. The Scottish people have shown time and again that they do not want to see the old saltire ripped from the Union flag. The Union has endured and it will endure—its dynamism will see to that.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I have no time.

In 2007, the peoples of Scotland and England will celebrate 300 years of pooled sovereignty and joint nationhood. In 2107, when you and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are long gone, our successors will, I believe, still be here, still debating the nature of that peculiar and unique relationship which binds our two nations together, still marvelling at what it has achieved; and, yes, there will still be some on the Opposition Benches questioning its chances of survival.

6.16 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): All I can say after that is that Rabbie Burns must have been burlin' in his grave when he heard himself being wheeled out in defence of the Union by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), who would surely qualify for inclusion in "a parcel o' rogues in a nation".

I thank and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), who initiated the debate. It is the first opportunity that the House has had since the general election to debate the Scottish constitutional question and the lack of democracy in Scotland.

I remind Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South, who tried to talk up the Tories' election result in Scotland at the general election, that they were hammered. They managed the magnificent feat of getting a quarter of Scottish voters to support them. If that is their measure of success, they surely have low horizons and expectations—or perhaps they are trying to rewrite history.

If we believe recent opinion polls, Tory support has dwindled to a mere 16 per cent. of the Scottish electorate. There is no doubt that Scotland is being governed by an unrepresentative minority clique. Not only were the Tories rejected by three quarters of the people of Scotland at the previous general election, but the people of Scotland gave the positive message that they voted for parties committed to the setting up of a Scottish parliament.

The denial of that parliament by the Government means a continuation of the democratic deficit in Scotland, which is the only country with its own legal system and laws, but no legislature to pass those laws.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman has suggested that all the other parties in Scotland fought the election on the basis that they wanted a separate Scottish parliament. Does he not accept that one party—the Scottish National party —stood for election on one issue alone: the establishment of a self-ruling Scotland with no Westminster connection? Labour and the Liberal Democrats stood for a parliament within the Union—a Scottish assembly.

Mr. Canavan: Three quarters of the Scottish people voted for parties committed in principle to the establishment of a Scottish parliament. There are always differences of opinion within those parties about the exact powers that such a parliament should have, and about its relationships with the rest of the United Kingdom—and, indeed, the rest of the world; but the best solution to that problem is contained in the motion, which refers to "a multi-option referendum". Let the people decide.

If the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) believes in the sovereignty of the Scottish people, he should support me on that. The truth is that there is more democracy in Hong Kong than in Scotland; soon, there will probably be more democracy in Northern Ireland. Surely no hon. Member can defend that.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: When asked by a South American business man why the Scots were so popular all over the world, I replied, "It is because we have the great good fortune to be the only nation that does not have the misfortune to have a Government."

Mr. Canavan: I am surprised that a distinguished Scottish lawyer does not support my argument. Surely it is a disgrace that Scotland, which has its own legal system and its own body of law, has no legislature to pass that law. At present, bits and pieces are incorporated in English Acts, preventing the proper scrutiny and quality of legislation that the Scottish people deserve.

Sadly, the only Government response on constitutional questions since the general election has been the "taking stock" exercise, which has turned out to be a bit of a farce. Even the pussyfooting proposals in the White Paper have been delayed. Surely it is not enough to respond to the wishes of the people of Scotland by saying, "Oh, well, we shall have more meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh and elsewhere in Scotland"; that is almost as relevant as saying, "We shall shift the Committee to Timbuktu."

The Scottish Grand Committee is basically a talking shop. I am not saying that it is a completely useless talking shop, but it has no real executive or legislative powers. If the Government had wanted to give it such powers, they would have referred the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill to it, and let all the elected representatives of the people of Scotland decide the future of the legislation, rather than drafting English Members on to the Committee to preserve the Government's majority.

The Bill threatens to destroy what is left of local democracy in Scotland. It has been rightly described as the most blatant piece of gerrymandering in the history of Scottish local government—and very expensive at that: the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has estimated the cost at some £720 million. If passed, it will also have serious consequences for important services such as social work and education; it aims to remove the statutory responsibility to employ qualified directors of education, qualified social workers and committees dealing with those subjects.

I assume that the Under-Secretary of State who is responsible for education in Scotland will speak at some point. I hope that he will pay careful attention to what I am about to say. The Bill interferes with the traditional catchment areas of many schools, thus infringing what is supposed to be one of the basic tenets of democracy, in which the Government claim to believe—parents' right to send their children to the school of their choice.

Let me take a couple of examples from my area. St. Modan's and St. Mungo's high schools are the only two Catholic high schools in Central region; some of my constituents choose to send their children to both schools. Both have rolls of about 800 pupils: St. Modan's is in Stirling, St. Mungo's in Falkirk.

If the Government's proposals for local boundary changes proceed, both schools will be in different local education authority areas. At present, about 60 per cent. of St. Modan's pupils travel from outwith Stirling district, which would be conterminous with one of the proposed new LEA areas. It may lose more than half its pupils, unless the pupils cross the LEA boundary—which they are unlikely to do unless the Government guarantee parents free transport, and also guarantee that the new LEA will not be burdened with extra costs.

So far, the Minister has refused to give any such guarantees, despite representations from hon. Members —including me—from the Scottish Catholic Education Commission and from the Scottish hierarchy. I hope that he will reply tonight, and that he will answer all the parents in Scotland whose right to choice will be severely curtailed, if not obliterated, by the Bill. It seems that the Government either do not fully realise the consequences of their proposed legislation, or are hellbent on wrecking their children's educational opportunities, destroying parental choice and eroding what is left of Scottish local democracy.

The Bill would also take power from elected representatives by creating up to 100 more quangos. That would make matters worse rather than better. I understand that Scotland now has 5,000 quango members; after the proposed reorganisation, there will be only 1,200 elected local government members—less than a quarter of the number of quango members. The quangos will be responsible for more public expenditure than the elected council members.

I am worried about more than the denial of democracy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) said, the Government are creating a system that is wide open to abuse and corruption. Last week, a conference of the west of Scotland Conservatives took place in Renfrew. The Minister and his colleagues may not take everything that I say as gospel truth; let us hear what other members of his party said and decided.

The majority agreed with the statement:

"Quangos are a gravy train for Tory supporters",

and an overwhelming majority agreed that there were

"too many quangos in Scotland".

The same report said that leading Tories—including the chairman of the Scottish Tory party, Sir Michael Hirst—were surprised at the votes that took place. No

[Mr. Canavan]

wonder Sir Michael was surprised—he would not recognise democracy if it were speared in his eyeballs. He was rejected by the voters of Strathkelvin in 1987, to reappear with his knighthood and patronage appointment as chairman of the Scottish Tories.

Given the placemen in certain posts, that seems to be the career pattern for Scottish Tories. Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, the Minister with responsibilities for health and home affairs in Scotland, was rejected by the voters of Angus in 1987. Lord Mackay was rejected by the voters of Argyll, then turned up as a Minister with responsibility for transport.

Last weekend, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury claimed in front of a student audience that foreigners are in the business of buying academic qualifications and indulging in corrupt practices. If the right hon. Gentleman is looking for corruption opportunities, he need look no further than all the quangos that were created and the many more that are being formed.

From the membership of those quangos, it seems that, to be virtually assured a seat on at least one of them, one has to buy not an A-level or university degree but only a Tory party card. That is what it is—jobs for the boys. That abuse of party power is even worse than that practised by many of the Stalinist regimes that once existed in eastern Europe.

Mr. McAllion: Did my hon. Friend read in the Scottish press that, because of the dearth of talent among members of the Tory Front Bench, there is every likelihood that Lord Mackay will be appointed Secretary of State for Scotland —even though he was not elected with a single vote cast anywhere in Scotland?

Mr. Canavan: I did, and I was appalled. I wondered whether the day will come when the Secretary of State for Scotland, instead of answering questions at the Dispatch Box, will have to be summoned to the Bar of the House because he has not been elected by even one constituency in Scotland. How will that go in terms of accountability? Scotland is ruled—or rather, misruled—by a party which has only minority support, and which has no mandate from the people of Scotland.

I conclude with this warning. The Government cannot run away from the people of Scotland for ever. This year, they will receive two blunt messages. They will get a double whammy in the forthcoming local and European Parliament elections. The people of Scotland are fed up with, and can see through, the Government, and their verdict will be given on a Government who have an increasingly strong stench of corruption—which is symptomatic of terminal decline.

If the people of Scotland can accelerate that decline through the ballot box, so much the better. The sooner that we can be rid of this Government, the better for the people of Scotland.

6.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) *rose——*

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Chair has a responsibility, particularly in debates such as this, to protect minorities in the House that represent close to one quarter of the Scottish vote. What is the argument for independence that the House is unwilling or unable to debate? When such points of view are excluded from debate, does that not reinforce the strong view that is held in Scotland—far beyond the ranks of the Scottish National party—that the House, its processes and procedures are a conspiracy against Scottish public interest?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The Chair is interested not in the personal views of any party, but in fairness in terms of the number of times that right hon. and hon. Members have contributed to debates.

Mrs. Ewing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the interests of fairness, surely all constitutional parties represented in the House should have been given an opportunity to express their views in this debate. My hon. Friend, who has been present for the entire debate, was not afforded that opportunity. Meanwhile, a party that represents a minority viewpoint in Scotland was represented by several speakers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Right hon. and hon. Members know full well that the number of times that they have contributed in the past determines to some extent how often they are called subsequently. The debate has not yet finished, so who knows who may yet contribute to it? I call the Minister.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) and I entered Parliament on the same day. The only difference between us at that time was that he sat on this side of the House and I sat on the other. The hon. Gentleman has lost none of his characteristic vigour and vitality, and I shall seek to answer his points.

Mr. Canavan: The Minister should get on with it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will, and I shall deal now with the hon. Gentleman's points.

The Labour party's claim that the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill will create 100 new quangos is the purest fantasy. The Bill provides for a maximum of seven non-departmental public bodies, plus any necessary residuary bodies. They are the three new water companies, customers council, recorders administration, staff commission and property commission. I am astonished at the hon. Gentleman's nerve in talking about quangos. The last Labour Government presided over many more. In 1979, there were 84 executive quangos in Scotland, which this Government have almost halved to 47. I have only to look at Labour's election manifesto to see proposals to establish 17 new quangos. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West should make the sternest representation to members of his own Front Bench because they are not going along with his views.

Mr. McLeish: Surely to goodness the Minister does not believe the Secretary of State's speeches when he reads them. Does he agree that Scotland currently has 163 quangos and not the number claimed by the Secretary of State? What about expenditure levels of nearly £7 billion? I am giving the Secretary of State, who is in his place, an opportunity to give the Minister the benefit of his advice. It is appalling that the Minister should attempt to distort the argument by giving completely false figures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is hoist by his own petard. The number of advisory bodies has also reduced during this Parliament. It is a plain and unmistakable fact that there were 84 executive quangos under the last Labour Government in 1979, but there are only 47 today. I remind the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) of the new quangos that Labour proposes to establish. It wants a cultural education committee, human rights commission, national investment bank, judicial appointments and training commission, consumer protection commission, wages council and various other bodies. Labour's 1993 conference passed motions endorsing the establishment of various bodies such as a training agency, national investment bank and regional development agencies—the list goes on and on. Yet Labour Members have the nerve to criticise the Government when we have reduced the number of quangos.

I did not intend to begin with that point, but as the hon. Member for Falkirk, East told me to get on with it, it was only fair to answer his key point. He is wrong—the Government have reduced the number of quangos in Scotland, and the hon. Gentleman's representations should be directed at his own leader and members of his own Front Bench. I will say to the credit of the hon. Gentleman that he has no more hesitation in voting against his own side than against us.

Mr. Kynoch: Has my hon. Friend considered that the Opposition might have withdrawn all those conference pledges on increasing the number of quangos, just as they withdrew all their pledges on spending?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We shall examine Labour's future actions with the greatest care. We noted what was said this afternoon, and it was not consistent with the line taken at Labour's national conferences or with its proposals for a number of new quangos.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central asked a significant question about local government being extended to quangos. I confirm to him that the White Paper published last July by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has responsibility for public service and science, proposed a code of practice for access to Government information. It will be implemented in April not only for Government Departments but for quangos within the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. That is undoubtedly a step forward. The principles of the code will be adopted by other non-departmental public bodies. There will be a similar code of practice for access to information about the national health service.

Mr. McLeish: Will the Minister confirm this evening in the House that he will set up a register of directors' interests which will be tough and will have an open regulatory regime to ensure that the wilful neglect of public funds that is taking place at present is stamped out?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can confirm that Scottish Enterprise is considering that matter. It is right that appropriate rules and procedures should be drawn up in that connection, as they are for the House of Commons.

Mrs. Ewing: I do not want to interfere in the dispute between what is probably the largest quango in Scotland, namely, the official Opposition and the Minister. Will the Minister confirm that, in a debate in the House in which the constitutional issue has been discussed, the Scottish National party, which is the driving force and the powerhouse on the constitutional issue, has been denied the opportunity to participate? As a member of the legal profession in Scotland, does he agree that there is a need to ensure that there is accountability between the various organisations in Scotland and that we have been denied the accountability of putting on record our viewpoint?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A considerable amount of parliamentary time was taken up last week as a result of the parliamentary disruption engaged in by the Scottish National party. Hon. Members cannot have it both ways. They cannot engage in disruption and take up a great deal of parliamentary time and then complain that they are not given enough time. The fact remains——

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister seems to suggest that there is some connection between the SNP not being called in the debate today and events last week. Through the prerogative of the Chair, can you confirm that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not true.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful for that confirmation. There is no question but that the SNP is dealt with fairly in terms of parliamentary time.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Minister to make that connection? It is a simple point of order. It is a simple question, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will answer it. No.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order to address the Chair with one's hands in one's pockets?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Sadly, it is.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have to consider the motion against the back drop of history. The Act of Union represented a partnership of willing partners and we believe that it is the world's best example——

Mrs. Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the light of your clear ruling on the subject, will you ask the Minister to withdraw his clear allegation made on the Floor of the House that we were denied an opportunity to speak in today's debate because of events last week?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I should make it clear that Madam Speaker has total responsibility. We who share the responsibility with her are the ones who decide who may or may not be called in any debate. The previous behaviour of hon. Members has no relationship with whether they are called on a subsequent day. I hope that that is clear. If anyone else suggests anything to the contrary, he is wrong. I hope that that is clear.

With the greatest respect, I do not think that the Minister made any allegation. He may have felt that there had been some such response, but I have made the ruling clear. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) may yet catch my eye. He knows what time the debate ends. I do not know how long the Minister's speech will be.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: To return to the matter of quangos, far from believing that all quangos should be dismantled, we believe that they have a legitimate purpose in the diffusion of power. I give one

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

example. The chairman and non-executive directors of such bodies are accountable in several ways not only to the law of the land but, through the citizens charter, to the people whom they serve. They are accountable to their sponsoring Secretary of State for their stewardship, and through him to Parliament. There is a parallel chain of accountability for the use of resources. It starts with the chief executive of the body and ends with the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons. That is consistent with the best traditions of democracy and parliamentary tradition.

If citizens know what they are entitled to expect from public services, as they will be under the citizens charter, and are given proper avenues of complaint if they do not receive it, they are well placed to call that body to account immediately. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) made the point well in that connection.

I confirm that we are determined that women in particular should be considered for more public appointments.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): So long as they have a Tory party card.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: They will be appointed on merit. Our approach is sensible and can be delivered. The proportion of women who hold appointments made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is already 40 per cent. That is one of the highest of any Government Department. However, we are not complacent and we want to improve on the figure. We are always keen to learn about women and men of ability and experience who would like to make a further contribution to life in Scotland.

The issue of local government reform was raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) was right to say that the purpose of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill was not to dismantle democracy. Its purpose is to avoid excessive duplication. For example, there are now two sets of councillors, two sets of headquarters and two sets of officials. It makes sense to co-ordinate housing, social work, education, sport and similar functions.

I shall bear in mind the point made by the hon, Member for Falkirk, West.

Mr. Canavan *rose——*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am answering the hon. Gentleman. The point that he raised is covered by clause 32 of the Bill. We shall reach it some time. We shall debate it thoroughly and I shall bear in mind the point that he made.

Mr. Canavan *rose——*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall not give way. There will be plenty of opportunity to debate the matter at length in Committee. I am sure that it will be discussed further when the Bill returns to the House if satisfaction is not obtained at that time.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central made proposals for a multi-referendum. I recall when I was a new Member asking Michael Foot, the then Leader of the House, to consider a referendum. He replied that a referendum was not the way to proceed. He subsequently changed his mind because a referendum appeared to be the only way to get the Scotland Bill on the statute book. A referendum with vague, general propositions tends to be of little value. It would be necessary to put before the electors a clear proposition for a particular policy, spelling out in detail what was involved. That is precisely what was done in 1979. When faced with a clear proposal, less than one third of the Scottish electorate voted in favour of change and the results were inconclusive.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. I have many points to answer.

I want to answer the charges made about the White Paper "Taking Stock". In 1926, it was a Tory Government who created the office of Secretary of State for Scotland. In 1939, a Conservative Government brought the Scottish Office to St Andrew's House in Edinburgh. The White Paper "Taking Stock" focuses on several matters. Scotland already receives a considerable share of parliamentary time. Some 60 Scottish Bills have been enacted in the past 10 years. In addition, when Scots legislation is incorporated in United Kingdom Bills which apply to Britain or the United Kingdom, the greatest care is taken to ensure that, both in terms of policy and in the drafting of the legislation, an approach appropriate to Scotland is taken. There have been discussions through the usual channels about the matter. Agreement has been reached and my right hon. Friend will make a statement in due course.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I hope that my hon. Friend has noticed that the verbose motion flows from a concept about the undemocratic power and influence of transnational and multinational companies in Scotland's economy. Two such companies have just come to Scotland and provided 2,000 jobs. We have obtained domination of the world by the same methods. What would have happened to Scotland if the narrow-minded idiocy being displayed had prevented us from investing in other countries, and prevented other countries from investing in ours?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can answer conclusively—multinational companies have had a good record. Last year, 79,000 people were employed in overseas-owned manufacturing units in Scotland, representing almost 25 per cent. of manufacturing jobs. It has been reported that gross wages and salaries per employee were 20 per cent. higher.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Does the Minister agree that the real damage done to Scotland involves the loss of control of Scottish companies? Is he aware that the last steelworks in Scotland, the Craigneuk works at Motherwell, is closing today, with immediate redundances? Will the Government do anything to try to find a buyer for it as a going concern?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It does not belong to the Scottish Office to sell, but strenuous efforts are being made by the local enterprise company. It is important that its efforts are successful. Mossend steel works, which is not far from the hon. Gentleman's constituency, is due to open shortly, creating many hundreds of jobs.

Mr. Gallie: Does not my hon. Friend think it shameful that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) did not distance himself from the insulting motion on inward investment? Does he not agree that it is a condemnation of the Labour party's commitment to jobs in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Fife, Central has been thoroughly unrealistic—inward investment has played a key role in creating and sustaining employment in Scotland.

Mr. McLeish *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall not give way as I have given way to the hon. Gentleman already.

Mr. Norman Hogg: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) was severely attacked in the intervention of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), which was answered by the Minister. When my hon. Friend tried to intervene to clarify the position, he was arrogantly brushed aside by the Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That has nothing to do with the Chair and is a matter for debating——

Mr. Norman Hogg: It was a good point——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It was a bad point.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Several hon. Members raised the subject of "Taking Stock". Responsibility for the Scottish Arts Council will transfer to the Secretary of State, as will various other responsibilities, such as training, through the establishment of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. There have already been some impressive results. In Scotland, more than half the Scottish work force are qualified to at least Scottish vocational qualification level three, compared to 30 per cent. south of the border. Responsibility for the highlands and islands airports will be transferred to the Secretary of State, which makes sense.

We are giving high priority to ensuring that Scotland is right at the heart of Europe. That is why we set up Scottish Trade International. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), was successful in persuading the Europeans that Scotland should host Europartenariat. Some 350 companies exhibited to similar companies from nearly 50 countries, and more than 5,000 meetings with Scottish companies were held over the two-day event. Scottish Trade International will be carrying out a follow-up exercise to ensure that the participants have all the advice and information that they need to pursue the deals that they made. That has been good for Scotland. On the issue of Scottish Office visibility, not only have we opened up access to more information, but we have established telephone inquiry links and 22 information points, and information leaflets will be made available.

I agree with my hon. Friends the Members for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) and for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) about the success of the national health service trusts. The benefits of that policy are already becoming apparent, with more patients being treated, improved facilities and services specifically adapted to particular needs.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East demanded a Scots parliament. The Conservative stand on that issue is unrepentant, and is incorrigibly and unequivocally Unionist. At the last election, we stood full square on that platform. Much to the dismay of pollsters, pundits and bookies, we were the only party in Scotland to increase our share of the vote and our representation in the House. Only one Labour seat in Britain was taken by the Tories in the last general election: that of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South. That was due to his vigorous and strong Unionist stand.

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman at this moment.

It is right to consider the role of the Secretary of State. If the motion were implemented, he would be stripped of resources, without the power to legislate and without the backing of his Department. He would rapidly become a cypher and would be unlikely to retain his position in the Cabinet. If he were to lose his place in the Cabinet, it would be bad for Scotland in the United Kingdom Parliament, and Scotland's influence would be correspondingly reduced.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North was right to consider the number of Scots in the Cabinet. There are four—the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Transport and for Defence, and the Lord Chancellor. Could that number be maintained if a Scots parliament were established? I am far from certain that it could.

Before the last election, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said that once there was a Scottish parliament that handled health issues in Scotland, it would be impossible for him to be a Minister for health in England. There are also concerns about the number of Scottish Members in the House. There are now 72 Scottish Members. If calculated on the basis of the population, the number should be 57. Would it be reasonable to maintain the present numbers if a separate Scots parliament covering most aspects of Scottish public affairs were established? If we followed the example of Stormont, we would have only 40 Scottish Members. I would not want to see the number of Scots represented in the House reduced as that would be contrary to Scotland's interest, as would the elimination of the office of Secretary of State.

Implicit in the motion is the fact that the parliament would raise taxes. The Scots would then be the most heavily taxed people in the United Kingdom. It would be unreasonable to make the rest of Britain pay for an extra tier of Government in Scotland without comparable parliaments all over England. The difficulty of the policy of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is that the rest of Britain does not want regional parliaments all over England, and certainly not throughout Wales. Tax-raising powers would constitute an extra burden on Scottish industry.

There was a report in *The Scotsman* on 19 August 1974 which stated:

> "Mr. John Smith, MP for North Lanark, claimed that members of the party who were pressing for devolution to a Scottish Government without the loss of the office of the Secretary of State and a reduction in the number of MPs at Westminster were being dishonest."

I do not wish to see the role of the Secretary of State eliminated, and I do not want the loss of employment that would go with the creation of another parliament. I do not want endless conflict between rival parliaments, which the motion would doubtless entail.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

I quote the words of a distinguished parliamentarian, who said:

"Feelings of pride in one's land and one's culture are both respectable and desirable, but they are perfectly compatible with membership of a somewhat wider political family: to sacrifice benefits accrued over 270 years in order to gratify confused and ephemeral political ambitions would be tragic and unforgivably foolish."

Those are not my words, but those of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) in his book "Devolution: the end of Britain?" I endorse them today.

Let us remember our common heritage with the rest of the United Kingdom. Let us strengthen those links and not throw away the benefit of hundreds of years of unity. We have an inescapable duty to oppose the motion. The Union has brought with it great benefits to all parts of the United Kingdom. Sometimes it appears that the people of Scotland are not fully aware of those benefits. Identifiable public expenditure per head is 15 per cent. higher than in the United Kingdom as a whole. To look at it another way, Scotland represents some 8·9 per cent. of the population——

It being Seven o'clock, proceedings on the motion lapsed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business).

European Community Documents

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

PARENTAL LEAVE

That this House takes note of the unnumbered Explanatory Memoranda submitted by the Department of Employment on 7th October 1993 and 7th December 1993, relating to parental and family leave, and the unnumbered Explanatory Memoranda submitted by the Department of Employment on 7th October 1993 and 11th November 1993, relating to non-standard employment; endorses the Government's view that measures taken in the field of social affairs should have full regard to the effects on job creation, to the principle of subsidiarity, and to the diversity of national traditions and practices; shares the Government's view that the need for Community legislation on parental leave and leave for family reasons and associated social protection provisions has not been demonstrated; supports the Government's view that it should not accept proposals which would increase the cost of employing part-time and temporary workers and reduce the number of jobs available; and endorses the Government's view that terms and conditions of employment are best agreed directly by the parties concerned without outside interference.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 189, Noes 99.

Division No. 108] **[7.01 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Aitken, Jonathan	Dover, Den
Alexander, Richard	Duncan, Alan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Duncan-Smith, Iain
Amess, David	Durant, Sir Anthony
Ancram, Michael	Eggar, Tim
Arbuthnot, James	Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Ashby, David	Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Atkins, Robert	Faber, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Fabricant, Michael
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Baldry, Tony	Fishburn, Dudley
Bates, Michael	Forman, Nigel
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Forth, Eric
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Boswell, Tim	Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*	French, Douglas
Bowden, Andrew	Gallie, Phil
Bowis, John	Gardiner, Sir George
Brandreth, Gyles	Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Brazier, Julian	Gillan, Cheryl
Bright, Graham	Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Gorst, John
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela	Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*	Hague, William
Burt, Alistair	Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Butler, Peter	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Hannam, Sir John
Carrington, Matthew	Harris, David
Carttiss, Michael	Hawkins, Nick
Cash, William	Hawksley, Warren
Clappison, James	Heald, Oliver
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*	Hendry, Charles
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Coe, Sebastian	Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Congdon, David	Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Conway, Derek	Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John	Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Cormack, Patrick	Hunter, Andrew
Cran, James	Jack, Michael
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*	Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*	Jenkin, Bernard
Deva, Nirj Joseph	Jessel, Toby
Devlin, Tim	Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen	Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*

Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Dr. Roger
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Raynsford, Nick
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Derek Enright and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

LANDFILL OF WASTE

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 5953/91 and 7506/93 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of the Environment on 10th January 1994, relating to the landfill of waste; endorses the Government's view that the proposal is unnecessarily detailed and prescriptive and does not take sufficient account of the principle of subsidiarity which is enshrined in the Treaty of European Union; welcomes the Government's intention to press for the removal of a number of the more detailed provisions now that it is clear that other Member States wish to take forward the Directive; supports the Government's view that carefully controlled co-disposal is an environmentally sound practice, the banning of which in the United Kingdom would be detrimental to the environment and would lead to significantly increased disposal costs for certain types of industrial waste; and endorses the Government's intention to seek a common position in Council which would allow those countries who practise controlled co-disposal to continue to do so.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

The House divided: Ayes 184, Noes 103.

Division No. 109] **[7.13 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*

Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stephen, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman, and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Coffey, Ann
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faulds, Andrew
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McMaster, Gordon
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prescott, John
Raynsford, Nick
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and
Mr. Michael Connarty.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the last debate you ruled from the Chair, quite clearly and effectively, that who is called during the course of a debate is a matter for those who represent Madam Speaker in the Chair, and that decisions are taken on the basis of fairness. We accept that ruling. However, during the debate the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State clearly stated that my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) was not being called because of events that happened last week. That seems to me to have been a direct threat to the constitutional rights of Back Benchers to speak out on behalf of their constituents or on behalf of their nation.

If the records show that those were the comments of the Minister—we can look at both written and oral evidence of the debate—will the Minister be asked to withdraw those comments in the interests of fairness, which you spelled out so clearly?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I suggest that we read the *Hansard*——

Mrs. Ewing: And the recordings.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I suggest that we read the *Hansard* recordings tomorrow.

Mrs. Ewing: And watch the video.

Sustainable Development (Rio Summit)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

[Relevant documents: The First Report of the Environment Committee of Session 1992-93 on Forestry and the Environment (House of Commons Paper, 1992-93, No. 257) and the Government's Response thereto (Cm. 2259).]

7.24 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): On 25 January, the Government presented to Parliament four exceptional documents. Each of those was presented by no fewer than 16 members of the Cabinet, including my right hon. Friends with responsibilities ranging over economic and environmental protection. Among them were Trade and Industry, Agriculture and Fisheries, the Exchequer, Health, Defence, Heritage, Science, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and of course the Foreign Office with its interest in overseas development. They raise issues with the widest possible implications, for the principles set out in those papers must increasingly underpin Government policies across the board.

Unfortunately, that concern goes under a typically unlovely 20th century name: sustainable development. The term was, as one might imagine, coined by a committee, albeit a distinguished international one. The Brundtland commission in 1987 described sustainable development in this carefully defined prose:

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

I prefer to say that we are working for economic growth without cheating on our children.

We must continually stress the two sides of that equation: economic development and environmental protection. Sustainable development is not anti-growth. Indeed, it cannot be achieved except through growth. It cannot be achieved except through the maintenance of a prosperous economy. It depends on the encouragement of profitable, competitive, world-class industries. For modern demands for high standards of living will not abate; they are bound to continue to increase. It is successful private enterprise which will find new ways of meeting those demands in an increasingly sustainable manner.

It is profitable companies which will develop new solutions to environmental problems—problems such as air pollution. It is profitable companies which are already selling the environmentally sound processes throughout the world, processes which have been developed here in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On the subject of profitable companies, can the right hon. Gentleman resolve for me what seems to be one of the central dilemmas of the present system—capitalist or whatever one calls it—that companies have limited liability and therefore have no responsibility in the way in which they are accountable to their shareholders for the future? How can the Government find a way of building in individual responsibility for companies for the future and square that with the companies' accountability to their shareholders and their limited liability?

Mr. Gummer: The issue of environmental liability is important and it is being considered with great care in the European Union. I look for the type of limited liability that is based on the duty of companies to do at any given time what any knowledgeable individual should do in pursuing policies that do not harm the environment or the future of our children.

There are arguments about how one draws that line. I would be very leery of saying to a company that it should know more about the environment than anyone else knows about it at a particular moment. The idea of insisting upon hindsight would be very dangerous, but I believe that we should be able to find a sensible answer. That is what the European Union is doing—trying to find the right answer.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): In that case, does the Secretary of State agree with and totally support the European directive that made it a requirement for companies undertaking major developments to carry out a properly worked out and costed environmental impact assessment? Alternatively, does he feel that it is sufficient to leave that as a voluntary set-up?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Lady knows that I have been pressing hard for a whole range of environmental assessments, not least the concept of environmental audits as part and parcel of the normal activity of major and medium-sized businesses. She knows my views on those matters. There are some real problems with the details of the directive which are not to do with the issues that unite us, so I cannot say that I agree with every jot and tittle. I believe that we must deal with the whole question of environmental liability in a sensible way which will meet the proper concerns of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) but will not lay on the shoulders of business impossible demands. We cannot expect business to have knowledge of something that is not discovered until some time afterwards. I look to a European answer which may be more in tune with our two requirements than is the case with answers suggested in other parts of the world.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): How does the Secretary of State square his statement with the activities of Fisons, a private company which is mining peat on Thorn and Hatfield moors in my constituency? It is ripping that lowland peat bog to pieces although it is important internationally. There has been a voluntary agreement between English Nature and Fisons since January 1992, yet it has still not been signed. I have pursued the matter since I was elected to the House and I can get no sensible answers. This site and other lowland peat bogs are very important, as most people are aware. Will the Secretary of State tell us what the Government intend to do to get the agreement signed and what they intend to do further to protect lowland peat bogs?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman knows that when I was Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I spent a great deal of time being particularly interested in the alternatives to peat. That is an issue which, no doubt, unites us. I shall be perfectly happy to look at the details if the hon. Gentleman gives them to me. He may then get sensible answers, if that is what he seeks. I will do my best and see what needs to be done. I am sure that he does not want me to comment on the particular details of the matter here, although I am happy to look at it and to see what we can do.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Can the Secretary of State square his statement about not cheating our children with his decision on the thermal oxide reprocessing plant, which was based on a planning inquiry held some 15 years ago? The available evidence was not published. Surely that is not just cheating our children, but cheating our grandchildren's grandchildren.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman has not spent the time that I and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food spent in going through the details and coming to our conclusion. The case is now before the courts. The decision taken by me and my right hon. Friend was entirely consonant with my belief about not cheating our children. The hon. Gentleman must learn soon that there are choices to be made and that those choices have to be made after the most detailed discovery and discussion of what the facts are. That is what I did and I stand by it.

If we are to have the sustainable development that we want, we need profitable companies which can most afford to invest in new plant and cleaner technology. A thriving private sector will invest in the research and development that is needed to identify and understand the solutions to our environmental problems. Only from a thriving economy can we draw the resources that we need to continue to expand the health services, to invest in education, to conserve and enhance our landscape and to build our heritage—in short, to meet the proper aspirations of our people.

I start with that clear message because I believe that sustainable development must be woven into our life styles. It must not become an excuse for a puritanical belief that life must be miserable for it to be sustainable. The words "sustainable" and "development" must be kept together. It is the phenomenal success of industry over the generations which has contributed to many of the environmental problems today. It is only through business —better business—that any real solutions can be found. That is an essential part of the discovery of solutions to the problems that we face.

The British, who invented the industrial means of production, have long experience of the harm that can be done. That was best expressed in a poem by Hopkins, in which he wrote:

> "Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
> And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil
> And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
> Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod."

Hopkins expressed his anguish at seeing the destruction and loss from industry—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) has not looked at the poem recently. If he looks at it carefully, he will see that it contains a number of the demands for sustainable development that we are addressing this evening. Hopkins also possessed the vision that we need —the vision of all that remains, of all that is fundamental and of all that can be preserved. It is on that preservation and on that seeking to pass on our heritage to the next generation that the sustainable part of sustainable development depends.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): We should get something clear at the beginning of our debate. The Secretary of State seems to identify development with sustainable growth. Does he see growth to satisfy all human aspirations as being a continual and everlasting process? Does he believe that, if there is a time when all reasonable human aspirations have been satisfied, it will be unreasonable to expect continuing economic growth?

Mr. Gummer: I can only point to a quotation that I used in my introduction to the document on sustainable development, which is the sensible comment made by Newman that growth is the only evidence of life. I find it difficult to conceive of a society in decline in which it is worth living. There is no known example of a period of flowering of culture and science that is also a period of economic decline. Culture and science flower at a time of economic expansion. That is a fact of history and it is one explanation why the socialist societies did not produce the scientific and cultural results that one would have expected over the years. Marxism developed a period of permanent economic decline.

I look to a society that grows. A society in decline cannot meet the reasonable demands of a civilisation in which human beings expect each year to find new ways in which to express themselves and to grow. I have no objection to that. Growth must happen in a sustainable way. It is only those who are so saddened that they cannot imagine sustainable growth whom we should fear. Those people want to use the admirable concept of sustainable development as a means of imposing on the nation their views about the restrictions that should be placed on the spirit of man. I find that another excuse for a sort of puritanism which, I hope, we shall have grown out of.

We can take pride in the United Kingdom's part in the Rio earth summit. Our environment strategy of 1990 meant that we were well placed to call on other nations to plan comprehensive strategies. We, ahead of most, had done so. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was the first world leader to announce his firm intention of attending the summit, which helped to ensure that other prominent Heads of Government took the plunge. On that occasion, my right hon. Friend launched the Darwin initiative and the technology transfer project. He also announced our sponsorship of the "Partnerships for Change" conference.

Those initiatives have made a real contribution and we should emphasise the nature of that contribution. They have made clear our commitment to the need for a global realisation of sustainable development. Britain was committing itself to partnership and to an understanding that we in the developed countries have a special responsibility to help other nations meet their commitments. The solution has to be global, but it will not be achieved unless the partnership is universally accepted.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I ask the Secretary of State a question of which I gave his office notice? If there is to be a global solution, why does not the biodiversity action plan extend to the British Indian ocean territories of Chagos Archipelago, Tristan da Cunha and St. Helena, which are fantastically rich in biodiversity? If the Government are setting an example, why does not their biodiversity policy extend to the outposts of empire?

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving notice of that question. I have to admit that it would have been more difficult to answer if he had not done so.

At the time, there were reasons that made it difficult to put those places in the same category as the other dependent territories, but I am seeing whether we can overcome the problem. I agree with the hon. Gentleman

that there is particular biodiversity in those places, as there is in many countries mentioned in the biodiversity document. He points to the fact that the demands of sustainable development, in its widest sense, will be met only by a global solution. I shall be happy to write to him about my researches.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): I agree with my right hon. Friend about the global solution; the documents deserve everyone's support. Many people, however, believe that world population growth has a fundamental role to play. Indeed, in reply to the debate on the earth summit last year, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said that population growth was causing considerable environmental problems. Will my right hon. Friend note that it is a matter of regret that population and planning takes up only one word in one line of the four documents? Might not it be expanded in the future?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that we could discuss that subject for a long time. One of the problems is that what has been most damaging in many countries is not population growth but the movement of the population into urban centres from the countryside. Sometimes, people treat the issue too simplistically. In Latin America, for example, the population expressed as persons per square mile is not very high, but the number of people who have crammed into urban areas in the past 25 years, denuding the countryside, is high. The problem is complex and difficult, and it is devastating the environment. I agree that the matter should be thoroughly discussed, but it needs to be discussed on a much wider basis than only population control.

Mr. Ottaway: My right hon. Friend must accept that world population is growing at the rate of 10,000 every 55 minutes, which is not insignificant. What better opportunity is there to discuss the problem than during this debate on the documents?

Mr. Gummer: The documents' specific purpose is to deal with a number of other issues. I am not speaking for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am sure that, if my hon. Friend wishes to do so, it will be in order to discuss population growth as part of sustainable development.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is not it true that every new mouth born in the world has to be fed but it comes with a pair of hands and a brain? It is the sum total of human creativity and energy which has made the world a better place in which to live for the majority of people.

Mr. Gummer: I am carefully trying to avoid the type of discussion that would divide hon. Members in a different way from which we are usually divided. I believe that human beings have an individual validity. That leads me to be extremely careful about the promotion of certain methods to deal with sustainable development, but that is better left for another debate. I am pleased that, on such a subject, my hon. Friend and I are on the same side.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I liked the right hon. Gentleman's redefinition of cheating children. How does the Government's policy on North sea oil and gas fit with their concept of sustainable development? Does not the dash for gas cheat our children?

Mr. Gummer: I do not think so. If we did not make the changes, the possibility of meeting targets on carbon and achieving a cleaner environment would be much reduced. It would not be reasonable to say that the Government's policy does not make a real contribution towards sustainable development.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gummer: I must get a little further into my speech before I give way to my hon. Friend.

Our proposals were designed to underline the commitment of the United Kingdom to a global partnership with the rest of the world. As a former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I am aware of the considerable part that is being played by the trustees of Kew, who are helping nations that would otherwise not have the ability or scientific base to provide the information that they need to begin their sustainable development programmes.

On his return from Rio, it was again the Prime Minister at the Lisbon and Munich summits who persuaded other European Union and G7 Heads of Government to undertake to produce plans for sustainable development. Since then, the United Kingdom has secured election to the newly established United Nations commission on sustainable development. The United Kingdom is one of the first to produce the promised sustainable development strategy and the first to publish a programme under the climate change convention.

That sustained commitment shows the Government's seriousness about building for our long-term future. I know that our aspirations are widely shared.

We need to show in all that we do the recognition that it is only by a world partnership that we can achieve our aims. My predecessor built a good relationship between the United Kingdom and India and, through that, between the north and the south. We have expanded that and there are now many lines of communication between the south and member states of the European Union. I hope that, together, we can carry that policy forward.

One of the remarkable achievements of last year's meeting in New York was that the suspicion between north and south was considerably allayed and many of our previous arguments were resolved. That is a helpful development and we shall seek to extend it in meetings in Geneva and again in New York. I believe that the Indian Minister will seek to do much the same at a meeting in Agra, which could do much to break down the sensitivities of new nations, which feel that it is hard for them to present such documents, because they may be criticised by older nations. We have accepted the principle that we should be prepared to criticise each other, which is a major breakthrough, in order to achieve the best possible answer.

It is particularly beneficial to have not only the clear commitment of the Government but the personal commitment of the Prime Minister. I hope that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) will ensure that the Labour party leader will make the same commitment. It would be good to have a statement of clear support from him. I have difficulty recalling the last time that the Leader of the Opposition made a speech on the issue, but perhaps now is the right time for him to do so. The attitudes set out in the documents must have widespread support. It is inevitable that those who are

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already convinced and who are campaigning for one environmental cause or another will say that we have not gone far enough. It is right that they should goad us, but it would be wrong for us to accept their assessment without reserve. Everyone has accepted that this is the right direction and we can demonstrate that the strategy that we have set out measures up to the importance of the issue.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): Will not the deregulation initiative which is being promoted by the Government seriously weaken the action on environmental improvement? I know that the document says that economic instruments will be used in preference to regulations, but does the Minister agree that what should be used is that which is most effective? Will he also consider not necessarily going for economic instruments in every single case?

Mr. Gummer: I agree absolutely that we must use the most effective measures. Deregulation is not about getting rid of necessary regulations, but unnecessary ones.

The hon. Lady should ask hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench, who have steadfastly refused to support the fiscal measures that are necessary to deliver the carbon dioxide commitments—*[Interruption.]* It is all very well for the Opposition. They know perfectly well that they could not deliver what is needed for carbon dioxide emissions without the fiscal measures that we have taken. The Opposition are dishonest and hypocritical if they will not stand up and say which taxes they would increase to ensure that we can reach the carbon dioxide targets.

Mrs. Helen Jackson *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I will give way to the hon. Lady if she will tell me which taxes she would raise. If she will not tell me, she should not be talking about this part of the debate.

Mrs. Jackson: Will the Secretary of State tell us the specific targets for the reduction in carbon emissions which the Government are prepared to set by the year 2000?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Lady is short-sighted if she does not know that. We have signed up to the international targets and we have said exactly how we will achieve them. The Labour party has refused to accept the measures that are needed to reach those targets. What is worse is that the Labour party and, I believe, the hon. Lady herself want to get rid of the electricity which is produced by nuclear power. That would mean that we would have to tax even more heavily and would have to cut even more to meet those targets.

If the hon. Lady looks at the Labour party's policy on nuclear power, she will see the problem that it presents. Nuclear power currently provides about 22 per cent. of the United Kingdom's electricity. If that were to be replaced, the United Kingdom's emissions of carbon dioxide would be between 6 million and 15 million tonnes of carbon higher. How would the hon. Lady deal with that? Where would she get an alternative for that? What taxes would she put up to damp down the use of energy? The hon. Lady and her party would have to spend about double what is proposed.

The trouble with the Labour party is that it is generous in its generalities and it is careful never to make any particular promises. The hon. Lady has again betrayed the facts. The Labour party has no policy, except promising the best and promising that we can get it all without a single increase in taxation and without any disadvantage to anybody anywhere in the world; or, at least, anybody in the world who has a vote.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. Friend agree that some of the hopes that were placed on wind energy are proving not to be as fruitful as was expected? Does not that form of energy have substantial environmental disadvantages?

Mr. Gummer: My constituency contains two nuclear power stations and many of the people who campaigned against the building of Sizewell B asked us to replace it with wind energy. I am interested that many of those same people are busy writing to me today to say that I should oppose any possibility of putting up a wind farm anywhere in Suffolk. I note, therefore, that there are many people who are always against everything, but who are never in favour of anything. Those people then complain if they do not have the electricity that they need to keep the old warm and to keep the hospitals and schools running.

The Opposition would be much more credible if they honourably told us which taxes the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) would allow them to increase in an unforeseeable future in which they might possibly gain power. The public would respect them much more. I wish to hear which taxes the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury would impose to meet the requirements in respect of which we have imposed the taxation which the hon. Gentleman now opposes. What extra taxation would the hon. Gentleman propose to cover the nuclear deficit when he removes the possibility of any nuclear use?

Perhaps the Opposition have changed their policy and they have a new policy on nuclear power.

Mr. Alan W. Williams *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I have been generous in giving way. I will give way to the hon. Gentleman if he will tell me which taxes the Opposition would want to increase. Will he tell me that?

Mr. Williams: Yes.

Mr. Gummer: Then I will give way.

Mr. Williams: The Secretary of State has talked at length about the matter. The right hon. Gentleman is trying to justify VAT on fuel—[HON. MEMBERS: "Which taxes?"] I am coming to it. He is trying to justify VAT on fuel on the basis that it will reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Would not the Secretary of State have more credibility if he told us that the money was to be earmarked for energy efficiency schemes which would reduce carbon dioxide emissions? Is not the money being used to cure the public relations problems of the Government?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman will not get away with that. That is the last refuge of—I will not say what, because it would be unparliamentary. He knows in his heart of hearts as a geologist and an expert, as he often remarks, that the policy of his party is incredible. What does he say? He says that our policy would be more

credible if we not only bring in the taxes to which the Opposition are opposed, but spend the money raised on something that the hon. Gentleman thinks is a good idea.

I remind the hon. Gentleman of what we are spending the money on. There is a considerable increase in the money which is going to every pensioner, so that they can now get assistance towards the major work involved in having an energy-efficient home. We are dealing with 500,000 homes this year. The hon. Gentleman knows that, but he does not mention it.

I gave way to the hon. Gentleman on a false prospectus. He made it clear to me that he was going to tell me which taxes the Opposition were to raise. The hon. Gentleman was going to tell me how the Opposition would deal with the fact that less carbon is put into the atmosphere by nuclear energy. He did not tell us, because the Labour party does not know. If it does know, it dare not tell us.

Labour Members would then find themselves in the same position as the most dishonourable case, which is the Liberal Democrat party. The Liberal Democrats, of course, are always green in words. The Liberal Democrats were in favour of the extension of VAT to fuel and then they changed their minds. Why? They changed their minds because there was a by-election in which it was inconvenient to stand up for their principles. I note that principles in the Liberal Democrat party are convenient only as long as they are electorally sound. The party has shown the same kind of principles on green issues which it showed on the racial issue in Tower Hamlets. Whenever there is a problem that can be got out of by winning a vote, the Liberals will be there.

The party knows perfectly that it would have to tax to meet carbon dioxide requirements. Liberal Democrats are very good at saying how green they are, but they never say how they would tax. They use generalities, but they never mention facts when it comes to how it will affect somebody who might vote for them.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will explain why his party dropped the proposal for VAT on fuel.

Mr. Hughes: The Secretary of State spoils a debate on important issues with this banter, which all hon. Members could enter into. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will answer the right hon. Gentleman's question. He knows perfectly well that he has been entirely selective about recent political history. We did consult before the election on whether VAT was a sensible option for dealing with environmental issues. We rejected it as an option. It was not in our manifesto for the general election and it has not been in any since, because we have been persuaded by the arguments. I am sure that the message of the debate will be that if the Government consulted more widely and listened to the answers more closely, they would have a sounder policy.

Mr. Gummer: It is fascinating that the hon. Gentleman should say that, but he has not mentioned that he would introduce another tax, which would have the same effect, but which was not mentioned to the electorate. That part of the manifesto was kept very quiet. The Liberals published all kinds of leaflets which suggested that they would manage the green goods without paying the difficult price for that.

Mr. Hughes: No, no.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman cannot say, "No, no". I have raised this issue for a simple reason: if we are to win the battle for sustainable development, we must be honest about the cost. We cannot deliver that development unless we accept that real costs are involved. The Government have committed themselves to insist upon those costs and to help those least able to pay them.

The system that we presented was much more generous than that which the Labour party suggested was the minimum necessary. We do not go for the minimum of help; perfectly rightly, we have done better than that. Does the Labour party support the necessary taxes that must be imposed? Does the Liberal party come out and say, "Yes. We would tax. This is the amount and this is how it would affect people"? Do the Liberals put that in their manifestos for by-elections? No, they do not.

I have some hope for the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, because we agree about many issues, but I have no hope for the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), because the Liberals would have to turn back the history of 50 years if they started to tell the truth about taxation.

Mr. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman will have plenty of opportunity to talk about this issue.

Mr. Hughes: The right hon. Gentleman does not want to listen to the argument.

Mr. Gummer: I will be very happy to hear the argument and no doubt we will hear in extenso—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ad nauseam."] If we deal with sustainable development, we must make sure that we do not pick out particular aspects and avoid the holistic approach that we need to take. We cannot win the battle on climate change unless we are prepared to charge the cost. That cost must be clear and we must seek to ensure that it does not fall on those who are least able to pay it. We must make the measures effective if we are to deliver the end.

There is more to it than just fiscal measures. We need to insist on the role of individuals. The Government must set a clear example, and so must the House. I am pleased that the House has decided to meet the same targets as have been set for Government offices. The House of Commons and the House of Lords will meet the 15 per cent. reduction in energy use. I met the man responsible and he is satisfied that the programme is well on course.

The Ministers in each Department responsible for green issues are also responsible for delivering the departmental targets. At the end of the period concerned, we should have achieved the 15 per cent. reduction that we need. I hope that, among other things, the temperature at which the House generally works will be lowered. I believe that it is higher than it need be.

The only way in which we can, ultimately, achieve our ends and sustain them is not only by setting an example, which we must, but by harnessing the enthusiasm, the willingness to contribute and the simple common-sense actions of countless individuals nationwide. Those small things, which everyone can do, make a huge difference to

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our achievements. It is true that while every household is responsible for 7·5 tonnes of carbon going into the atmosphere, that emission could be reduced by 1 tonne if people adopted relatively small measures. Many may point the finger at each one of those measures and say that they do not seem much, but if each household, out of 20 million, were to adopt those simple measures, the difference could be enormous.

By using less central heating, by using only that amount of water that needs to be boiled for a particular function, by using energy-saving bulbs and by walking, when possible, instead of driving, a great deal could be achieved. That is why we have set an example not only by what we are doing in Government buildings and offices, but by helping pensioners to provide the insulation necessary for their homes.

Those measures represent just 30 per cent. of our target. We must consider transport, which is an important part of the equation, although it is responsible for less carbon than that produced from domestic sources. The car is perhaps the single most emancipating manufactured product yet devised. We need to retain the freedom which car owning has provided. *[Laughter.]* It is all right for Opposition Members to laugh, but the car has given to many people opportunities that they never had before. Those opportunites should not be laughed at. The Opposition will find that the electorate does not share their laughter, because people feel that the motor car has been and is a great force for good.

The car must be the servant, not the master. The issue is how we control the car sensibly within our society. That is why the sustainable development plan states frankly:

"If people continue to exercise their choice as they are at present—and there are no other changes—the resulting traffic growth would have unacceptable consequences for both the environment and the economy of certain parts of the country—and could be very difficult to reconcile with overall sustainable development goals."

There are several approaches to solving that. One is to increase the cost of travel by road. The Government have not baulked at that responsibility, but I have not noticed enthusiasm from the Labour party to support the extra duty on petrol, over and above the cost of living, to help towards that. I have not noticed that, because it is embarrassing to support tough, necessary measures; it is much easier to claim the credit for the advantages that those measures achieve and to make generalised anti-road comments.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to give way if the hon. Lady will tell me that she will support that tax.

Ms Walley: In view of what the right hon. Gentleman has just told the House, do I take it that he and the Secretary of State for Transport intend to review the widening proposals for the M25?

Mr. Gummer: What an interesting answer. I have still not heard an answer about the tax. The Opposition do not want to answer that question. They do not want to accept the fact that they want all the easy popularity, but they do not want to meet the bill. Meeting the bill for sustainable development points up the difference between hypocrisy and reality. I will not, of course, aim either of those words at anyone because that would be unparliamentary.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) knows perfectly well that a public inquiry is being held about the future of the M25. That is the proper way to conduct business. I am sure that she would want the public to have their say, and no doubt they will, and a decision will be made as a result.

A second solution is within our hands as individuals, because we can choose to use the car less or more sensibly. Many people already make a point of doing that and I believe that many others will do so. Technical measures can also help, such as the manufacture of cleaner motor vehicles and I pay tribute to those who have already done so much in that regard.

We can also, however, employ the land use planning system to influence the siting of new shops and offices. Where we choose to work, where we go to enjoy ourselves and where we go to shop are significant choices for our use of the car. They also make a significant impact on urban quality.

Understanding what is needed to improve the quality of cities and towns requires us to look at issues in a broader way. How people shop relates to how they use their cars. How local authorities respond influences whether businesses will invest in town centres. Good urban design demands vitality in the urban property market. That vitality flows from people's decision to shop in town centres. In turn, that depends on a positive approach to planning and managing town centres. That is a job for local authorities, because they must be imaginative in enabling things to happen. They should not say no to a substantial new development without making clear their reasons. Whenever possible, they should point to an alternative way of making provision for economic development. They must adopt a positive approach.

Local authorities must work with local people, landowners and developers to identify the right local strategy. Those strategies in local plans must take account of the national priorities set out by the Government last year in planning policy guidance note 6. That policy is intended to help to deliver town centres that serve the whole community. Those centres should provide a focus for retail development where competing businesses are near enough for shoppers to compare prices and benefits from competition. They should be places in which a series of different uses are encouraged. They would then be attractive to local residents, shoppers and visitors because they would have lively restaurants, cafes, culture and entertainments, as well as shopping facilities and places for people to live.

I want us to improve the quality of our towns so that we can reduce the pressures of urban sprawl and the pressures to develop green-field sites. That means encouraging new shopping developments in locations where they can reinforce town centres—in town centres or within walking distance of them. Where they would result in an unacceptable impact on a town centre, it may be necessary to discourage development on green-field sites on the edge of cities.

I wish to mention a further development that has resulted from the document on sustainable development. Month by month, we shall have new examples of the steadily developing strategy outlined in the document. Today, the Producer Responsibility Industry Group,

representing 28 major companies in the packaging world, presented to me some new packaging proposals. I have the document in front of me. It must be considered further by both Government and industry. Businesses must decide whether to follow its recommendations or face the prospect of a much more bureaucratic scheme proposed by legislation in response to the European Union packaging directive.

The Government must also reserve their position on the plan until industry is sure that it complies with United Kingdom and European Union competition law and until appropriate authorisations have been received from the relevant competition authorities. But I have no hesitation in endorsing the way in which the industry group has approached the challenge. Recycling is a crucial part of any sensible sustainable development strategy. The plan would nearly double the recycling and recovery of packaging waste from 32 per cent. in 1993 to 58 per cent. by 2000. It would bring convenient access to recycling to 80 per cent. of homes by the end of the century, either through home collection or close-to-home bank schemes. Some 15 per cent. of households—3·5 million homes—will be covered by 1996.

The plan includes a clear commitment to expand markets for recycled materials. Having looked hard at potential markets, we believe that recycling of plastics waste is projected to increase from 5 to 16 per cent. by 2000. The plan also safeguards some of the recycling activities most seriously threatened by the impact of foreign schemes, such as United Kingdom paper collection and reprocessing. I shall want to look again at some of the detailed targets, but I believe that the plan is a major step forward.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): As my right hon. Friend knows, the Select Committee on the Environment is midway through its inquiry into recycling. Will he confirm that the producer responsibility group document will be made available to the Select Committee before it reaches its conclusion?

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to do that. It will also be discussed widely by the industry and I hope that we shall have a concerted agreement at the end.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that, if a Minister refers to a document in his speech, he has a duty to place a copy in the Vote Office? There is none there at present. As the Minister has referred to the document, does not he have a duty to produce it for the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Yes, that is the usual procedure. I hope that the Secretary of State will make the necessary arrangements.

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to place the document in the Library and the Vote Office. I apologise to the hon. Member for Denton and Redditch if he feels that I have not already done so, but I received the document only this afternoon. Once I receive full details, I shall certainly make them available to the hon. Gentleman. The document will be in the public domain—it is the group's document, not mine—and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not have wished me to hide the information from the House.

We should ensure, almost immediately, that the new arrangements made so happily through the Uruguay round make it clear that those policies work closely with our environmental policies. We agreed that in Rio and, on the international stage, we contribute to work under way in OECD, the UN Conference on Trade and Development, and the United Nations Environment Programme to examine the interaction between trade and environment policies. I recently had a meeting with my French, German and Spanish colleagues to see how best the European Community can contribute to that important aspect of our policy.

We have announced that the Government will put forward their policies not just for internal criticism but for outside monitoring, which is why there is a panel on sustainable development with such distinguished members. We shall also have a round table on sustainable development, whose proceedings and attitudes will be determined by its members, not laid down in advance. We are reaching out to ensure that the citizens' campaign will reach every village and town in the country, so that sustainable development becomes part of everyone's policy. That is essential if we are to achieve sustainable development.

I began my speech with the first half of a quotation from Hopkins' poem. Some hon. Members will be longing to hear the end of that poem, for at least it holds out hope of change——

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): And hope of the end of the speech.

Mr. Gummer: As the hon. Gentleman says, it also holds out hope of the end of my speech.

The poem says:

"And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings."

There is much to give us hope for a real renaissance in our attitude to the environment in which we live and breathe. Throughout the world, there is a determination to achieve sustainable development, not to cheat our children. Not only in the rich west but in the poor south we must find a way through on a global basis. But none of us can be excused from accepting our individual responsibility for contributing to sustainable development.

8.15 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I welcome the opportunity to debate the documents and sustainable development. I am pleased that the Government say that they want to take Rio forward. It is good to see them trying to go forwards rather than backwards for a change.

The Government announced the four documents with a great fanfare of trumpets at the Banqueting house. Again tonight, there has been much trumpeting from the Secretary of State about how wonderful the Government are being. But what do the documents really add up to? The answer, I am afraid, is very little. They contain a reiteration of existing statements and commitments, but little that is new. The Government have laboured mightily and brought forth 567 pages, two committees and advice on opening your curtains when you get up in the morning.

The two committees are all well and good, but they do not add up to a real vision of a sustainable future for our country or the rest of the earth that we all share. May I

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highlight some general failures in this exercise by the Government? First, they have failed to look with real imagination to the long term. They have recognised the need to do so, but have not done it. The documents contain no sense within the Government of a real concept of where our country could be in 50 or 100 years' time.

There is much talk about the need for research, consultation and waiting for evidence before making decisions, but no sense of direction. If the Government had a sense of direction, they would have recognised the importance of global actions and solutions, especially in relation to the developing world.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) is here, because he pointed out that, following the Budget, the Government are freezing the amount that our country is spending, in cash terms, on overseas aid. Let us put that into the equation when discussing global solutions to sustainability. Let us also put the general agreement on tariffs and trade into the global arena. I was pleased that the Secretary of State—this was a first for the Government—acknowledged today that we need to put the environment into the GATT process. When the Prime Minister came back from the Uruguay round, he was asked about that by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition. This, in fact, answers the question that the Secretary of State asked today about my right hon. and learned Friend, who asked the Prime Minister about the impact of the outcome of the GATT negotiations on the environment. The Prime Minister replied that no one thought there was a problem. Everyone accepted, he said, that the environment was happily taken care of.

Of course, the environment has not been taken care of. Many people are rightly worried that the GATT process will trump environmental protection in international agreements. We want the environment and its needs written firmly and clearly into the remit of the new world trading organisation.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I am all in favour of bringing the environment into the GATT round, but many of the most vociferous opponents of the idea are countries of the south which believe that it would be used as a cloak for protectionism by the rich countries of the west.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman misreads the feelings of many countries in the south. They want to be able to exercise protection of their environment themselves; at the moment, the GATT rules do not allow them to. If environmental protection became an excuse for protectionism, that would not be a good thing. Equally, we must not allow the cause of free trade to lead to the unnecessary degradation of the global environment.

Perhaps the most disappointing part of the documents is that which deals with the prospect of catastrophic climatic change and the impact of carbon dioxide emissions leading up to and beyond the year 2000. Let us consider the steps leading up to the year 2000 first. The Secretary of State made a great deal of that in his speech. Perhaps, then, he will tell us where he believes the savings of carbon dioxide emissions will come from through the work of the Energy Saving Trust. That trust has £6 million from British Gas and a promise of £25 million from the regional electricity companies—and that is it. Is this the trust that is going to yield up about a quarter of the prospective savings of carbon dioxide to which the Secretary of State tells us the Government are already firmly committed? I suspect that we need to hear a great deal more about the funding for, and the actions of, the Energy Saving Trust before we can believe that the Government intend to deliver their commitment.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that in February 1993 he told *Green Magazine* that Labour had been thinking of a number of small but effective tax measures, which included increasing VAT on environmentally unfriendly products? On which products would he put VAT; and does he consider coal-fired power stations, with their production of carbon dioxide, environmentally friendly?

Mr. Smith: I can tell the hon. Gentleman exactly what our document, published in 1991, said—that we would favour putting small increases of VAT on items such as heavy metal batteries and materials containing CFCs. If the hon. Gentleman cannot tell the difference between a heavy metal battery and a domestic gas bill, I am afraid that he is even more stupid than I thought.

The Government's bogus argument is that VAT on domestic fuel is a green measure, intended to change environmental behaviour. In fact, of course, it is designed purely to raise money for the Exchequer—but they do not tell us that. Putting up the price of domestic energy does not change the behaviour of the overwhelming majority, who carry on using the same amount of energy as before, but paying more for it. The people who give up using some of their energy are the people who cannot afford to carry on using it. So the entire burden of a minimal reduction in energy use and carbon dioxide emissions is borne by those who are least able to bear it. That is what happens when VAT is imposed on domestic fuel.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Select Committee on the Environment carried out a study of energy efficiency and recommended that the Energy Saving Trust be funded to the tune of £1·5 billion. Where does the hon. Gentleman think that sort of money should come from? If he thinks it should come from the utilities, will he make it clear to the British people that their electricity and gas bills will have to rise considerably to meet that target?

Mr. Smith: First, the hon. Gentleman should ask the Secretary of State that question. Secondly, it seems to have escaped his notice that the regional electricity companies are making about £1·5 billion profits each year. Thirdly, if the hon. Gentleman had properly read the Opposition's proposals for a national programme of energy efficiency work, he would know that what we propose does not require a single penny's contribution from the taxpayer. Nevertheless, under the sort of programme that we suggest, with a small premium increase in the unit cost of gas and electricity only for people who have had energy efficiency work carried out for free, four times as much carbon dioxide could be saved as the Government claim they will save by means of imposing VAT.

Mr. Dafis: Can the hon. Gentleman confirm one little statistic? Is it not true that Government receipts from 17·5 per cent. VAT on domestic fuel will amount to £2·5 billion?

Mr. Smith: Correct. But the Government will spend only about 2 per cent. of that on the home energy efficiency scheme. So the Secretary of State's claims to generosity —all that extra money going into energy efficiency— amount to nothing more than one fiftieth of the sum that the Government intend to take away from people.

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): Does my hon. Friend recall that when the Paymaster General was asked, during consideration of last year's Finance Bill, what percentage of the VAT would go on energy measures, he said that he was not prepared to answer hypothetical questions? Does not that nail the lie being used to mislead the public about the reasons behind the VAT?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It was noticeable that the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, introducing his Budget in March last year, said not a word about any increase in funding for energy efficiency work. Finally, however, the Government woke up to the fact that they had to be seen to be doing something to mitigate the impact of VAT, and that they did in November.

Dr. Spink: The hon. Gentleman is wriggling and refusing to answer a simple question. I shall ask him once again. Which taxes will he enforce or raise to reduce CO2 emissions? It is a simple question. Please may we have a simple answer?

Mr. Smith: I have already given a simple answer to the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown). By establishing a national programme of energy efficiency work, such as we propose, one can save four times the amount of energy that the Government claim to be saving through the imposition of value added tax, without imposing a single penny of extra tax.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) can tell us why—even on the Government's figures—Britain's carbon dioxide emissions will be reduced by less than 1 per cent. through the imposition of VAT on fuel. The Government are imposing the maximum social pain and distress on millions of people for absolutely minimal environmental benefit.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I must speed on, so I shall not allow any more interventions at this stage.

What will happen after the year 2000? The Government's calculations for what they will do in the run up to 2000 are paltry, but when we ask what they have in store beyond that year they say:

> "Further international action may well be necessary. The current Convention measures will need to be reviewed in the light of the further scientific evidence that has been sought."

In other words, they have no clue what will happen beyond the year 2000.

At the moment, all we have from the Government is a commitment, which they show little sign of being able to meet as carbon dioxide emissions are rising, to have emissions at the 1990 level in the year 2000. We have no commitment beyond that, not even one to stabilise at the level from the year 2000. The documents do not give us any further information.

The first general failing of the documents is that they have no real long-term vision. The second general failure is that the Government do not understand, as they should, that environment protection can be an opportunity and not merely a threat and a burden. Throughout the documents, the environment is seen as something that imposes penalties and dampens prosperity, but it can be a stimulus for prosperity. It is estimated that the global market in environmental products and technologies will be worth at least $300 billion a year by the turn of the century. I hope that, instead of harping all the time on the difficulties of meeting some of the environmental challenges, the Government will start to think about the inherent opportunities.

Thirdly, the documents fail to understand that sustainability is about social equity as well as environmental probity. The Government have totally failed to grasp that fact and their attempt to claim VAT as an environmental measure is precisely in that category. A sustainable approach does not mean that one simply ignores people's needs, especially the needs of those least able to cope with some of the changes that may be necessary.

The Government's documents are, therefore, defective in their wider vision, but the detail also leaves a lot to be desired. There are four areas of concern. First, the roads programme; even the Government are beginning to show some signs of recognising that the development of public transport and not the building of more roads provides the key to a proper sustainable transport policy. Will they, therefore, admit that they were wrong to desecrate Twyford down? If the Secretary of State is so fond of Gerard Manley Hopkins—as, indeed, am I—he will know the closing lines of that wonderful poem, "Inversnaid", where Hopkins writes:

> "What would the world be, once bereft
> Of wet and wildness? Let them be left
> O let them be left, wildness and wet:
> Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet."

Will the Secretary of State apply that to Twyford down; to the 161 sites of special scientific interest that are due to be destroyed by the roads programme; and to the 500 SSSIs that have been damaged during the past three years? Will he apply those principles to the sites that we ought to be declaring inviolable for ever, as part of our implementation of the European Union's habitats directive? Will he apply that to the parts of the home counties where the M25 is to be widened?

If the Secretary of State is serious about putting sustainability at the heart of our transport policies, he will launch a proper and thorough review of the roads programme and its impact on the environment.

I touched on the second area of concern when I mentioned habitats and biodiversity. The hedgerows are one of the most important forms of habitat in this country. The Government said in their manifesto at the last election —we know that they said a lot of things which have since turned out not to be the case—that they would legislate to provide statutory protection for our hedgerows. So, what has happened? A Conservative Back-Bench Member valiantly tabled a private Member's Bill to do precisely that, but it was talked out by some of his fellow Conservative Back Benchers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), who has pursued such matters vigorously since he came to the House, produced a Bill last Friday which would have provided protection for hedgerows, but the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), who sits on the Conservative Benches, objected and the Bill fell.

[Mr. Smith]

The deregulation task force document produced by the Government states in recomendation No. 314 that the task force recommends:

"Abandon the proposed introduction of hedgerow legislation."

That recommendation is, as yet, undenied.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is putting the argument rather one-sidedly. He should recall that three years ago I tried to introduce a private Member's Bill to protect hedgerows. The Bill was not blocked by any of my Conservative colleagues or the Conservative Whip but by the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend, the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen).

Mr. Smith: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to reintroduce his Bill, I can assure him that he will have full co-operation from the Opposition to ensure that it gets through. We have made the Government that offer on several occasions. If the Government want to introduce legislation—perhaps as part of their long-delayed legislation to pave the way for an environmental protection agency—we would give them full and speedy co-operation.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) and the Secretary of State could tell us whether it is the Conservative party manifesto commitment on hedgerows that will stand or the deregulation task force proposal. We have lost one fifth of our hedgerows during the past 10 years and it is about time that they had proper statutory protection.

The third area of concern is forestry. At the moment, Britain is one of the least forested countries in Europe. There has been a remarkable improvement in the planting, conservation and access policies of the Forestry Commission during recent years. The Government appear to accept, because they signed up to the forest principles strategy at Rio, that we need a proper forestry strategy. But there is no prospect of a national strategy if, as the Government appear to wish, the Forestry Commission is to be privatised.

An interdepartmental working party is already beavering away and is due to report to Ministers about now. Ministers are due to make their decisions on the future of the Forestry Commission in the next few weeks. We in the Labour party insist that the Forestry Commission, in whole or in part, should remain in the public sector. It should not be privatised because, if it were, public access, the conservation values of forest maintenance and management and the possiblity of having a genuine national strategy for the future of our forests would be diminished. Perhaps the Minister will give us a commitment that the Government will abandon any plans to privatise the Forestry Commission.

The fourth issue on which progress could be made is bathing water standards. At the moment, our bathing water and our beaches fail to meet the European Community directive legal levels for quality in far too many cases. If one looks around the regions, one will see that, in the south-west, 13 per cent. of beaches fail to meet the standards. In southern England, outside London, 24 per cent. fail to meet legal standards. In the north-west, 67 per cent.—two thirds—of all the beaches have bathing water that fails to meet the legal requirements laid down in agreed European directives.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) seems to be placing much reliance on European legislation. Surely he must remember the Environment Select Committee's unanimous condemnation of the directive for being poorly based on science. That has been reiterated by the Director General of Water Services. Furthermore, a substantial piece of work has been done by *Which?* exposing how it is enforced in Europe and here.

Mr. Smith: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman, unusually, is mistaken. He is getting his directives mixed up. What he said might well be true as far as the drinking water directive is concerned, but it is not true in relation to the bathing water directive. If he wants a practical demonstration of that, I have with me a sample of bathing water, culled only yesterday, from a beach in Cornwall. Its contents are rather unpleasant. This is the bathing water

What are the Government up to? They are in what one might call a recidivists' alliance with the new right-wing Government in France, trying to get the bathing water directive and a whole series of others repealed, withdrawn or amended. The bathing water directive is there on the memorandum that is circulating between the two Governments.

The Prime Minister may believe, as he told us when he came back from the Council in December, that it is perfectly all right for us to swim in sewage when we go to the seaside in this country. I do not share that belief. I want to ensure that our bathing water is improved rather than diminished in quality. I want to see the bathing water directive upheld and not dismantled. I have the proof of why it is needed.

I have identified only four of the many specific issues that could be advanced. We must see much better progress, much more conviction and some signs of real action if the Government are to be believed in what they say about sustainability; otherwise, these documents and the Government's statements on sustainable development will remain simply statements, worthy statements perhaps, but with no sign of action and no real vision underlining them.

8.45 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I am glad to be able to follow the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), because he and I were old colleagues on the Environment Select Committee many years before he reached his present distinguished role, which I hope he will enjoy for many years.

I should remind the hon. Member that the Environment Select Committee has produced reports not only on the drinking water directive but on the bathing water directive as well. The unanimous findings were that the directive was not well based in science. As I said a moment ago, that has been upheld by what the Director General of Ofwat has said, but also by an interesting paper—I commend it to the hon. Gentleman—produced by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology.

One example of where the directive is defective in science is that the parameter for the incidence of salmonella—as laid down in the bathing water directive—is nil, not 0·001 or 0·000001 per cent. As a third of all

gulls carry salmonella, any beach that is near gulls could pass only if those gulls were shot. I am sure that that is not a method which the hon. Gentleman would commend. Like him, I am totally committed to improving the standard of bathing waters, but the matter should be addressed by reference to proper health threats, not by simply framing directives in poorly produced scientific language.

I feel a bit left out of the debate, because I have not brought my book of Hopkins poetry with me. I will not venture down that road. One of the most striking things about the debate is that if it had been held in the aftermath of Rio, approximately two years ago, there would have been far more press attention and far more hon. Members in the House.

We have gone a great way since Rio in all sorts of ways, but I am afraid that, in public perceptions and interest, we seem to have gone backwards. That confirms my general impression that the media are more interested in issues that are trivial and transitory than those that are important and long-term, as undoubtedly this issue is.

Rio was accompanied by much razzmatazz. None of us could have woken up and not heard—if we listened to the "Today" programme—Brian Redhead and others lecturing us on all these extremely important issues and saying what a critical conference it was. Some things have come out of it, but it is a painfully slow business.

There is much common ground between Opposition Members and Conservative Members. I include Ministers in that, because trying to take forward international agreements when one knows that some who signed up to them did so because they wanted press attention at the time of the razzmatazz, yet had no intention whatever of honouring them, must be a frustrating process.

Some criticism was made of the United Kingdom at the time for wanting to look at the fine print of the various agreements before signing up. As so often under those circumstances, the United Kingdom is only the second country to publish a detailed response. I am reminded of a report on acid rain, of which the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and I were co-authors. We said that the Government should join the 30 per cent. club. They did not, but they were very confident that they would achieve the club's objectives. That has come to pass. But has the hon. Gentleman looked recently at the record of all the countries that signed up? Quite a few subsequently said, "Sorry; we meant to achieve that goal, but we did not manage to."

I had the honour to be one of the four Members of Parliament who attended the IPU follow-up conference in Rio, in November 1992. Considerable interest was expressed in some of our United Kingdom activities—especially the annual reports of the Department of the Environment, which are extremely well set out and coherent, and contribute greatly to debate on a factual rather than a suppository basis. *[Laughter.]* It is always possible to make slips: on a previous occasion, I referred to the Po without adding the word "river".

I also welcome the digest of statistics produced by the Department; that, too, contributes a great deal to factual debate. What Rio produced were words, words, words and yet more words. I do not believe that future generations would forgive us if we did not deliver on some of those words—and one of the most important subjects is climate change and global warming.

There is, in general, a scientific consensus on that, although some debate still takes place: the greenhouse effect is recognised as highly probable, although there is room for debate on whether global warming results from it. However, there are extremists on both sides. There are the ostriches, who will say that, because one or two scientists do not agree, we should do nothing; and there are those would take us back to the dark ages, reacting hysterically and histrionically to the evidence.

I think it eminently sensible to operate on the precautionary principle—not just because of the important matters that are at stake, but because the precautions make sense in their own right. It makes sense to conserve resources and energy, to preserve species and to be both good neighbours and good forebears for generations yet to come. I have always felt—as, no doubt, have other hon. Members—that my duty is to pass on to the next generation a world better than the world that I inherited.

I believe that, so far, we are on common ground; but all the actions taken in the United Kingdom and the European Union will be of little consequence if we cannot export our attitudes to other countries. Countries such as China are so important, in terms of their population and their potential economic growth, that if they are unwilling to play a part in the attempt to tackle global warming, we might as well all pack up and go home. We must take every opportunity to embrace such countries in international conventions, and to assist them by means of technology transfer and other forms of help.

The Government have, very properly, entitled their attempt to turn their aims into action at home "Helping the Earth Begins at Home". Fifty per cent. of our greenhouse gas emissions are generated by and from buildings; 25 per cent. are caused by traffic. Every individual has some control over those emissions.

One of the depressing features of traffic emissions is that, although Europe and the United Kingdom spend considerable time producing regulations that control what goes into cars at one end and what goes out at the other, little effort has been put into trying to improve the efficiency of the engines in between. There is enormous scope for new technology in car design that might cut that 25 per cent. total.

I believe that the car is with us to stay. Although it is highly desirable that more people use public transport wherever possible—or, indeed, use no transport other than their own two legs—there is a good case for ensuring that the traffic that remains is civilised. That means proper traffic management schemes, proper bypasses and a good look at road pricing—not necessarily in terms of charges for motorways, which would deal with the wrong end of the problem, but in terms of charges for entry to congested cities. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will examine that possibility first.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Surely the real problem—which the Government have not yet tackled—is how to reduce dependence on the motor car. We all agree that such a measure would be very unpopular, but no one has come up with an effective proposal this evening.

Mr. Jones: Of course that is a problem. I think that pricing has a part to play, along with changing attitudes and trying to encourage more car sharing. I have always believed, however, that, rather than trying to make water flow uphill, we should recognise what people are going to do and try to make it less environmentally damaging. That, I think, represents the thrust of what I have been saying.

[Mr. Jones]

I have mentioned the importance of bypasses. My constituency is fortunate, in that the A41 bypass opened recently. It is well recognised as one of the most environmentally friendly new roads in Britain: it will have 80,000 trees along its length by the end of the planting season, and it will bring much-needed relief to the communities on its path—Berkhamsted, Northchurch, Bourne End, King's Langley and Hemel Hempstead.

My constituents living in those roads—and in roads represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page)—will know that the environmental arguments are strongly in favour of the bypass, and I am sure that the same is true of other hon. Members' constituents.

Those who attack the roads programme always seem to be in favour of the bypass in their constituencies; it is the generality they attack. A few months ago, I replied to a constituent from Friends of the Earth who had suggested that the programme should be reduced, asking him to give me a list of the roads that he thought should be removed from it. He never replied: they never do, because they are unwilling to face up to what may happen in individual areas.

I have referred to emissions from buildings, which may be caused by heating or lighting. There is undoubtedly a strong case for greater efforts in energy conservation, as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury rightly pointed out; currently, however, we await the Government's response to the Select Committee's report on that important subject.

I will not anticipate either that response or the debate that I hope will follow it, but I shall highlight one or two points. The energy ratio fell between 1983 and 1989, but that trend reversed, and there has since been a sustained 3·7 per cent. per annum increase, which needs to be addressed. My noble Friend Lord Walker of Worcester said 10 years ago:

> "A new publicity campaign would move the UK from being one of the most apathetic nations in energy conservation to a position where we are the best within two years."

I never did think much of my noble Friend's forecasting methods, but he has to be so far out with that particular prediction that I hope he will not be reminded of it too often. If we do not try to deliver on his promise of 10 years ago, we shall be in severe trouble in future. There must be greater legislative effort and more resources directed at energy conservation.

There have been exchanges during this debate on the Energy Saving Trust Ltd. I reiterate that it must be properly financed. As the Committee recommended, the Government must adopt a proactive stance, to ensure that all interested parties realise the important role that they should play.

In that context, I was particularly disturbed by the recent comments by the gas industry regulator to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, in which she appeared to go back on her commitment to the E factor and to energy conservation. I subsequently had an exchange of letters that may be published eventually, but I am still extremely concerned that the regulator is not taking that part of her duties as seriously as she should. I commend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the Select Committee's recommendation that a statutory duty should be placed on regulators to have regard to the environment.

There is much to be said for public authorities setting a proper example. There are some good stories of energy conservation among Government Departments, but such achievements have not been universal and in some cases, Departments have gone backwards. The new system of green Ministers should not be just a pleasant get-together now and again, but must contribute to ensuring that the laggards pull their weight and deliver energy savings.

The local authority sector is extremely important because of the number of disadvantaged families that it embraces. Local authority and housing association new build and property renovation should be undertaken with energy efficiency in mind. There are still many technical barriers to that in the local government regime—particularly in respect of leasing. I hope that there will be a positive reaction to the Committee's recommendation in due course. I would attach strings to all future capital investment to ensure that energy saving is delivered.

Greater emphasis must be placed on combined heat and power. It is absurd that so much energy is wasted by not co-ordinating power generation and the heating of offices, factories and homes. Proper energy labelling is also important. It is difficult for the public to know when they are purchasing an environmentally friendly piece of equipment or even an environmentally friendly house. In my constituency, Admiral Homes—pioneers in energy conservation—designed a house with a rating of 10, which is an important achievement.

However, lending authorities such as banks and building societies do not take energy efficiency into account when valuing properties or deciding how much to advance individual borrowers. That does not make sense. If people enjoy lower household running expenses because they spend less on energy, they must more easily be able to afford the repayments on the capital borrowed. One way forward would be for building societies and banks to change their lending policies in that regard.

Although I see scope for flexibility in building regulations between one parameter and another, the last thing I want is a dilution of the impact of these regulations on energy efficiency. I was horrified at the statement by the managing director of Bovis Homes when he was appointed to one deregulatory party—that he was out to get the building regulations. That seemed to be prejudging the issue that he was meant to examine, and was quite inappropriate.

Price must play a part in reducing energy consumption. Whatever Opposition Members may say about value added tax on fuel, it did not exist in the past. I remind the House that the Liberal party document, "Costing the Earth", said that it advocated

> "as a first priority the imposition of a tax on energy . . . The United Kingdom is unusual amongst EC members in not applying even standard rates of VAT to domestic fuels . . . If it proved completely impossible to persuade our international partners to adopt energy taxes, we would nonetheless press forward, but phase them in at lower levels than otherwise—for example, by ending the anomalous zero-rate of VAT on fuel".

No amount of wriggling by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will get the Liberals off that hook. We all know that the Liberal party ditches promises whenever there is a convenient by-election. I live in the Millwall ward of the Isle of Dogs, for goodness' sake: I know the sort of literature that comes through the door from the Liberal party. It is disgusting, and the Liberal party's response to it is disgusting. There

is no way in which the Liberals could deliver on the energy philosophy they set out in the document I quoted and in others.

It is fair to say that price, although important, is not enough. There have to be carrots as well as sticks. There are schemes in place which benefit some people. I commend the Energy Saving Trust, the home energy efficiency scheme and the Government's extension of that scheme.

However, the middle classes, who could well afford to cut their energy consumption, are complacent about it. Not one constituent who has written to me complaining about VAT who lives in a large house and comes from a well-heeled background has said anything about the environment or about doing anything to their home. Yet I know from what I have done to my home that one can save enormous quantities of electricity, gas or oil if one goes about it in the right way.

I said that it was necessary to move people away from their total dependence on the motor car, so I welcome the increase above the rate of inflation in the tax on fuel. An effective measure that could accompany that is to get rid of the car tax and put the same amount on fuel tax.

That would save on the cost of administration of the car tax. It would deal once and for all with tax dodging. It would provide a powerful incentive to use less fuel. It would not harm pensioners, because on the whole they do much less than the average mileage. The measure would hit those who use cars to drive long distances every year. I catch the eye of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) at that point, but I know that he uses the train frequently.

Forestry was an important part of the Rio declaration. It is important internationally. We must remember that sustainability is the key. Nothing is more depressing than seeing so-called environmentalists campaigning for bans on imports of hardwoods. By doing so, they tell a country that what it has is of no value. If what a country has is of no value and it cannot make any money out of it, it will find something to do with the land which will generate an income. That is bound to be bad environmentally.

We must encourage those who have sustainable policies and discourage those who have not. For example, peninsular Malaysia has the British heritage of an excellent 50-year replanting cycle, although there have been problems on the island of Borneo. Other countries in west Africa and south-east Asia do not have sustainable policies. I strongly recommend taking a differential approach not only to countries but to plantations and companies within them.

It is important that we do what we can, but we must do it in practical terms. I remember talking to a leading environmentalist in Brazil when I visited that country a few years ago with the Select Committee. Museo Goldi said that people in the west had to get away from talking about the environment at cocktail parties and start to help countries to do something about improving sustainability. He went on to say that the British had one of the best records that he had come across. The Overseas Development Administration was financing work through the Oxford Forestry Institute to help Brazil to improve its performance.

There is a lot to do. One has to remember that the greatest fire in the history of the world occurred in Brazil. It occurred because of the tax regime in Brazil. The cause of the fire was Volkswagen—a funny sort of company to cause a fire in a forest. Apparently, it owned the land and needed to demonstrate that it was being developed, which was done by burning down the trees.

At home, I think that the Government's response to the report that we produced on forestry and the environment was a little disappointing. There are some positive signs; I welcome the fact that the Government are considering the need for a national forestry strategy. Given our low tree cover ratio, I find it peculiar that the Government rejected our recommendation to establish one-stop shops to provide advice on forestry applications and grants. Landowners who have to go between the Countryside Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, local authorities and other organisations become lost in a maze, and probably put off the idea.

Equally important in the report was our recommendation that England, Scotland and Wales should be considered separately for the purpose of developing forestry strategy. The geography and geology in each of those countries are different, and, although they should be brought together in a national forestry strategy, what is right for Scotland is not necessarily right for England, and vice versa.

Mr. Dalyell: On the subject of Scotland, the hon. Gentleman knows the case of Mar lodge, and he knows Dr. Jim Ratter, the adviser on the Select Committee that went to Brazil. A number of us feel strongly—as does Dr. Ratter —that we must set an example. If we are to make suggestions to the Brazilians about what they should do with their Atlantic rain forests, we had better do something about the ancient forest of Caledon.

Mr. Jones: I have some sympathy with the argument of the hon. Gentleman, who would not expect me to comment specifically on that issue.

In many third-world countries, it has rightly been asked of me, "How can you lecture us about what to do with our forests when you have destroyed the vast majority of yours in the industrialisation process?" It is extremely important not to lecture, but to try to work in co-operation with others, which is why I praised the work of the Overseas Development Administration.

In the almost 11 years that I have been in the House, I have never been involved in a debate with such a long-term impact on the future of not just this country but the world. It is sad that so little seems to have been achieved in the intervening period since the Rio summit. But our Government have done a great deal more than others, for which I commend them.

9.12 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The partisan comments of the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) spoilt his argument and were as invalid as the similar part of the speech of the Secretary of State for the Environment. However, his non-partisan comments contained many sensible suggestions, which I hope that the Government will take up. He also made some mild criticisms of several Government policies, which I hope that the Government will read, hear and act on.

Today's debate is the first since the Energy Conservation Bill passed through the House on Friday. Passing legislation and doing things will also be far more effective than talking—that was the message of Rio. I welcome the fact that the Energy Conservation Bill has not

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

yet been blocked by the Government, and I hope that they do not seek to water it down in Committee—one of the first practical tests of whether we are serious about sustainability.

It is ironic that we are having the debate today—the very day that the Government are defending their position on wanting to start up THORP, the thermal oxide reprocessing plant. They are also trying to defend their unwillingness to have a public inquiry. To many of us, and to huge numbers of people up and down the country, that is one of the most unsustainable of the Government's recent commitments. I hope that the court will be able to provide an effective backstop and order the Government to have a public inquiry.

Today's debate is welcome. I welcome the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to his relatively new responsibilities. I am glad to see him here and look forward to working with him.

The debate should have occurred in the summer. It was scheduled to occur in the last week of term before the summer holiday, but it was hijacked by the Maastricht shenanigans and was lost. That is a reflection of the failure of the system, to which I shall return. Producing documents and then debating policy, as opposed to debating policy and then producing documents, is a funny system and a funny way to govern and consult. It is all too indicative of the way in which we have behaved so far and I am ever hopeful that the system will improve. We should have had the debate here and in the other place well before now so that it could have influenced the content of the Government's documents when they came to produce them.

My premise, to which the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West alluded, is that the Government should set an example. Whatever the standards of other Governments in following up the Rio summit, we should set an example. Even if others' standards fall short, we should seek to have the higher standards. On that premise, the Government are about to submit their document—a little belatedly, as they committed themselves to producing it by the end of September—to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, which was set up at the Rio conference.

We ought to note that the debate, as evidenced by the current consultations between the Whips on the Front Bench, is far too short for the subject. To fit in a debate which will last for no more than two and a half hours and the last of the substantive business after a private Member's motion again indicates a lack of commitment to take the issue as seriously as it merits. It is not that the country is not committed. One of the interesting—and, if we are not careful, misleading—facts displayed in the opinion polls is that people still think environmental issues are less serious. That is not true. Most people have adopted the environmental agenda and have recognised the importance of it. It may not be at the top of their list: if they are out of work, they may have other things to think about. With 3 million people unemployed, it is not surprising that employment or the state of the economy is at the top of the list. But most of the environmental pressures and movements of the 1980s have produced a residual strong commitment and we should not be deluded either by the apparent lack of interest or by the apparent shortness of the debate. We want to take part in the debate, we want to influence the Government and what I shall say will be aimed at trying to get the Government to be stronger, better, quicker, faster and tougher. They have taken some steps, but many of us believe that they have not yet gone far or fast enough.

The fundamental issues have been alluded to and addressed either specifically or indirectly in the documents that the Government produced at their £20,000 jamboree down the road at the Banqueting house during the past month. We are talking about the sort of growth that we achieve and the quality of life that we want and can get. We are also discussing the right level of consumption and not just accepting that there is a demand for more and more consumption. The debate is not only about inter-generational equity, as it is called, but about equity in Britain and equity around the world. These are all big issues.

It is not acceptable that after 14 years of Conservative government the gap between the rich and poor in the country has widened; nor is it justified by the fact that the same has happened in most other countries. It is certainly unacceptable that the gap between the richest 20 per cent. and the poorest 80 per cent. has widened. Those issues were all on the Agenda 21 part of the debates at the Rio summit. This debate addresses that entire range of subjects, including population, housing and quality of life the world over.

Dr. Spink: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I shall try to let as many hon. Members intervene as possible, but the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) has intervened twice already.

Ministers are clearly increasingly nervous about the Liberal Democrats; otherwise, they would not have a go at us so often. They must be nervous if they continually have to quote the draft before the final draft before the final document as policy and never allude to the final policy document itself. If they are nervous because we are chasing them, I am happy about that, too.

Dr. Spink *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: No, I shall not give way on that point because I want to leave time for other hon. Members to speak.

The responses to the White Paper suggested a general disappointment. It contained many coulds, ifs and maybes rather than whys, whats and whens. The Government need not accept my word—the National Society for Clean Air called it

"A Small Step for Sustainability"

and Friends of the Earth said that it had been

"disappointed by the limited extent to which any new approach to marrying the twin objectives of sound economic development and protecting the environment has emerged."

In the days following the Whitehall launch down the road, many newspaper headlines reflected the general disappointment.

Dr. Spink: But what taxes would the Liberal Democrats impose?

Mr. Hughes: I can deal with taxes if the hon. Gentleman wants me to, but I am trying to keep to the central issue. I shall end my remarks by saying yes, we all have to pay. We should be quite straightforward about that.

The day after the launch many newspaper editorials reflected the general disappointment. One stated that the gloomy environmental picture posed "hard questions" and would need

"not just a searching scrutiny of the lifestyle of the Great Car Economy but a challenge to familiar assumptions about growth and change"

and suggested that the Secretary of State's reference to Cardinal Newman was not very useful. The *Financial Times*, hardly a partisan newspaper, judged the White Paper to be "a pale green blockbuster". *The Independent* said:

"Major gives green light to nuclear industry growth."

Those comments represent incompatible views, but there were also adverse comments from those whom one would expect to be critical, which included:

"Our green hopes, their empty words".

Andrew Marr wrote an interesting commentary in which he made it clear that the documents did, however, highlight some difficult choices.

Let us accept that the Government had generally high expectations. No one thought that they were doing terribly well and the documents told us little new. Indeed, I think that it was Madam Speaker who said that it was not a new policy, which was why there was no statement in the House. Some of us knew already that it contained nothing new.

Let me suggest why we were disappointed and how the Government should respond. First, the White Paper contained an inadequate set of responses. It contains inadequate targets, timetables and proposals for monitoring. I and many others believe that unless we have clear targets and timetables and an objective method of monitoring our attainment of those targets and timetables we shall be partisan and merely whistling in the dark.

We need economic indicators. Many people have worked on indicators that would serve our purpose. We need valid projections, statistics, facts and figures to assess objectively how well the Government are doing. By definition, they are not those produced by the Government in their own defence to justify themselves when, like any Government, they fall short of their objectives.

Secondly, the whole process needs to be much less inadequate. It is not sufficient to have a series of Green and White Papers which regularly fall short of the targets that they themselves set. There can be no doubt that that is what is happening at the moment. We have a process whereby the Government consult, disappoint those whom they have consulted by appearing not to have listened, produce documents and then propose inadequate mechanisms for carrying forward the debate anticipated at Rio. A panel, or round table, on sustainable development and a citizens environment initiative are no substitute for a series of rigorous governmental processes to test the validity of what is and what is not a sustainable policy.

We should establish an entirely free-standing body which is regularly the proactive generator of proposals—a body like a royal commission. Local and central thinking should be integrated into that body. Any draft governmental proposal should be rigorously scrutinised by Select Committees of both Houses before it is concluded and, so far as possible, a consensus should be sought. I am not arguing that my view alone should prevail; I want the best common agreement. I believe that I can persuade the Government of the merit of my case, but I shall not have the opportunity to do so if there is no debate before they produce their documents or if they do not read or take account of people's submissions.

There is much good practice. The Dutch are very good and the Canadians are very good, for example, and the Government know that. It has been suggested to me, and I agree, that if the Government did what the Canadians did last year—passed an Act of Parliament setting up the mechanism for a round table and so on—we would do better. Will the Minister consider the Canadian model and the Dutch model—the American model is not far behind—and provide us with an evaluation of whether we could use those models here?

My third proposal is about inadequate integration. For me, the test of whether we have sustainable development is whether we marry sustainable economic policy into our sustainable environmental policy. For me, that means that the Treasury is central. In Holland, much taxation never passes into law until it is co-signed not only by the Chancellor or the Finance Minister but by the Environment Minister. Unless we debate the sustainable benefit of taxation A compared with taxation B, we shall not bring about that marriage.

The reason why the Government got into such a muddle in connection with VAT on fuel, and the reason why the Liberal Democrats backed off the idea, was that it did not add up as the best way of taxing for green purposes. If the Government had consulted widely about it instead of the Chancellor pulling it out of his red box and saying, "Wow! Here is a good money-raising wheeze and it is also environmentally sound", the Government would not have been in so much hot water and they might not have lost two by-elections to the Liberal Democrats during this Parliament.

There are many ways in which one can test sustainable policies and we each might have our pet test. I can only list some of the ways in which one can test them.

One can test them by considering energy policy. I would argue that one needs a sustainable, coherent energy policy; one cannot have the nuclear review one day, the renewables review the next and decide the future of the coal industry the day after that. We have to ensure that we do what we say we will do. It is no good saying that we will reduce energy consumption if Government buildings then consume more energy. It is no good setting Energy Saving Trust Ltd. a task and then giving it a minimal amount of what it needs to carry it out.

Alternatively, one can use transport as the test. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) gave obvious comparable examples. One has to ask oneself whether the motorway widening scheme is acceptable on present tests. Is it acceptable that we lose more than 50 per cent. of our sites of special scientific interest as a result of about half of our motorway schemes? The answer that I and others would give to that is definitely no.

One can use agriculture, planning and the countryside as the test, whether one considers hedgerows or sites of special scientific interest—only five years ago, 3 per cent. of those remaining sites had been destroyed, but now 5 per cent. have been destroyed. I welcome what has been said about planning and out-of-town superstores, and so on, but that was a policy for which some of us argued 15 or 20 years ago and it is now a bit late. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said from a sedentary position earlier that it is a bit like shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. We have built all the blessed

[Mr. Hughes]

superstores out of town now; the country has been ploughed up; people have to drive to the stores and they are not near railway stations. It is a bit late now, but I hope that we have learnt the lesson.

We could have had sustainable targets for air pollution as the test. The Government eventually signed up in Rio to a target for carbon dioxide emissions, but with no legal commitment. That is not good enough. There are already serious doubts about whether even the target that the Government set is sustainable and achievable on the basis of their present performance. We have to do better in terms of domestic, vehicular and industrial pollution if we are to achieve even the Government's target for the year 2000.

We can use water pollution as the test. To use a crude test, six of our eight premier bathing resorts still discharge raw sewage. If that is where we have arrived after 14 years of Conservative government, the priorities are wrong.

There are many tests. Those are some of the obvious ones. Population is another one. Trade is one. Aid is one —and in Malaysia recently there have been examples showing the inadequacies of our aid programme.

I was asked the question that we are all asked: are we speaking about hypocrisy or reality? The answer is that we have to speak about reality, and reality requires difficult nettles to be grasped. It requires us to work out how we pay the price. The question about how we pay the price has an answer. We pay the price by making the most worthwhile investment and we make the most worthwhile investment by ensuring that we hand on the same amount of capital in the bank, if not more.

Maurice Strong, the secretary general to UNCED, said;

"We have to make sure that the road from Rio is a fast track, if we are to realise our hope that the United Nations Earth Summit really was a quantum leap forward on that road to sustainable development."

Nobody could call the British road from Rio a fast track. We have started on the road, but unless we go much further, much faster and much more effectively, it will not be we who pay the price, but those who come after. We shall have spoilt their chances of inheriting from us a sustainable world.

9.30 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): The climate change convention commits developed countries to taking measures aimed at reducing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000. The Government have accepted that commitment and they will meet that commitment. They might even better it. That is real action, not just words. We have already heard tonight that we need real action, not more words, to protect the environment.

A real and positive contribution can be made by nuclear electricity generation to reduce the United Kingdom's emission targets for the year 2000. We currently generate about 22 per cent. of our electrical power through nuclear energy. If we replaced that by gas or coal-burn generation, the UK's emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases would be dramatically increased. The Secretary of State said that there would then be an increase of 6 million to 15 million tonnes of carbon a year.

We must ensure that we retain a balanced energy strategy which allows for the replacement of the old Magnox reactors as they go off stream before the year 2000. We need new nuclear stations and new nuclear capacity to come on stream to replace the Magnox stations. I am as anxious as other hon. Members to bring forward the energy debate when we can review the position of nuclear power within our strategy. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to press his right hon. Friends to bring forward that review. I accept what the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said about the need for a co-ordinated and comprehensive strategy which would embrace issues such as waste management. However, I believe that we should bring forward the nuclear review at the earliest possible moment so that we can plan rationally and responsibly how to protect and enhance the environment and to meet our Rio commitments. If we are to meet our Rio commitments, we need a stable nuclear component within a balanced energy strategy. I hope that the Opposition will now accept that fact.

Labour has consistently called for the adoption of more stringent targets than those included in the convention to deal with the problem of climate change. After the Rio summit, the then Labour environment spokesman attacked the Government for dragging their feet. Labour claimed in June 1992 that more could have been achieved and that British Ministers could have played a more positive role, especially in respect of global warming. How could they have done? Where is Labour's policy for achieving more? How could the Labour party achieve more, without imposing taxes on energy, when it wants to destroy the nuclear component of power generation? Will the Minister explain that to me, because I fail to see how it could be achieved?

The Liberal party has also shown a certain amount of inconsistency. It opposes the Government's decision to levy VAT on domestic fuel and power. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) quoted from its 1991 policy document entitled "Costing the Earth", in which it showed itself to be even more hypocritical than the Labour party. Page 31 of the Liberal party's 1992 general election manifesto made a commitment to introducing a Community-wide energy tax on all energy sources.

The Liberal Democrat party reaffirmed that commitment on page three of its Green Paper, "Taxing Pollution, Not People", which was published in September 1992 and stated that it supported

"The European Community proposals for an energy/carbon tax and would press for its immediate implementation at a national level".

I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey nodding in agreement with that statement.

That document accepted that such a tax would lead to increases of 58 per cent. in the price of coal, of 14 per cent. in the price of gas and of 13 per cent. in the price of domestic electricity. Page nine states that the proposals are "too timid rather than too radical".

The Liberal Democrat party's support for the EC carbon tax showed its uncritical enthusiasm for all things European. Will the Minister explain that inconsistent element in its policy which I do not understand?

9.36 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I am grateful to have the opportunity to make a few brief comments in the debate and I thank the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) for curtailing his remarks.

I am as cynical about the Government's record on the environment as I am about their record on so many other matters. The two main themes at Rio were the developing countries and the global environment. We restated our commitment to the developing countries to reach the United Nations aid target of 0·7 per cent. of GDP, but the Goverment have cut our aid budget from 0·52 to 0·27 per cent. over the past 14 years. Recently, it has been revealed that aid of £254 million for the Pergau dam in Malaysia was partly used for arms. That was a corrupt, improper use of the aid budget. It makes one feel cynical about the Government's aid policy.

Often we hear the Government say one thing but do another. We have a carbon dioxide problem and too little forestation. A major effort should be made to tackle that. With the surplus in agricultural production under the set-aside policy, it is eminently sensible to increase forest cover. The Government have a target to double forest cover by 2050, yet we still face the possibility of privatisation and the danger that forests will be cut down to make a quick profit.

In the documents, the Government talk about promoting the use of public transport, but what have they done? They have privatised the railways, which will hardly help. In the past year, the coal industry in particular has suffered from the dash for gas. I said earlier that I liked the Secretary of State's redefinition of sustainable development—that it would not cheat our children. What else are we doing with the exploitation of North sea oil and gas?

The dash for gas could have been halted and slowed down by imposing combined heat and power regulations on new gas power stations and by insisting that they use their energy efficiently. That would have transformed electricity generation over a 10-year period, with power generated at 80 per cent. efficiency instead of the present 40 per cent. The national rivers survey by the National Rivers Authority in 1990 showed for the first time ever that there has been a net deterioration in the quality of British rivers. What do the Government do? They cut the NRA's budget by 30 per cent. over three years. In a recent European summit, the Government backtracked on EC water quality directives.

Deregulation is threatening environmental protection, and we are still waiting for the environmental protection agency which was promised four or five years ago by the Government. All that we have been promised for this Session is a paving Bill. I feel let down, as do the people of this country, by the Government's record. It is short-sighted in terms of the environmental technology industry and it puts us at the back of a queue behind Japan, Germany and the United States in that tremendous growth market.

I finish by referring to a recent newspaper article by Professor David Pearce, a professor of economics at London university. He said that there was little in the policy papers to suggest that the Government understand the meaning or implications of sustainable development. That comes from an insider who knows more about the Government's policy than any hon. Member in the House this evening. It is sad. The debate concerns taking Rio forward, but I am afraid that the Government just do not have the political commitment to what was discussed in Rio.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you hear a point or order from me at 10 o'clock to save time? The point of order will concern the fact that there are a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House who were trying to be called.

Madam Speaker: I will hear the hon. Gentleman's point of order now.

Mr. Dalyell: I make no complaint about those hon. Members who were called. Could it be registered that my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and other hon. Members would have liked to take part in the debate? Those hon. Members will take it ill to be berated by sections of the press and to be told that there is no interest in Rio and in the environment—far from it.

Madam Speaker: There is a great deal of interest in the matter. Between them, the two Front Benches will, by 10 o'clock, have taken one hour and 40 minutes in a short debate. I would also point out to the hon. Gentleman that two orders were quite properly divided on. Those took 25 minutes, during which time other hon. Members could have been called.

9.42 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): It is only fair to point out that the Secretary of State took 52 of those minutes on his own account. The right hon. Gentleman's responses to interventions were often somewhat longer than the interventions.

This has been a good debate, and it is unfortunate that more of my hon. Friends were unable to catch your eye, Madam Speaker, because of the time restraints. I should like to draw the attention of the House to a couple of remarks made by hon. Members. It was significant that the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), who is respected on both sides of the House for his views on the matter, could not manage to get through his speech without making some minor criticisms of the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) made a good critique of the documents and of their effectiveness or otherwise. My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) as usual made a knowledgeable speech, and brought the benefit of his great expertise on the subject to the House.

The Secretary of State made great play in his opening speech of a piece of work by Gerard Manley Hopkins. I thought that it would be appropriate to look for a response in the form of poetry. *[Interruption.]* The Minister now may be reticent to get involved in this literary side of the debate. I thought that the words of Wordsworth might be appropriate:

"Blest statesman he, whose mind's unselfish will leaves him at ease among grand thoughts."

The issue at stake during this taking Rio forward debate is whether the Secretary of State has dealt with the grand issues, and, indeed, how at ease he is with them. That seems to be the crucial test.

The Secretary of State made a few interesting points tonight. Over the past few months, I have studied him and I accept that he has a genuine set of green intentions. He feels strongly about some issues, about which he sometimes rants in the Chamber. *[Interruption.]* Perish the thought that the Secretary of State should ever rant. There appears to be a black hole, however, between what the right hon. Gentleman believes he is doing and what the proposals in the Government's documents are likely to

[Mr. George Howarth]

achieve. A good example of that, which the right hon. Gentleman mentioned, is the link between green issues and environmental policy and economic growth and economic policy in general. That is at the core of sustainable development.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said, the global market in environmental technologies is worth $300 billion according to the OECD and $600 billion according to other estimates. Either way, it is a massive market, far bigger than the global market for the aerospace industry. I hope that we can agree that that is the case.

We need a sound domestic base on which to develop that market, especially if we are to maximise the export potential that is offered. A survey of 300 United Kingdom businesses, recently carried out by environmental consultants, revealed that, although the global market is growing exponentially, Britain is at the bottom of the league. According to a study conducted by the German Government, Germany has 21 per cent. of the market, while the United States and Japan have taken, respecti ely, 16 and 13 per cent. of it. The United Kingdom's share is so low, unfortunately, that it does not even figure in the survey. Those consultants concluded:

"The British technology industry is not a world player."

The Government's obsession with privatisation is also threatening the future of our forests. I hope that the Minister will take the initiative tonight, because it is about time that the Government said that they would not pursue that privatisation. I hope that the hon. Gentleman can offer hon. Members that assurance.

I have the honour to represent part of the north-west, but I regret to say that 67 per cent. of the bathing beaches in that region have failed the bathing water directive. The Wirral, on Merseyside, has some of the best beaches, but some are not even recommended for people to use. At the same time as the statistics are published, the Minister dodges his way around Europe trying to get Britain out of that directive. If people use our beaches at all, they are forced to stand alongside raw sewage, sanitary products and other equally appalling objects.

The recent accident at Ellesmere Port reveals that the petro-chemical industry is not safe and has a huge potential for inflicting environmental damage. I support the call of my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) for a public inquiry into that accident. It is time that we learnt from such disasters about how mistakes are made. We should try to learn how to avoid similar environmental damage in the future.

On all those issues, the Government behave dirty at home, while their record abroad is one of missed opportunities to lead. The British people have lost confidence in the Government's environmental policy, as they have in so many of their other policies. The time is coming when the Government will no longer be trusted to protect our environment, because they are obviously failing to do so now.

9.48 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): I have been fascinated by this debate. In a former incarnation, I was responsible for matters in Northern Ireland and I was immensely impressed by the quality of the briefing that I received from officials in my Department, as well as by my Secretary of State and other Ministers who have told me about the success story of this country's environmental policy.

I was particularly fascinated by a survey carried out on people's attitudes to environmental problems. It showed that although 85 to 90 per cent. of those canvassed were concerned about matters relating to the ozone layer, greenhouse gases, and so on, the same percentage were entirely opposed to actions to remedy those problems if they involved cost.

We are arguing about a climate of change in public opinion, which means that we must get it across to people that dealing with those concerns will cost money or affect individuals' way of life. Unless we create that climate of change, we shall be unable to fulfil the requirements and targets set out in these immensely important documents.

In Northern Ireland, I was Minister responsible for the Department of Economic Development and the Department of the Environment. Those two Departments were indivisible. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said that this area of environmental activity is an opportunity, not a burden. I could not agree with him more. As a result of my experience in Northern Ireland, we produced a document called "Growing a Green Economy", which dealt with economic growth and environmental protection. That is why I was refreshed and heartened to realise, on taking this new job, that we were trying to do the same thing here.

Ms Walley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: If the hon. Lady will forgive me, I do not have time.

Our task concerns those in industry and business as much as environmentalists. We must encourage each side of the argument—if argument there be—to recognise the virtues on both sides.

As Chairman of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) spoke with great authority on, and interest, in environmental matters. My hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) made a brief intervention in his speech. I recognise that some of the questions raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West were critical in detail. It is right and proper that, on such a wide subject, we should consider a number of activities and we recognise that, whereas the Government are achieving more than many of our contemporaries in other countries, we have some way to go in other areas.

I do not accept, however, the attack by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury on the Government's transport and roads policy, for example, which he made with great venom, albeit with a twinkle in his eye. None the less, it is a serious point. Labour-controlled Lancashire county council in my constituency is determined to push a motorway through rural areas, affecting rural habitats and parts of my constituency and others. Like the Liberal party, the Labour party says one thing at national level but does another locally. Such action is not untypical of Lancashire council and many other Labour-controlled authorities.

Mr. Dafis: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I do not have time. I am not referring to his party, but if he wants to take up the matter, he will have an opportunity to do so later.

Leaflets have been posted in my constituency and those of some of my hon. Friends saying that the Liberal party is against VAT on fuel. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, what the Liberal and Labour parties say in the House is contrary to the policies declared by their spokesmen.

The Government, led by the Prime Minister and supported by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, have taken action to produce documents that have fulfilled a commitment to spell out what was required and what the future holds. We must make it clear that that will bring burdens to bear. The Opposition have not been prepared to do that.

Soon after arriving at the Department, I learnt about the packaging initiative, to which my right hon. Friend referred. It is immensely impressive, and it will be extremely important in getting the industry to realise what needs to be done and in encouraging people in the industry to recognise the lead taken by the group of 28. Today, in another part of Britain—Derbyshire—I launched The Countryside Means Business, which profiles 12 small companies reflecting the sustainable development message and encouraging economic activity in rural areas—activity which is also environmentally sensitive.

This week, the United Kingdom ratifies the Basle convention on the control of the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and their disposal. The United Kingdom will become a party to the convention in May, and on 1 May the new waste licensing regulations come into force.

Tomorrow marks the first of a series of 10 road shows on the theme of climate change: the challenge and the opportunities. Next week is energy advice week; the following week the Government publish their response to the Select Committee report on energy efficiency in buildings. The Helping the Earth campaign is to be extended for another two years. Here, indeed, is evidence of activity and of a commitment to the targets set by my right hon. Friend and by the Government throughout the length and breadth of this country. We, therefore, have nothing to be ashamed of.

There is certainly more work to be done, and we must keep at it. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) mentioned bathing beaches, a subject which I, as a fellow north-west Member, understand well. The sewage outfalls of this country have needed attention for many years, but not much attention has been given them—although hon. Members may have mentioned them from time to time. As a result of the bathing water directive and of the Government's commitment, about £2 billion is being spent on the problem. Compliance has risen from 56 to 80 per cent. of beaches, and by 1995 the vast majority will meet the mandatory standards of the directive. It is simply not true to say that my right hon. Friend has been going around Europe trying to stop the bathing water directive. We need to nail that canard here and now.

It is worth adding that a four-year study by the universities of Wales and of Surrey showed that more fuss is made about this matter than it merits. As I have said, £2 billion is being spent to bring our beaches up to the standards that we want.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West referred to a number of points that interested me. I was particularly taken by the idea of the surveys of energy efficiency done before people buy houses. I was associated with that good idea on my first engagement in this job. I am interested to learn that at least one building society has taken it up. Clearly, it would have an effect on owners if, before they bought a house, such a survey were part of the deal. Any encouragement of the practice is to be welcomed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point asked one or two questions about Labour and Liberal policy. It is not for me to answer those questions——

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): It would not take long.

Mr. Atkins: Indeed not. In our documents, we have set out targets which constitute a challenge to the public, and we have set out ways and means by which round table advice from the great and the good—they understand these matters; they can criticise and advise us on what we need to do—can be elicited. That shows that we recognise that more needs to be done. We recognise that independent, impartial, outside advice can tell us where we need to be moving, to build on our energy efficiency campaign, and so on. We have increased expenditure on that campaign by up to 50 per cent. this year, and the budget for energy efficiency stands at about £100 million. Home energy efficiency scheme expenditure has doubled, and will be about £75 million in 1994-95. All this is more evidence of our commitment and of the tremendous lead given by my right hon. Friend during his tenure of office.

Let me remind the House that we are talking about sustainable development and a strategy to meet it. The strategy builds on the 1990 environment White Paper, which sets out principles of sustainable development and looks ahead 20 years to 2012 to identify the problems and opportunities that we must all work on. It studies processes and the way in which we can achieve sustainable development and who can do what—whether the Government, local authorities, businesses, industry, voluntary bodies or whoever. It also sets out three new Government measures: an independent panel, a national round table and a citizens environment initiative.

As I listened to Opposition Members, it became increasingly clear that the Opposition parties are presenting a fraudulent prospectus—saying what they want in general, but being coy about, or denying, the specifics. They never accept that there is a cost and they pretend that it can all be done without upsetting the voters.

There is a cost and the public deserve——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is not a complaint about the fact that neither I nor my hon. Friends the Members for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) and for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) have been called, but concerns the way in which Parliament operates. You will recollect that on a Monday—after a Banqueting house press conference had taken place in the morning—I raised a point of order, which you most courteously heard, about whether it was proper that a press conference should take place with a great fanfare but that there should be no statement in the House of Commons. I subsequently raised the matter on the Floor of the House and my hon. Friend

[Mr. Dalyell]

the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) supported me from the Opposition Front Bench. He agreed with my point of view and, Madam Speaker, you gave a very sympathetic response on that occasion.

Since I saw the Leader of the House about the matter he has written to me saying that I had no reason to complain because there would be a debate, which he implied was better than a statement by the Secretary of State. However, tonight we have seen exactly what happens in a debate, and that it is not a substitute for a ministerial statement.

Therefore, if on future occasions any Government should spend all that money—I gather that it was a heck of a lot——

Mr. Simon Hughes: It was £20,000.

Mr. Dalyell: Yes. If any Government spend £20,000 on making a statement at the Banqueting house, we should at least have a statement in this House. Tonight's debate has proved that there is no substitute for such a statement, when a Minister can be questioned——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. There are no points of order arising from that matter. I dealt with the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about 20 minutes ago. I understand exactly what he is talking about; however, it is not a point of order for me but a matter of business. The hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members may wish to raise it during business questions on Thursday.

The debate has been very short and I have enormous sympathy with Back-Bench Members who have been sitting here for the past two or three hours waiting to speak, while Front-Bench Members took about one hour and 40 minutes between them and other Back Benchers also took a considerable time. On such occasions—when several other Back Benchers have a contribution to make—there ought to be a little more understanding and hon. Members' speeches should be more brisk. The hon. Gentleman's point of order is, therefore, a matter for business questions, but I think that I have made my views very clear. I am very disappointed for those Back Benchers who have been sitting in the Chamber for some time and have not been able to speak in the debate.

Cruelty to Greyhounds

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

10.3 pm

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): I am grateful to have this opportunity to mention the problem of cruelty to greyhounds so soon after the BBC's "On the Line" programme on the subject. That documentary brought the issue to my attention and there has subsequently been much comment in the press—especially the sporting press—and a great deal of supplementary information and evidence has been sent to me, and no doubt to other hon. Members.

I shall make a special mention of Mrs. Anne Shannon of the Isle of Man, who runs the Homesafe Greyhound Rescue outfit, and of Mr. Paddy Sweeney, a prominent veterinary surgeon who is also the father of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney). The hon. Gentleman has kindly passed information from his father to me.

It is not my intention this evening to criticise greyhound racing as a sport—the second largest spectator sport in the United Kingdom and a very important industry—but I intend to criticise some of the priorities within the sport.

At the most public end of greyhound racing is a vastly profitable public entertainment colossus. I am told that £2 billion a year is gambled on dogs, £14 million is spent on upgrading Hackney stadium, including, I believe, £10 million investment by Saudi Arabia. The cloth cap and half-crown bet image of dog racing has given way to a much more wealthy and upmarket image, with excellent restaurants, bars and relatively luxurious accommodation. It is a multi-million pound entertainment industry at that end.

At the other end are the charities and the volunteers struggling to rescue as many as 30,000 dogs a year, who are either retired from racing or never make the grade. The Retired Greyhound Trust can rescue some 600 dogs a year. One wonders what happens to the other 29,400. The chief trading axis in greyhounds that concerns us is Ireland, the United Kingdom and Spain. More than 25,000 dogs are registered in Ireland every year; 9,000 are exported to the United Kingdom, which totals around 90 per cent. of the United Kingdom runners.

The United Kingdom accounts for 80 per cent. of Irish exports, so conditions and attitudes in Ireland are of direct concern to the authorities and the Government in this country. Some 50 per cent. of Irish greyhound puppies make the grade. Therefore, 50 per cent. do not. One wonders what happens to them. In my view, there is massive over-breeding of greyhounds in Ireland, which is encouraged by an EC grant of some £1 million a year.

The purpose of my speech is to highlight a variety of abuses to which greyhounds are subjected, which were made clear by the television programme and by publicity in the *Sunday People* and other newspapers around the same time. First, there is the trade in selling greyhounds for use in Spain, for all sorts of purposes—such as inferior meetings or, at worst, to be killed. One hears about them being ground down for dog food, used for vivisection and so on.

In the television documentary, a Mr. John Shields was shown buying dogs in Ireland and transporting them to Spain. Some evidence shows that he transports dogs to

Spain not only directly but in a transit van that travels through this country—some 36 dogs at a time, in cages less than 14 in wide. Some of the dogs that are transported to Spain are British-bred; most are not.

Mr. Shields said that he has sold thousands of dogs to Spain, over a period, and that it is not against the law. That is true. It is against National Greyhound Racing Club rules. I believe its integrity and sincerity in trying to maintain those rules, but it is not against the law. Therefore, there is no means of stopping Mr. Shields or others who want to take part in that trade.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Is my hon. Friend aware that, as well as its being against NGRC rules to sell greyhounds to Spain, it is against its rules to allow dogs to go to Spain to be used in other activities such as coursing and hunting, to be used on flapping tracks in the United Kingdom, or for them to be bloodied on live animals, including rabbits?

There is a price to pay. My hon. Friend may not be aware that anybody found practising any of those habits with greyhounds in Britian will be barred from participation in any NGRC track in the United Kingdom. That means that they cannot race on registered tracks, which form the majority of race tracks in this country.

Mr. Pickthall: My hon. Friend is an expert, and I take what he says seriously. I shall say more about NGRC sanctions later: on the basis of what my hon. Friend has said, some people who figured in the documentary should be barred from the sport forthwith.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): The mere fact that such practices may contravene NGRC rules does not make them illegal. Legislation is needed to make the rules stick.

Mr. Pickthall: I shall emphasise that point later.

I could describe conditions in Spain at length, but time forbids, the information is readily available and my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) has covered much of it. I can summarise the position by saying that many dogs end up in what approximate to concentration camps. The conditions they must survive have been described in lurid terms; one or two English veterinarians have done sterling work in Spain, trying to alleviate those conditions.

In 1992, the last year for which I have figures, some 55 dogs were subjected to vivisection or experimentation in the United Kingdom, although such action is against the spirit of the law—and against the law itself, as I understand it.

Mr. Meale: I have been told, in reply to my questions to the Home Office, that only 14 of those 55 dogs came from the United Kingdom. Having checked with the NGRC, I understand that, if any person involved in greyhound racing in this country were found to have provided dogs for experimentation, that person would be barred from participating in registered racing.

Has it occurred to my hon. Friend that, if greyhound racing were made illegal in this country—I hope that he does not suggest such a course—the door would be left wide open to another abhorrent practice? I refer to the coursing of live rabbits and hares, which, unfortunately, still takes place here. I hope to God that we do not allow that to happen, rather than organising registered races with proper veterinary care—which is available, under the guidance of the NGRC.

Mr. Pickthall: I do not remotely suggest that greyhound racing as a sport should be banned. I am simply saying that, if the Government and the industry do not take urgent and drastic action to stop the current abuses, a groundswell of opinion—led by various groups—will suggest just such action. The father of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan made that clear in the documentary.

Mr. Meale: I do not mean to keep interrupting my hon. Friend; I promise him that I shall not do so again. However, he has quoted Mr. Paddy Sweeney a number of times. Mr. Sweeney, unfortunately, must be cited as a relative of an hon. Member who is present in the Chamber.

I have a letter from Mr. Sweeney, quoting a speech in which he said that it was the job of everyone connected with greyhounds

"to work for the welfare of greyhounds and the development of coursing."

Just who are we talking about, and whose word are we taking?

Mr. Picktall: As my hon. Friend knows from my interest in abolishing hare coursing, I totally disagree with the latter part of that sentence.

I will touch briefly on the disposal of what might be termed redundant greyhounds. I am told that a greyhound costs around £2,000 a year to kennel and feed properly, and in the documentary that we all saw the Ulster RSPCA described various horrors. They may have been one-offs, but I suspect that they were not—instances of dogs clubbed to death, having their ears cut off, being dumped in the Foyle and injected with household bleach or other substances—anything to kill them, to avoid paying the £20 its costs to have a dog put down humanely, as if that were not bad enough.

A side issue, but none the less important, is the baiting and training of dogs using live rabbits. The film clearly showed Owen McKenna, the son of Joe McKenna, baiting dogs with live rabbits. Our interviewee said that dogs get bored with artificial bait—the conclusion being that they need live bait from time to time. That was particularly horrific—and if the strictures of my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield are to be taken seriously, I presume that at least Owen McKenna will soon be banned by the NGRC from participating in the sport.

There are two aspects to the drugs question. One is the ready availability to the training industry of black market drugs such as cortisones, amphetamines and anabolics. The documentary showed them to be available at least from a man called Alan Bennett in Yorkshire—not, I hope, the Alan Bennett that we all know and love. He was saying over the telephone that, if those drugs were used, the dogs would be—forgive the language, Madam Speaker—buggered afterwards. In other words, the second problem is the use of drugs to allow injured dogs to run. That may be okay in the short term, but in the longer term it harms dogs and perhaps even finishes them off.

The veterinary surgeon to whom several references have been made graphically illustrated, as he has done in writing, the effect of track racing on the four legs and feet of dogs. Again, that problem is sometimes covered up by drug misuse.

[Mr. Picktall]

I hope that the Government will consider a number of matters, and that the Minister will comment on them tonight. The Select Committee on Home Affairs should reopen its 1991 investigation, which imposed severe strictures that were not followed up. The Government should at least query EC subsidies or overbreeding in Ireland.

The Government should also be involved in talks with their Irish and Spanish counterparts, to agree a joint approach to greyhound welfare and to prevent the export and import of animals other than as runners at proper tracks. I believe that the Irish Government's Agriculture Minister is still Brian O'Shea. So far, he has not been very helpful, although the board has been positive.

The Home Office should tighten up on the exemptions that allow ex-racing greyhounds to be purchased by laboratories where there are no suitable purpose-bred animals. The NGRC will ban for life owners who sell greyhounds that way. The Government should discuss—this is important to the NGRC and to everyone else involved in the sport—the possibility of imposing something like a levy at track level to provide properly for retired greyhounds. I hope that the industry will take that on board. There is surely enough money at the top of the industry to do something effective about it.

The Government should take action against the wrongful sale and use of drugs to enable sick or injured dogs to run. They should insist on enhanced veterinary examination before racing. Again, those guilty of the abuse of drugs should be banned from involvement in the sport.

Exports of greyhounds should be controlled by law. That has already been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield, and by the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan. The NGRC takes action against people involved in the sport in Britain, but it cannot invoke the law to stop the trade. That is a matter for the Government.

Lastly, men such as Owen McKenna and others who use live animals to blood greyhounds should be banned by the NGRC from any involvement in racing. The Government should seriously consider whether such people are breaking the law.

It is an irony for me to be raising the subject of greyhound racing. I do not claim to be a dog lover, but I am revolted by the cruelty at the margins of the sport in Britain, and perhaps more than at the margins in other countries. It is no answer to say that most of the cruelty happens in Ireland or Spain. In the European Union we are intimately bound together in the trade that takes place. What happens in the ghastly Spanish concentration camps, where at least some, however few, of the dogs are from the United Kingdom, is our concern, just as it is the concern of the international community.

If the NGRC and the Government in co-operation do not do something about cruelty to greyhounds, Britain will see a sustained campaign against cruelty in sport. That could damage a perfectly legitimate sport, which I would not want to see damaged or become the subject of the attention of, for example, the League Against Cruel Sports.

10.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I congratulate the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) on his success in obtaining this debate. His concern about the use of animals in sport is well known. The hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) spoke with authority about NGRC rules. His knowledge in that matter is also well known. I noted the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney).

As my time is limited, I shall press on. As the hon. Member for Lancashire, West said, his debate has been prompted by a recent television programme in which allegations were made about cruelties in the sport of greyhound racing. The programme referred to practices, as the hon. Gentleman described, such as the feeding of dogs with live rabbits. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the use of drugs to enable injured dogs to run when they should not and the disposal of dogs, when they no longer race, for use in experimentation.

Before dealing with the allegations, it might be helpful if I were to describe the current law against cruelty to animals, without giving a long and descriptive passage. The Protection of Animals Act 1911 makes it an offence to ill-treat or cause unnecessary suffering to any domestic or captive animal. Under the Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988, the court may in addition deprive a person of ownership of an animal for such period as it thinks fit. Section 1 of the 1911 Act was amended by the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960, which makes it an offence to abandon any animal—permanently or not—without reasonable cause or excuse in circumstances likely to cause the animal any unnecessary suffering.

Before I deal with the specific matters that the hon. Gentleman raised about the treatment of greyhounds in racing, I should make it clear that the Government are not responsible for greyhound racing as a sport, as the hon. Member for Mansfield reminded us in his recitation of some of the rules. We have two interests: we are responsible for controls on betting and we are responsible for the statutory framework governing the prevention of cruelty to animals to which I have just alluded.

In relation to the first, our concern is——

Mr. Sweeney: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Wardle: I am sorry, I must press on. If there is time later, I will give way. The time was over-run, quite understandably. Our concern is to maintain the integrity of betting as it takes place on greyhound racing and to see that the punter is treated fairly.

Turning to the specific issues raised by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West about the treatment of greyhounds in racing, obviously we must all be concerned if any of the allegations that have been made are true of racing in Britain. I heard what the hon. Gentleman said about other countries in the European Union and I understand his feelings, but he will also appreciate that I speak at the Dispatch Box for controls in this country. No doubt what he has said about conditions in other countries will be noted.

We have been in touch with the British Greyhound Racing Board, which says that the practices depicted on television are not tolerated in regulated greyhound racing in this country. I understand it to be its belief that a considerable amount of the footage shown in the television programme was filmed outside the United Kingdom and that most of the allegations involved practices taking place abroad.

The NGRC has said that there is no place in greyhound racing for anyone involved in cruel practices. It takes a most serious view of the matter and has made it clear that it does not accept cruelty to animals in the training and preparation of racing greyhounds. I understand that NGRC rules forbid the practice of using rabbits to train greyhounds and any trainers found using live bait to train a greyhound will have their licences withdrawn and not be allowed to train greyhounds for NGRC racing. I see that the hon. Member for Mansfield is nodding in agreement. The NGRC also says that it has a clear line in respect of greyhounds racing while injured. It requires a vet to be in attendance at each race meeting and all greyhounds to be inspected twice before racing. I am assured that the rules are very strictly applied.

Many people are naturally concerned to know what happens to retired greyhounds when their racing life is over. The NGRC cannot speak for independent tracks, which are not under their jurisdiction, but under its rules, the welfare of greyhounds is most important. The NGRC says that its main approach is that owners must be registered with the NGRC and can lose their licence if dogs are ill-treated. Of the £20 registration fee, £5 goes to the NGRC's Retired Greyhound Trust, whose function is to act as a fallback to help owners who cannot meet their responsibility towards the greyhounds in their care by placing dogs in homes.

The subject was touched on by the Select Committee on Home Affairs, which examined the financing of racing in 1991. It recommended that track owners and bookmakers should donate part of their profits to the retired greyhound trust. The Government's response was that the welfare of greyhounds during and after their racing career was the responsibility of the owners. Nevertheless, any support that those involved in the conduct of greyhound racing, or in betting on it, could give would also be welcome.

The Government have played their part in channelling funds towards the sport. The 1992 Budget resulted in a 0·25 per cent. reduction in betting duty. When making the announcement at the time, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he hoped that the bookmakers would channel the portion relating to bets on greyhound racing to a voluntary fund. The two industries have set up the British greyhound racing fund under an independent chairman, Lord Kimball. The fund has benefited integrity services at tracks. In addition, £59,000 was donated in 1993 towards the work of the Retired Greyhound Trust.

It is understood that the track owners are also considering what more might be done to promote the home-finding schemes at their own tracks. It is the industry's intention to give fresh impetus to the work of the trust and in particular to concentrate on expanding and properly financing local home-finding schemes. In addition, it is estimated that 3,000 retired dogs are being kept in kennels by trainers throughout the country.

Whether the industry should be doing more to put money towards the provision of homes must be a matter for it. But I know that the industry is considering those questions most carefully in response to the concerns that have been expressed. I know that there is particular concern about the fate of dogs that are exported—as has been mentioned. The Government have no power to prevent the export of animals to other European Union countries and what goes on in those countries is a matter for them. However, I am sure that the remarks of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West will have been noted. I understand that the NGRC has banned its members from exporting dogs to Spain. Where a dog goes after its racing career has to be the responsibility of the owner.

There have, I know, been suggestions that ex-racing greyhounds may have been used in scientific research. The 1986 legislation contains special provisions in respect of laboratory dogs and cats, which must be bred at, and obtained from, a designated breeding establishment. The only exception to that is where the Secretary of State is satisfied that animals suitable for the purpose of the programme cannot be so obtained and where there is a clear scientific case for using a non-designated source of supply. That provision is designed as reassurance that stray or stolen dogs will not be used in experiments.

There is now no designated source of supply for greyhounds. For a short period in 1991-92, there was a designated breeder of greyhounds for research purposes. When authority is given by the Home Secretary to acquire greyhounds from non-designated sources, a condition is added to the relevant project licence prohibiting the acquisition of animals from charities seeking homes for ex-racing greyhounds.

The demand for greyhounds for scientific use is very small and appears to be diminishing still further. It is likely that there will always be a residual demand for such animals for very scientific inquiries. For example, studies of the metabolism of drugs in trained, race-fit animals cannot be carried out in animals other than trained, race-fit animals. Therefore, if the scientific question is to be addressed properly, a means of acquiring such animals must be provided.

On the question of abuse of animals at independent tracks, it is already open to any person who believes that a dog has been caused unnecessary suffering in any circumstances to initiate proceedings under the Protection of Animals Act 1911, or to report the matter to the police.

As I seem to have made up a minute or so on time, does my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan wish to intervene?

Mr. Sweeney: Given the high incidence of injuries to greyhounds at United Kingdom dog tracks, will my hon. Friend consider introducing controls over the NGRC and other track operators to ensure that tracks are independently inspected so that racing can be stopped if the going is too hard and so that veterinary examinations are conducted by independent vets rather than those employed by dog tracks?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend will have heard my earlier comments and his remarks will have been noted by the House. As I said, it is a matter for the NGRC. The Government do not propose to introduce legislation that would, in effect, tell the NGRC what to do. It sets its rules, which it expects to be followed. If they are not, the penalties have been made clear to its members. Two inspections are conducted by a vet at each meeting and I see no reason to doubt their integrity. My hon. Friend's comments will have been noted.

We all want to see humane treatment of the animals on which the sport depends. The Government have given full support to legislation to strengthen the Protection of Animals Act 1911. We have supported measures for increased penalties and stronger powers for the courts to disqualify offenders from having custody of any animal.

[Mr. Wardle]

The sport must be ever-vigilant to protect its good name and I commend the hon. Member for Lancashire, West for bringing the matter to the attention of the House. The industry must face the concerns that have been expressed head on and must deal with them. We shall be in touch with the sport's ruling body to report what has been said in the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 8 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Madam Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Stephen David Wyatt Milligan, esquire, Member for Eastleigh, and I desire, on behalf of the House, to express our sense of the loss we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

NATO Summit

1. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the NATO summit.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The NATO summit successfully set the agenda for the alliance to meet the challenge of enhancing European stability. Alliance leaders launched a partnership for peace in which the emerging democracies of eastern Europe will be able to develop a deeper relationship with the alliance through practical military and political co-operation.

Mr. Ainsworth: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that encouraging answer. Would he care to comment on the recent trilateral meeting with France and Germany which took place in London? Does he agree that that may well help Britain to play a leading role in the emerging European security and defence initiative?

Mr. Rifkind: My recent meetings with my French and German colleagues provided a useful opportunity for informal exchanges of views about a wide range of issues. Perhaps the most interesting information that was shared at the meeting was the decision that the French Government have reached to join the military committee of NATO, in which they have not fully participated since the days of General De Gaulle. They also expressed an intention to participate in informal meetings of Defence Ministers. We welcome that closer association of France with the workings of the alliance, as it is especially important that the views of the French should be available when subjects such as peacekeeping, partnership for peace, counter-proliferation and other matters of that type are being discussed.

Mr. Jim Marshall: If a non-NATO country joins the European Union and becomes a full member of the Western European Union, what will its relationship be with NATO?

Mr. Rifkind: They are obviously separate alliances, but it is assumed that, as countries move towards membership of the European Union, if they also wish to consider a closer association with NATO the two would naturally seem to go together, as would involvement in the Western European Union. It is obviously better that there is common membership so far as possible, but that will depend on the pace of progress, not only for the European Union but for other matters relating to military integration.

Mr. John Marshall: Do the NATO leaders recognise that there will never be a negotiated peace in the former Yugoslavia so long as there is a huge imbalance in firepower there, and is that not an irrefutable reason for lifting the arms embargo so that the Bosnian Muslims can have a chance to defend themselves?

Mr. Rifkind: It has been the policy of the United Nations for many years, not only in relation to the former republic of Yugoslavia, that when wars take place it would be inappropriate for the United Nations to take sides in a conflict of that type or to encourage the supply of arms to any of the combatants.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: One of the most welcome results of the NATO summit was the commitment to open Tuzla airport, which would greatly enhance the credibility of the United Nations and greatly assist the humanitarian effort in central Bosnia. What steps have the Government taken, either on their own or with their NATO allies, to implement that commitment? Is it understood that for Tuzla airport to be opened and kept open will require not only air power but the deployment of forces on the ground, possibly up to brigade strength?

Mr. Rifkind: Two decisions were taken at the NATO summit. One decision was to ensure the relief of Srebrenica, where it has not been possible for the Canadians to be relieved by other UNPROFOR forces. The second decision was to call for an urgent study of ways of opening Tuzla airport. The Dutch have now sent an advance party into Srebrenica and it is believed that the relief operation will be completed during this month. We obviously still need to study the results of the further work that has been commissioned with regard to the opening of Tuzla airport.

Bosnia

2. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel are currently serving in Bosnia.

Mr. Rifkind: There are at present some 2,300 troops serving on the ground in former Yugoslavia, of which some 1,500 are based in Bosnia-Herzegovina supported by the remaining 800 in Croatia. I returned this morning from a visit to Bosnia, including Sarajevo, where I have seen personnel of all three services hard at work in the former Yugoslavia as well as the Adriatic and Italy. It is clear from my own experience that, despite the difficult and

dangerous conditions in which they operate, our forces continue to make a vital contribution to UNPROFOR in the performance of its humanitarian mission.

Dr. Spink: In the light of his recent visit to Bosnia, will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in paying tribute to all the British forces with the United Nations for their courage and skill in delivering the humanitarian aid that has probably saved about half a million lives in Bosnia and is certainly protecting thousands of lives now? Is he aware that senior officers in Bosnia are fully satisfied with the current scope of their operations, and will he refrain from taking any action in the short term which, although it might give instant gratification, would, in the longer term put at greater risk the people of Bosnia, the United Nations and British troops?

Mr. Rifkind: I warmly endorse my hon. Friend's tribute to the work of the British and other United Nations forces. He is right to say that that has a crucial impact on the saving of lives. The Bosnian Prime Minister, whom I saw in Sarajevo two days ago, stressed that without that humanitarian aid the people of Sarajevo would have starved over the past year. It is, therefore, important that in any new initiative being considered we continue to attach the highest importance to the United Nations being able to meet the crucial humanitarian requirements of the people of Bosnia, not only in Sarajevo but elsewhere in that country.

Mr. Mullin: Air strikes alone will achieve nothing in Bosnia. They will have to be matched by a commitment of ground forces if anything is to change. To pretend otherwise is just a gimmick, so why are those who were so keen to commit ground forces in the Gulf to reinstate the tyranny in Kuwait not at all enthusiastic about doing so in what would be a much better cause?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's suggestion goes against all military advice and military common sense. The fundamental distinction between Bosnia and both the Falklands and the Gulf is that the latter territories had been invaded by foreign armies, so when all other means had been exhausted it was possible to expel the aggressor by military means and send him back where he came from —from the Falklands to Argentina, and from Kuwait to Iraq. As the hon. Gentleman must be aware, the vast majority of the people involved in the fighting in Bosnia are themselves Bosnians, whether they be Serbs, Croats or Muslims, and have shared the same villages and communities. Therefore, whichever community they come from, there is no way in which an external army could expel them from their own country.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that those most keen to be first in, such as the Front-Bench spokesmen of the Labour and Liberal Democratic parties, are often also first out, as was seen during the Falklands crisis? If we were to intervene militarily it would be at the expense of our relief work in Bosnia and we should run the risk of becoming bogged down in the Balkans—something which successive British Governments have avoided for a century.

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly true that any initiative under consideration at present, or that may be advocated by anyone with an interest in such matters, should fulfil two requirements: it must be consistent with the need to show political leadership and political will, but that political will and leadership must be rooted in sound military judgment. If it is not so rooted, it will be a cruel deception on the people for whom it is designed. It is, therefore, essential that both those criteria be satisfied before any new initiative is taken.

Dr. David Clark: Following the appalling and meaningless slaughter in Sarajevo at the weekend, does the Secretary of State accept that one positive way forward would be to demilitarise and internationalise Sarajevo, making it a true safe area? Will the Government join in an ultimatum to the Serbs to the effect that if they do not accede to that request they must face the consequences of air strikes?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows that these matters are currently being considered by the United Nations. Of course, we all share his reaction to the atrocity in Sarajevo on Saturday: it was an act of pure terrorism against women and children and must be seen in that light. What we must now consider is whether action that might be taken can meet our various objectives: the continuation of aid, which most people accept as being highly desirable; the need to try to influence the behaviour, particularly of the Serbs but also of other factions, with regard to the commitment of military and other atrocities; and our obligation as a national Government in the protection of our own forces, who are already doing a very difficult task in Bosnia. I hope that the whole House will agree that it would be unwise to follow any initiative that would put in jeopardy those other requirements.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Is it not significant that the recently appointed American Secretary of State for Defence has said that, when considering air strikes, attention should be paid to the fact that the 22,000 lightly armed United Nations troops on the ground are surrounded by 200,000 combatants who are capable not only of fighting a war but of winning it? In those circumstances, does my right hon. and learned Friend welcome the new realism of the American Government? Will he give an assurance that that sense of realism will prevail and that if the Americans wish to contribute more to the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia they are welcome to do so?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the views of Mr. William Perry, the new American Defence Secretary, whom I met in Germany on Saturday. As my hon. Friend indicated, Mr. Perry confirmed that it was his view that all countries must take account of the need to ensure the safety of United Nations forces currently in Bosnia, and that it was important, before any conclusions were reached, to take into account the advice of the military commanders in Bosnia, who clearly have an awesome responsibility which must be an important factor in the considerations currently under way in the United Nations and elsewhere.

Low-rent Accommodation

3. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to increase the supply of low-rent accommodation for ex-service personnel and their families.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): My Department works closely with

housing associations and the Housing Corporation to ensure that service leavers have access to low-cost housing.

Mr. Miller: I am sure that the Minister will accept that the recent £150 million cut in local authority credit approvals and the £334 million cut in housing association capital expenditure will inevitably lead to a reduction in affordable housing. I am sure that the Minister will also accept that the Ministry of Defence has some 15 per cent. of void properties, while the figure for local authorities is currently 1·9 per cent. Is that the way to treat people who have risked their lives in the interests of the country when their pay and conditions are being cut?

Mr. Hanley: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, the Housing Corporation has suffered funding restraints for 1994-95. That will mean a reduction in the availability of some low-cost opportunities; I do not deny that. The joint service housing advice office does a tremendous amount of work in providing housing for people leaving the armed forces. There is a wide range of attractive schemes. Nomination rights have been worked out recently with a number of local councils, including Portsmouth, Chatham, Shrewsbury, Bristol, Plymouth and Doncaster, and negotiations are under way in East Anglia and Berkshire. The authorities have provided 925 housing units, which have been returned to the associations in exchange for 469 nomination places. There is also a do-it-yourself shared ownership scheme. A recent survey of those leaving the armed forces showed that nearly 80 per cent. intend to own their own homes, and we are helping with low-cost solutions to that, too.

Mr. Viggers: Is my hon. Friend aware that when service men leave the armed forces prematurely or when there is a divorce, there is a tendency for the family to apply to the local authority where they are currently based? That places an intolerable burden on garrison towns such as Gosport, which I represent. Will my hon. Friend ask the Department of the Environment to review the circular in which it asks local authorities to give priority to service personnel even if they originally come from other local authority areas? That would relieve the pressure on garrison towns.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is right. There is, of course, additional pressure on garrison towns. That is why most of our initiatives are centred in garrison towns. I will willingly draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State who is looking at the matter closely.

The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) mentioned that a number of houses are left unoccupied by the armed forces. It is right to stress that we have pressures in the armed forces which are not present in district and local councils, inasmuch as we need to have housing that is not only refurbished, but available for occupation at short notice—possibly by large numbers of people. However, we try to keep the number of empty homes down to a minimum and we have sold many in the past year.

United Nations Operations

4. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to improve the ability of the British armed forces to contribute to United Nations operations.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): We shall continue to ensure that our forces are well trained and well equipped for present and future United Nations operations. Britain's armed services are already regarded as one of the finest peacekeeping forces in the world.

Mr. Connarty: At a time when there is talk in the European Union of air strikes and when France is talking about possibly pulling out if something is not done, does the Minister accept that there is a suspicion that it is the overstretch in the British armed forces that is making them unable as well as unwilling to commit other troops? Does he accept that it is difficult for United Nations staff to draw up contingency plans when member states such as the United Kingdom will not identify troops that will be available? When will he reply to the letter from NATO asking the Government what troops they are willing to commit to a peace initiative in Bosnia?

Mr. Aitken: There is no suggestion that if the commanders of our contingent in Bosnia or the United Nations commanders ask for a certain number of troops they will be denied them.

Mr. Colvin: How many of our Territorial Army units are currently involved in United Nations peacekeeping operations? Does the Minister agree that if we are to fulfil role 3, as set out in the defence White Paper, it is important that our Territorial Army becomes the first line of reserve in the British Army, rather than the last as at present? Will my hon. Friend bear that in mind when he considers his response to the current consultation document, "The Future of Britain's Reserve Forces"?

Mr. Aitken: No territorial units are involved in United Nations operations at present, although individuals from the Territorial Army are involved. My hon. Friend's more general point is currently under active consideration.

Dr. David Clark: Bearing in mind that air strikes alone, without the use of ground troops, have never resolved a war, does the Minister recall the United Nations Secretary-General calling last June for an extra 7,500 troops for Bosnia, of which only 2,800 have materialised? Is the reason why no United Kingdom troops were offered the fact that none was available because of overstretch? If that is the case, will the Minister ensure that an approach is made at the North Atlantic Council meeting this week to ask the United States to send ground troops to augment the United Nations presence as part of a new strategy which could involve air strikes?

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman seems not to have noted that we are the biggest contributor of troops to the UNPROFOR contingent at present. Our contribution is good in terms of numbers. The other matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred are matters for the United States Government. I am sure that they will be discussed at the forthcoming North Atlantic Council meeting.

Mr. Budgen: Does my hon. Friend agree that the first question to ask before committing British troops to supporting military action under the United Nations is whether a British national interest is involved? British troops should not be asked to risk their lives in some vague activity directed towards our becoming some form of world policeman.

Mr. Aitken: I think that my hon. Friend underestimates the fine job of humanitarian duty that the British troops are now doing in Bosnia. Of course, in general terms, one of the considerations that has to be borne in mind in any military action is the degree of national interest on behalf of Her Majesty's Government's forces.

Nuclear Weapons Arsenal

5. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures Her Majesty's Government are taking to reduce their nuclear weapons arsenal following the ending of the cold war.

Mr. Aitken: The Government have already announced substantial reductions in the United Kingdom's nuclear forces and weapons, including a cut of more than 50 per cent. in our sub-strategic stockpile.

Mr. Cohen: Instead of the Government's creative accountancy in the area, will the Minister consider how other countries view Trident? Especially since the non-proliferation treaty is coming up for extension next year, would an equivalent Minister of another country consider doubling the strategic warheads, as 96 strategic warheads per Trident submarine have replaced 48 per Polaris submarine? Has not the Home Office recently disbanded the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation which existed to detect nuclear blasts and radiation, travelling around the country in the course of its work? Has the Home Office disbanded it because it believes that there is no need for it—and if there is no threat, why do we need Trident?

Mr. Aitken: The House is used to listening to the unreconstructed voice of old-fashioned unilateralism from the hon. Gentleman. When it comes to accountancy matters, the hon. Gentleman has his figures seriously wrong. When the Trident submarines are fully in service, the explosive power of Britain's operational total of strategic and sub-strategic nuclear inventory will even then be substantially lower than before the Berlin wall came down. It would be a reduction of more than 25 per cent.

Mr. Booth: Is my hon. Friend aware that in the past year, £27 million of British taxpayers' money was spent in Russia on dismantling nuclear equipment and transporting it away? Is that not an example of the generosity of Britain and the good sense of the Government which deserves credit?

Mr. Aitken: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his point, with which I agree. It was an imaginative gesture by the Government and we gave slightly more to the Government of Russia than my hon. Friend suggested—some £35 million in total—so that they could build, or have built for them by GKN in Britain, safe carriers to move their nuclear weapons to places of safety.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Minister confirm that the Secretary of State personally received the petition handed to the Ministry of Defence on 27 January by Grandparents' Action Against Trident? Will he also confirm that the Secretary of State has read the petition and understood the arguments against what the grandparents call Trident madness? Does he especially understand the basic point that it is unsustainable for the Government to argue that nuclear weapons are essential to the national defence of this country while, at the same time, arguing that nuclear weapons should be outlawed for the defence of almost every other country?

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend's private secretary received the petition and has given it to my right hon. and learned Friend. On the second point, I simply cannot agree. It is still an uncertain and dangerous world and a minimum nuclear deterrent is essential ultimately to safeguard Britain's security.

Drugs Tests

6. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to introduce random tests on service men for drugs.

Mr. Hanley: The armed forces are currently considering the introduction of compulsory drug testing of personnel on a random basis.

Mr. Townsend: May I encourage the Minister to continue in that direction? Is he aware that many service men, especially those serving in dangerous occupations such as on submarines, would welcome random tests and believe that they would be a useful precaution, bearing in mind the immense expense of equipment which is in the hands of young service men.

Mr. Hanley: I thoroughly agree with my hon. Friend. The Army has carried out two studies, one in Berlin and one in the United Kingdom, into compulsory drug testing on a random basis and I hope to see the results of those tests shortly. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that being a member of the armed forces is different from being a civilian. Soldiers have greater responsibilities in that they often operate with weapons, ammunition, explosives and heavy vehicles, often in difficult or dangerous circumstances. At sea and in the air, they are responsible for extremely expensive equipment. The consequences of being impaired by drugs are much greater for them than for those in most civilian occupations. Therefore, I agree with my hon. Friend—we must make progress.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that there is great concern among fishermen in the Clyde and elsewhere of the dangers posed to fishing boats by submariners who may be taking drugs, especially on United States submarines? Will he raise this matter urgently with the United States Secretary for Defence?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman has been most devious in getting in his question. He knows that we have recently announced a SUBFACT scheme and that the code of conduct operates in his area. He is right in one regard—if any submariner were influenced by drugs or under the effects of drugs, it would be severely dangerous, as it would be if a fisherman were under the same effects.

Mr. Hargreaves: If my hon. Friend is considering that course of action, will he advise his colleagues in his Department that they should also look carefully at the

possibility of service men taking anabolic steroids, as they are most certainly proven to be connected with violent, if not criminal, behaviour?

Mr. Hanley: I can assure my hon. Friend that if a member of the services were found to be taking anabolic steroids, he would be liable to administrative discharge.

Mr. Martlew: I agree with much of what the Minister said, but does he agree that the emphasis should be placed on prevention rather than on detection and that what we need is schemes that give rehabilitation for, education on, and prevention of, the use of drugs by the armed forces? Is it correct that the Government have allowed the resources for such schemes to be cut recently? Will the Minister give the House the commitment that resources will be made available for those schemes to allow our service personnel, many of whom serve in dangerous areas such as Northern Ireland and Bosnia, to resist the temptation of illegal drugs?

Mr. Hanley: I am pleased to agree with every word that the hon. Gentleman said: it makes a nice change. The armed forces provide lectures, videos, posters and a whole range of measures aimed at preventing members of the armed forces from taking drugs and, indeed, alcohol.

Bosnia

7. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to withdraw United Kingdom forces from Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: British forces will continue through the winter to support the United Nations in carrying out its humanitarian mandate. No decisions have yet been taken about the deployment of British forces thereafter.

Mr. Brandreth: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply and welcome his tribute to our troops for what they have already achieved in the former Yugoslavia in terms of saving lives and delivering humanitarian aid. Can he confirm that in any future decisions that he makes, he will be guided by the advice and counsel of our commanders on the ground, and that of paramount importance to him are the security and safety of our troops?

Mr. Rifkind: This is a matter of great importance. Indeed, it was one of the central issues that I discussed with General Sir Michael Rose, the United Nations British commander in Bosnia. Clearly, it is a matter which is relevant not only to British troops but to French, Canadian and Norwegian troops and to those from a number of other countries that are contributing to the United Nations presence in Bosnia.

Ms Hoey: Does not the Secretary of State realise that even discussion and talking like this about withdrawing British troops gives the Serbs a green light to continue their aggression? Does he agree that if the Government make that decision—I hope that they will not do so—what they would have to do immediately on withdrawing British troops is allow the Bosnians to arm themselves and to lift the arms embargo?

Mr. Rifkind: No one is talking about the possibility of some unilateral British withdrawal. What it is appropriate for the United Nations to consider is how long its commitment to UNPROFOR will last and how long it is possible and desirable to carry out what is a difficult and arduous task. We had all hoped that by this time there would be a political settlement in Bosnia, which would have allowed the United Nations involvement to be transformed into a more traditional peacekeeping role. That has not happened, and inevitably a legitimate debate is taking place about what the implications would be for the United Nations if the parties involved in the traumatic war do not reach a solution in the reasonable future.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Is not the Government's prime concern the safety and security of the British troops now stationed in Bosnia? In the light of that, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree, with regard to the proposed air strikes, that great concern should be taken to make sure that the troops are not placed in a position of great insecurity? That would not help matters, and the troops may be used as piggy in the middle by both sides.

Mr. Rifkind: Those considerations must be taken into account. The Government have accepted for some time that there may be specific circumstances in which the use of air power would be appropriate. We have particularly spoken of the acceptability of air power if, for example, UN forces were themselves under attack. Whatever consideration may be given to that question, I can assure my hon. Friend that the security of our forces will be of importance not only to the British Government but to all countries presently considering new initiatives.

Mr. Donald Anderson: The circumstances in which air strikes would be internationally sanctioned with the authority of the UN have been strictly defined to be the protection of the troops on the spot. Does the Secretary of State believe that the UN Security Council would have to be approached again before there were any air strike for wider purposes, such as punitive purposes? If so, what is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's judgment about the response of the Government of Russia?

Mr. Rifkind: United Nations Security Council resolution 836 allowed, and indeed encouraged, the consideration of any possible means of ensuring that there was not a stranglehold on Sarajevo, and that gives us a degree of flexibility. It would be appropriate for the Secretary-General to consult members of the Security Council if any further action were thought to be desirable. However, I do not believe that it would require a further resolution of the Security Council, for the reasons that I have given.

"Options for Change"

8. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress with "Options for Change" in the Army.

Mr. Hanley: We have made good progress in implementing the decisions announced in July 1991 in "Britain's Army for the 90s", as subsequently modified by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in his statements to the House on 3 February 1993 and to the Select Committee for Defence on 1 December 1993.

Mr. Thompson: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to spell out the enhanced role of the Territorial Army under "Options for Change"? Does he recognise that

Territorial Army units must be large enough to be viable, and that the recent reduction in battalion establishments needs to be reversed? Will he keep open as many drill halls in East Anglia as possible to maintain vital links with a population that respects and supports the work of our volunteer reserve?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is assiduous in representing the interests of the Territorial Army in East Anglia, and particularly Norwich. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has said that we are looking at opportunities to enhance the role of the Territorial Army. We have had consultations, and we are now looking at what legislation can be put in place.

As to the size of the units, my hon. Friend will realise that the size of a unit must be appropriate to its role. We believe that the post-"Options" size of battalion of 500 is appropriate, and there is no reason at this moment to alter that. I say again that my hon. Friend's representation of the interests of the Territorial Army is a model to us all.

Mr. Dalyell: Are the preliminary findings of the Scotland Yard investigation in the Falklands in relation to allegations against 3 Para to be put in the Library?

Mr. Hanley: That is a matter not for the Ministry of Defence but for Scotland Yard.

Sir Anthony Grant: One of the results of the "Options for Change" policy is that some of the best-trained and best-motivated people in the country are available for service elsewhere. Will my hon. Friend do everything that he can, in conjunction with the Home Office, to encourage those people to serve in the police force, as that may improve the rather fuddy-duddy image of the police?

Mr. Hanley: I thank my hon. Friend for that question, but I assure him that where there is talent, the Army, Navy and Royal Air Force want it for themselves.

Western European Union

9. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions the Council of Ministers of the Western European Union has had regarding the probable increase in membership of the assembly of the Western European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: There have been no discussions on the matter in the WEU Council of Ministers.

Mr. Thompson: The Secretary of State will be aware that the Council of Ministers, in its wisdom, created a level of associate membership of the Western European Union. Currently, Turkey, Iceland and Norway are applying for membership at that level. Is the Secretary of State satisfied that the criteria laid down for associate membership are appropriate when one considers the possibility that countries of the former Soviet bloc in central and eastern Europe will apply to join the WEU? Would they be appropriate if a situation such as that in Bosnia arose in any of those countries?

Mr. Rifkind: We consider the criteria to be appropriate. Full membership is relevant to those who are also members of the European Union. Those countries that have sought associate membership either do not seek full membership or have not yet become members of the European Union. Therefore, the status of associate member meets that criterion.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there is an overwhelming need to get the countries of central Europe on side where the future of European security is involved? Does he agree that one of the best ways, as the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) said, is proper association with the WEU? It can lead to all kinds of good works in the future.

Mr. Rifkind: It is appropriate that we seek to develop links not only with the countries of central Europe but with the countries of eastern Europe such as the Ukraine and the Baltic republics. I believe that, within the framework of the partnership for peace proposals, it will be possible to see the development of links with not only NATO but the WEU.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister accept that many parliamentarians in eastern European countries believe that the Western European Union can be used as a guarantee of their security? Does not he think it reasonable to ensure that a more realistic assessment is conveyed to those states?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct—article 5 of the Brussels treaty gives total and unqualified commitments to the security of member states. Therefore, it is important that in any consideration of extending that membership, the full implications are taken into account.

Devonport

10. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to increase the work load at Her Majesty's dockyard Devonport over the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Devonport dockyard will continue to receive an allocation of Ministry of Defence refit work in accordance with the needs of the Royal Navy.

Mr. Hicks: Is my hon. Friend aware of the growing and justifiable concern about the predicted level of the work load at Devonport? Does not he realise that that could have an adverse effect on the total numbers employed and on the balance of the work force? In view of that, would not it be right to review the Ministry of Defence contract work for surface ship refits at Devonport? At present, only three out of a possible 11 have been allocated to Devonport.

Mr. Aitken: As my hon. Friend was good enough to acknowledge, the announcement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in June last year secured a good future for Devonport: all future nuclear submarine refitting work will be done there. I understand the anxieties that my hon. Friend has expressed about employment figures. I cannot promise that any new refit work will be allocated that would take away from the commitments given to Rosyth, but I note that several service ships will continue to be allocated for refits to Devonport until 1997. I shall consider the point that my hon. Friend has made until that moment.

Ms Rachel Squire: Will the Minister give a commitment that any increase in the work load for Devonport will not be achieved by closing either Rosyth

royal dockyard or Rosyth naval base? Will he make a statement about the future of both those establishments for the next five years and explain why naval personnel at the Rosyth base have recently been sent a questionnaire asking them where they would like to move if the base closes?

Mr. Aitken: On the hon. Lady's first point, I can certainly confirm that the commitment to the allocated programme for Rosyth that the Government announced still stands and is firm. On her question about Rosyth naval base—a separate matter—and the questionnaire, I should make it clear that in the defence costs study we are considering all naval infrastructure, including many naval bases. No decisions have been taken; nor will they be taken until after the recommendations and the context of the studies have been presented to Ministers.

Mr. Ian Bruce: In looking at the work load that will go to Devonport and the increase that will result from moving flag officer sea training, will my hon. Friend have special regard to the port auxiliary repair unit, PARU, in my constituency and allow it to bid for small ship repair work from both the Ministry of Defence and civilian firms when it is transferred to civilian management, which is what we intend to do?

Mr. Aitken: It is our policy to have as much competition as possible for small ship repair work, so the organisation in my hon. Friend's constituency should have a fair chance of winning some of that work in competition.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 February.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Dowd: And very entertaining they were, I am sure. Will the Prime Minister admit that the Government's proposals in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill for the measure of a pint of beer represent a total surrender to the interests of a big brewers, who are such generous backers of the Conservative party? Taken together with the craven submission to the interests of tobacco companies over advertising, does not that demonstrate conclusively that whenever the interests of the Tory party's paymasters are involved, the customer is always the loser?

The Prime Minister: On both counts, the answer is no. In the Deregulation and Contracting Our Bill we are concerned about removing burdens on business. The principal reason for seeking to remove burdens on business is to encourage their competitiveness, their profitability and their success and to encourage the creation of jobs. It is no good the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues parroting remarks about wanting jobs if they then oppose the measures that will help to create them.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the progressive destruction of a great European capital city and the extinction of a sovereign state that we recognise are unacceptable?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend is referring to the problems of Sarajevo and he will know that I will be discussing those with my right hon. Friends this afternoon and that the North Atlantic Council will have a further meeting tomorrow.

Mr. John Smith: On that point, does the Prime Minister appreciate that, if no action is taken to protect the people of Sarajevo from the pitiless shelling to which they have been subjected, the Serbs are bound to conclude that no action will be taken against them whatever they do?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman will know, the United Nations Protection Force contingent is in Bosnia to help the civilian population. The United Nations cannot end the civil war by force. That is a point which is generally understood and I am pleased to see the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledge that. That has never been a feasible option. Ultimately, peace will come only at the negotiating table, but the United Nations may need to use force for specific purposes —for example, to carry out its mandate and to protect its own people in Bosnia. It may need tactical air support from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. We have always been prepared to see air power used for those purposes, provided that the commanders judge it appropriate.

On the question of Sarajevo, I do not believe that we can wait for action to follow an overall settlement. I do not believe that it is right to tolerate the continued mortar and artillery attacks against the civilian population. UNPROFOR, with support from NATO, must apply immediate and strong pressure to halt those attacks.

Mr. John Smith: I appreciate that we cannot end a civil war by military intervention, but should not we set ourselves some minimum objectives? For example, should not a political objective be set to remove all the weapons within striking distance of Sarajevo, with the threat that if that is not done, air attacks will be pursued? Why do the Government not say that that is one of our, and our allies', political objectives?

The Prime Minister: As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) a few moments ago, the North Atlantic Council will meet tomorrow to consider, on the advice of military commanders, what pressure can most effectively be applied and how. If we use air power, we must be clear about the objectives of that action. The aim must be to reinforce pressure to end the bombardment of Sarajevo. To that end, the United Nations command must be able to set clear and specific conditions, knowing that tactical air support is available to back it up if necessary.

Any use of force must be forward looking. It must seek to improve the situation in Sarajevo and contribute to the pressure on the parties to end the war. Those are not easy options and no one in the House believes them to be so. Any decision must take careful account of the importance of the humanitarian operation and the safety of the civilians and soldiers running the operation. Those are the objectives that NATO must consider tomorrow in determining how to proceed.

Mr. John Smith: On the precise point about the threat to Sarajevo, will the Government support a proposition that an ultimatum should be issued to the Serbs to withdraw the weapons of attack from striking distance of Sarajevo?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman will know, the Foreign Affairs Council yesterday made a clear recommendation that

"The aim should be to bring about the immediate lifting of the siege of Sarajevo, using all means necessary, including the use of air power"—

but it then went on and looked to the North Atlantic Council to carry forward that process. That decision was precisely in line with the views expressed by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Sir Donald Thompson: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House how he was received by textile workers at Firth's in my constituency 10 days ago, what their assembled customers told him and whether he was able to reassure them about the future?

The Prime Minister: It was a most enjoyable visit to Firth's. It is perfectly clear that the company is very successful. Its order book and exports are expanding, and it has invested in the most modern manufacturing equipment for textiles. There was no doubt about the success of that firm in the minds of either its management and work force or its customers who were present on that occasion.

Mr. Ashdown: The Prime Minister's new, more muscular mood on Bosnia is welcome, but may I remind him that it is now four weeks since he told us of his determination to open Tuzla airport as soon as possible, and probably five weeks since the launching of the Serb spring offensive aimed at obliterating what remains of Bosnia? Can he tell us of any progress in opening Tuzla airport to which he has set his hand?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, that matter is under consideration within the United Nations and NATO. It is not a unilateral matter for the British Government. The United Nations, with NATO's support, is taking a firm line over the roulement of troops at Srebrenica, the opening of Tuzla airport, confronting obstacles to road convoys, warning off the Croatian army and demanding an end to the bombardment of Sarajevo. All those important and difficult matters are being considered by the commanders on the ground on a day-to-day basis. They are receiving the full support that they need at a political level.

I wish that the right hon. Gentleman would stop pretending, as he does so often, that there is some easy, magical and painless solution to a problem that is intensely difficult for the commanders on the ground and everybody concerned with the operation. The right hon. Gentleman has been consistent in one respect only: he has been consistently wrong on every course that he has advocated since this dreadful conflict began.

Mr. Paice: When my right hon. Friend was a banker, before he came to the House, how would he have reacted if a business man had presented him with a business plan that concentrated on building up overheads, increasing jobs at the expense of output and maximising wages whether or not the business could afford them? How would he react to a business plan with the social chapter, a minimum wage and returning to all the problems that beset business in the 1970s?

The Prime Minister: I suspect that I would have reacted to it in exactly the same way as business men will today. They are perfectly clear about the business environment that they want. They want minimum interference from the European Community, the Government or local government. They want low inflation, the lowest possible interest rates and the right business environment. They do not want a 1960s-style business plan.

Q2. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Jones: Has the Prime Minister seen the report in *The Times* today that John Cahill, the chairman of British Aerospace who has just sold Rover to BMW, is to get a pay-out of nearly £10 million after only two years with the company? How can that be justified?

The Prime Minister: That is not a matter for me.

Hon. Members: Resign.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Q3. **Sir Peter Fry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Sir Peter Fry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best business plan for Britain is an economy with inflation at 1·9 per cent., the lowest rate of corporation tax in the European Community and the lowest interest rate for many years? Does he also agree that the business plan put forward by the Leader of the Opposition would put British business straight into the hands of the receivers?

The Prime Minister: We all know of, and see regularly, the hostility of Opposition Members to business but the economic conditions that we have now put in place —low inflation, low interest rates and low corporation tax —are precisely what business wants. The Governor of the Bank of England said the other day that economic prospects today are better than at any time in his professional career. We have the basics of the economy right and British business needs the opportunity to build on those basics to create the prosperity, the growth and the jobs that everyone in the country wants.

Q4. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Ms Eagle: If the Prime Minister does not believe that a £10 million pay-off to somebody who has just sold our last remaining car industry to foreign competitors is not a matter for him, will he please explain to the House precisely what is a matter for him?

The Prime Minister: I am intrigued at what the two hon. Ladies say. What intervention and control would the Opposition propose?

Q5. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gill: The House will be aware of today's announcement that British Telecom intends to extend its cheaper afternoon rate to peak periods. In welcoming those price reductions, will my right hon. Friend agree that they would have been impossible under a Labour Government because of the Labour party's pathological opposition to privatisation and competition?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Those changes have come about because we decided, against the opposition of Labour Members, to privatise the industry. I gather that many calls will now be 25 per cent. cheaper. That is very good news for everyone who uses the telephone. By privatising British Telecom, increasing competition and introducing a proper sense of regulation, we have helped to make the services more efficient, more reliable and better value for everyone who uses them. That is what happens when one leaves the private sector to run things, when one does not seek to over-regulate and over-control in every respect.

Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) (Amendment)

3.30 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North) *rose—*
[Interruption.]

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber should do so quietly so that we may get on with the business. I am sure that you can make yourself heard, Mr. Greenway.

Mr. Greenway: I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend section 1(1) of the Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) Act 1990 so as to increase the age set out therein.

At the turn of the century, the life of everyone depended upon the horse. Horses pulled the plough to harrow the soil and the implements by which the seeds were sown. When it was time to harvest, the horses were there again, pulling the cutting machines and the carts of grain, straw and stubble so that people might be provided with bread, and other horses and animals upon whose existence man depended might be given sustenance.

Horses pulled buses in our streets, fire engines, milk floats, hackney carriages, refuse carts, tinkers' carts and the conveyances of city gents and their ladies, and they carted childen to schools if these were any distance from home. Doctors went round their patients on horseback. Bishops travelled their dioceses on horses, and gaiters remain the official dress of bishops. Indeed, Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher, who crowned our present Queen, never wore anything else when on official duty.

Members of Parliament often travelled to the House in carriages or by some other means of horse transport. No area of life was not touched, directly or indirectly, by this noble creature.

Sadly, there was plenty of terrible cruelty through neglect and wanton beatings. However, most horses were loved and thoroughly cared for by their owners. This was especially true where the owner was wise enough to realise that the cared-for horse lasted much longer and was able to work much better than the abused horse. There was manure in plenty on the streets for everyone, but even then there were those who, in the discharge of their self-appointed task of defending the environment, saw that as wanton pollution.

Then came the internal combustion engine—or, as Winston Churchill so aptly described it, "the infernal combustion engine". Growing numbers of machines have gradually seen cars, lorries and other motor vehicles replace horses in carrying people to the places to which they want to go and in trawling loads of everything, from beer to bridges for rivers and roads. Horses have become ever fewer on our roads, and a horse and cart is now a very rare sight in towns, although driven ponies and traps have returned to some country areas as a healthy, fresh-air means of transport. Nowadays, the only horses seen on our roads are those ridden by children and adults for pleasure, and police and Army horses, which do superb work.

This morning, I had the pleasure of riding a 21-year-old mare called Launceston, an Army horse, in Hyde park's Rotten row, with Captain Charlie McEwen. As ever, the experience was marvellous—on a crisp, sunny morning —and I was reminded again of the need for me to do all in my power to keep horses among us, and for the House to do the same. Horses are so civilising, yet so challenging, that their influence on society can only be good.

In 1964, as a senior housemaster at Sir William Collins school—a comprehensive for 1,100 boys at King's Cross —I was allowed by my then employer, London county council, to take 20 groups of boys each week for lessons in riding and stable management, paid for by ratepayers and taxpayers, and to observe the effects. Those were fine, tough boys, who stood no nonsense from anyone; but they had to respect the horses to be able to ride and control them, and they had to be able to control themselves to achieve that.

My scheme spread to cover disabled children in special schools, who benefited enormously from riding. It must continue, for both ordinary and disabled children.

Horses now face such dangers on the roads that it may soon become too dangerous to ride on roads unless something is done to improve safety. In 1993, riding attracted 3·5 million people; it seems incredible that it is not mandatory for all riders to wear hard hats on the roads.

On 29 August 1993, *The Times* reported that there were 32,000 admissions to casualty departments every year as a result of contact with horses—which is an accident rate of 87 men, women and children per day. According to the *Daily Mail* of 24 September 1993, every year 30 people are permanently paralysed and 15 lose their lives.

As the department of neurosurgery at the Radcliffe infirmary pointed out in 1984, all six of the unhelmeted and improperly helmeted riders who died that year died of primary brain damage; with proper headgear, they could have been saved.

The great danger is that horses may become extinct as their practical uses diminish and the roads become ever more dangerous. Furthermore, we are told that a county the size of Oxfordshire is disappearing under the bulldozer every 10 years: that can only mean ever more riding on roads at a time when traffic is increasing vastly every day. We must ensure that the legislation controlling riding on roads is adequate to provide enough protection for riders to be safe in traffic. Protective headgear can and will save lives.

We should bear it in mind that even the most experienced riders will fall from time to time. Recently, the country was in a state of consternation when it was learned that Her Majesty the Queen had fallen from her horse and fractured her wrist. Naturally, there was much speculation about what would have happened if the accident had been more serious, as it easily could have been.

Her Majesty could have experienced a much worse injury had she fallen on the highway, or fallen on her head with only a headscarf to protect her. The worst could have happened if the horse had been at a walk on the road—let alone if Her Majesty had been travelling at a spanking trot, or even galloping, on a horse that bolted: that can easily happen even to the best horses.

Moreover, even the best horses can suddenly forget their manners and rear, or behave unexpectedly. The *Daily Mail* of 18 January 1994 stated that the Queen's accident was just one of a number of royal riding accidents, some of which had been fatal:

"William III, who succeeded James II in 1689, broke his collar bone when his horse stumbled on a mole hill at Hampton Court. He subsequently developed pleurisy and died."

Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel suffered a similar fate when he fell off a horse in Hyde park and died in agony three

days later. The leisurely ride of Bishop "Soapy Sam" Wilberforce of Winchester was interrupted when he was thrown from his horse and killed instantly. A startled Prime Minister Melbourne watched Queen Victoria stumble from her mount.

Those notable examples show that riding can be dangerous. As a spokesman for the British Horse Society put it:

"Riding is genuinely regarded as having some element of risk attached to it. It is sensible to take precautions against these risks".

Our ancestors did not have the choice, but protective headgear, in the form of hard hats and helmets, can and does save lives. At £25 and £35, that is not too high a price to pay. At present, no law requires the use of a hard hat above the age of 14, but organisers of safe-riding initiatives, including the British Horse Society, of which the Queen is patron, on whose council I have served for 21 consecutive years, and whose award of merit I am proudly wearing today, constantly recommend safe riding hats for everyone, whatever their age.

We must do our utmost to ensure that all riders are safe. We are on moral high ground. How can we let parents say to their children who are under the age of 14, "You have to put your hard hats on because we are going riding, but I do not need to wear one"?

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Richard Spring, Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. David Faber, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Richard Tracey, Mr. Stuart Randall, Mr. John Carlisle and Mr. Iain Mills.

HORSES (PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR FOR YOUNG RIDERS) (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Harry Greenway accordingly presented a Bill to amend section 1(1) of the Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) Act 1990 so as to increase the age set out therein: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 18 February, and to be printed. [Bill 43.]

Points of Order

3.42 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance on the subject of answers to questions. If it is in order, as I understand that it is, for the Prime Minister to answer questions about the wages of ordinary workers who are struggling to make ends meet, why is it not possible for him to answer a question about Mr. Cahill, who is to receive a £10 million pay-off after selling the British Rover company to BMW? Is not the Prime Minister responsible for such matters?

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, Ministers, Back Benchers and Front Benchers are responsible for the comments they make in the House. It is not the responsibility of the Chair.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): My point of order, Madam Speaker, arises directly from the events at today's Prime Minister's questions, which is increasingly becoming a farce—I think that viewers, of whom there are a million, would agree with that.

Was it in order that, during questions, the Prime Minister gave a detailed answer on the privatised British Telecom in response to a planted question from a Conservative Member, but that, when it came to the rather more difficult question about another privatised company, British Aerospace, he said that it was not a matter for him? We need to know which questions the Prime Minister is willing to answer and which he is not. As long as he continues to perform as he has been, he will bring this place into disrepute.

Madam Speaker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave a moment ago.

Orders of the Day

Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: I have to announce that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). I have had to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches between the hours of 7 and 9 o'clock. I trust that other hon. Members will co-operate by voluntarily reducing the length of their speeches.

3.43 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I shall start by setting the Bill in the wider context of our competitiveness as a nation. There is not one item, or even one group of agenda items, that constitutes national competitiveness. There is not a given moment when that competitiveness can be measured in final or absolute terms. The essence of competitiveness is that it is a process, perhaps even a culture, which, to be effective, must be ongoing. It permeates society and affects the attitudes of the public and private sectors alike. In the private sector, it should embrace the smallest sole trader and the largest multinational corporation. In the public sector, it embraces major issues—the management of the economy, the quality of training and the output of our schools—but it must also penetrate less familiar but contributory factors such as standards, design and, of course, the regulatory climate.

The Government have announced their intention to publish a White Paper on competitiveness, exploring the strengths and weaknesses of our performance and indicating where we are ahead, how we stay ahead and, where we are behind, how we catch up. The Bill is one part of our approach to one aspect of our competitiveness—the regulatory climate.

No advanced society can manage itself outside a regulatory framework. Indeed, it is impossible to contemplate the sophisticated assumptions on which we conduct our everyday lives without the underpinning of regulation. Inevitably, regulation is about restraint. The central issue that confronts us as we manage the Government's deregulation initiative is, therefore, the balance between the legitimate entitlements of society and the damage that can flow from the over-fussy, over-prescriptive use of restrictions.

Regulation can be a spur to innovation and competitiveness. Regulation can be vital to protect the safety of workers, of customers and of the environment. If the balance is tipped too far, however, there can come a point where the real costs outweigh the assumed benefits. That can be particularly true as time passes, as practices change and as new technologies emerge. Regulations that were once considered right and necessary can become burdensome. Businesses feel that they are swamped with red tape and no one should underestimate the significance of that, particularly for the smaller business.

I have been struck by the different psychologies that can be found in small, often owner-managed, businesses and the larger, often international, corporations. For the former, it is often the boss, in what time he or she has to spare, who has to face the forms, the questions and guidance notes. Let us imagine trying to wrestle with an illuminating passage from "Home Office Guidelines on Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations 1992", which states:

"Alternative escape routes should generally satisfy the following criteria: (from any point from which there is initially a single direction of escape) they are in directions apart, equal to 45 degrees plus 2·5 degrees for every metre travelled in one direction. See appendix 1."

I am extremely happy to say that it is now being rewritten.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Who was the Home Secretary in 1992 and what did he do about it?

Mr. Heseltine: I am delighted to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that it was rewritten by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Before the Opposition leap around with expectation, let me read from an order issued by the Excise Office in 1976 under the then Labour Government. I am sure that the Opposition will now be carefully listing the incumbents of the various offices responsible for the Excise Office in 1976. The difference is that the order was still on the statutue book when the Labour party left office, but we changed it. I was trying to be bipartisan by quoting one example of regulations passed under a Conservative Government and then one of measures passed under a Labour Government, but the Opposition cannot resist the temptation to deal with this important issue in the traditional banging about of party politics.

As the Opposition have tried to provoke me, let me be provoked and quote from the 1976 Excise Office order. It states:

"Relief in respect"——

[Interruption.] I thought that the Opposition might listen as I am quoting from an order passed under a Labour Government. It reads:

"Relief in respect of assimilated articles. The use of oil in manufacture or preparation of an assimilated article does not earn entitlement for relief from duty. But entitlement in respect of oils so used may be earned by subsequent use of the assimilated article in the manufacture or preparation of an article that is not an assimilated article."

Quite honestly——

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I wish to make other arguments. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Heseltine: My problem is to keep the hon. Gentleman out.

Madam Speaker: Order. Secretary Heseltine.

Mr. Spearing: Will the President kindly give way?

Mr. Heseltine: Of course.

Mr. Spearing: Does the President agree, first, that regulations come before Statutory Instruments Committees for clarification and authentication and, secondly, that when they are made by, one hopes, knowledgeable officials and agreed by, one hopes, well-versed Secretaries of State, the technical language can probably be understood only by the people whose everyday work is involved in carrying out and complying with those regulations? Does the President agree that it would be easy to guy any good statutory instrument on those grounds.

Mr. Heseltine: The question reveals the attitude of the Labour party. As Ministers, we are not supposed to understand; as members of the Committee, we are not supposed to understand; as ordinary people, we are not supposed to understand; but there are some awfully clever people somewhere who do understand, who draft that sort of stuff.

Just try, Madam Speaker, going to those thousands of rooms at the back of hard-pressed businesses where ordinary men and women try to earn a crust and saying to them, "We have all these awfully clever people in Whitehall who understand all that stuff." The fact that business people spend hour after hour, night after night, trying to understand the regulations and we do not understand them simply puts us in the same chaotic position. It must be incumbent on us to make regulations in a language that the ordinary man and woman in the street can understand. It is no excuse for the Labour party to say that it does not matter if they do not understand it as long as clever people understand it. I am not saying that.

This afternoon we are getting a surfeit of over-regulatory zeal here, with half the parliamentary Labour party rising to its feet to try to over-regulate my speech, on which I should like to make progress, if I may.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose——*

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose——*

Mr. Heseltine: I give way to the hon. Member for Workington.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In the case of the two quotations that he has read to the House, will the President read the explanatory memorandum on the back, which is what we normally read when we want to understand statutory instruments when we debate them?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman knows that there is a 10-minute limit on the time of speeches and it will be important for him to have the chance to make that important argument if he can cram it into the time that you, Madam Speaker, may or may not give him.

Several hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Heseltine: I will not make progress if there is any further discussion about that.

Mr. Cryer *rose——*

Mr. Illsley *rose——*

Mr. Heseltine: I will not give way. The place must calm down, if I may suggest it. *[Interruption.]* Madam Speaker, that was not intended to be lese-majesty, if that is the right approach to your distinguished office.

I am trying to argue, patiently and at some length, that that type of officialese—garbage-speak, if I can coin a phrase—is all too characteristic of government, whether it is local or national. We all know examples of it—the sub-paragraphs, the multiple choice questions and the complications of language. They can drive people who have to fill in the forms and understand the regulations to despair.

That frustration and despair are often a great deal more intense in the small business than they are in the large. The reason is not difficult to find. Larger companies are more able to afford the professional advice or the skilled staff to cope with the intrusions of the public sector. That is why we have ensured, in our deregulatory initiative, that we take special account of small businesses when we consider the burden that that type of activity places on them.

Our deregulation initiative put in place a system to scrutinise the regulations that affect the wealth-creating process. We set out to review those regulations that were imposed by primary and secondary legislation, those regulations arising from domestic initiative and from European requirements and those regulations that were the product of administrative decision by the army of inspectors that enforced all those regulatory decisions.

We were not prepared, in the exercise, to rely on the advice of the people who had drafted the regulations in the first place. Therefore, we invited Lord Sainsbury to chair eight task forces, which were drawn largely from the private sector, as they began to work their way through the thousands of regulations that actually exist.

As a result of that intense work, the business task forces have made more than 600 recommendations. We have *[Interruption.]* It is fascinating; the Labour party is solemnly trying to persuade the private sector that it has at least entered the 20th century, yet the moment that the House debates the issues about which the private sector cares most, all that we hear from Labour Members are sedentary interventions about trying to recreate a class divide that the whole country, with the exception of the Labour party, knows disintegrated during the 1980s.

Mr. Cryer: The right hon. Gentleman will, of course, be aware that, year after year, the Government have set their face against providing time to debate a Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments report about poor drafting and extensive use of powers that Ministers do not have. A Committee with a majority of Conservative Members has several times asked the Leader of the House to require that the Committee's report be brought before the House before the statutory instruments are taken, yet the Government have refused time after time.

As the right hon. Gentleman is so worried about statutory instruments, may I ask him why in 1992 the Conservative Government produced almost 3,500 of them —more than at any time in the history of Parliament, and almost double the highest number produced by any Labour Government?

Mr. Heseltine: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, that has happened because we have completed the single European agenda, which has meant harmonising the entire range of such matters throughout western Europe. That has required a whole range of reforming regulations. That is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, and I shall deal with that subject later in my speech. Moreover, as he also knows, and as I shall explain later, our proposals for special scrutiny under the Bill go a long way towards meeting some of his objections.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Arising from that point, my right hon. Friend will be aware that the measures that have given most cause for concern and anger in recent years have come under the general heading of food safety or food hygiene. They have affected hotels, restaurants and the tourist industry in general, as well as shops and all sorts of other businesses throughout the country. In the explanatory material on the Bill, I see few examples of such horrors, which Christopher Booker, among others, has exposed. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that his Bill will eradicate as many of those horrors as possible?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes an important point. The answer to his question is that all those issues are under review.

I was about to say that, as a result of the exercise that I described, the business task forces have made more than 600 recommendations. We have announced that we have accepted about 250 of those, and 280 are still under consideration. We rejected about 70, because we felt that the public interest demanded their preservation on the statute book.

When the Bill was published, we issued a booklet called "Cutting Red Tape", which is available in the Library and the Vote Office and which shows the scale of our first response. About 440 proposals are being implemented now or are under active consideration, and we expect recommendations from the voluntary sector task force shortly. We have already identified many changes that would not remove any necessary protection and could usefully reduce burdens.

I shall give some examples of what those changes amount to. Why, for example, should not the Patent Office accept documents electronically, instead of on paper? Why is Government approval needed for parking control equipment used by local authorities to enforce traffic orders? Why should insurance companies have to submit detailed information, which is no longer needed for prudential supervision?

Those are only a few examples. If we needed to find time for primary legislation for every such change, change would take years to achieve. The first four clauses of the Bill therefore provide an order-making power to allow the amendment or repeal of outdated or unnecessarily burdensome legislation.

The order-making power could be used to replace a system of regulation with one that was less burdensome but achieved the necessary protection. We have built in considerable safeguards and constraints on the use of that power: necessary protection will not be removed; consultation with interested parties is required; a draft order would then be laid with an explanatory document giving the reasons for the measure, including savings in compliance costs.

The nature of the deregulation order-making power is that it could cover a wide range of policy matters that may need separate consideration. I understand the sensitivity of that issue. In our view, it is therefore appropriate to provide a special and exceptional form of parliamentary scrutiny in addition to consultation. We have provided a 40-day period during which such additional scrutiny could take place. We have submitted proposals to the Procedure Committee on the form that such scrutiny might take.

The key elements of our suggestions are set out in the explanatory guide to the Bill. We have suggested that a new scrutiny Committee might be set up in each House, with power to examine witnesses and seek additional information. The role of the new Committee—it might be for the consideration of both Houses where they have a joint Committee—might be to consider whether the subject matter was appropriate to be enacted in subordinate legislation and whether the proposed order would remove any necessary protection. Such Committees could recommend whether particular proposals should proceed or whether they should proceed only if amended in some way.

The Bill provides that Ministers would have to take account of the outcome of the scrutiny and of any other representations in finalising any order. I should make it clear that the Government will look carefully at any other option for effective scrutiny that emerges as the Bill proceeds.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the President of the Board of Trade make it clear what he means in clause 3 by

"consult such organisations as appear to him to be representative of interests"

or

"consult such other persons as he considers appropriate"?

Having described the mechanism—"Cutting Red Tape" says that the Government have identified 3,500 regulations that they may wish to remove—how on earth will that procedure not be swamped by the sheer volume of the changes that he wishes to introduce?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman can be assured that the process of consultation will be wide. It is obvious. Anyone who has read the explanatory memorandum will know that we are trying to give the fullest possible opportunity for people to make representations. But that is for the scrutiny committees to determine. The hon. Gentleman asked about the scale of the problem. We are fully aware as a Government that the scrutiny committees have absolute power to determine the pace at which the process can go through. Therefore, we must have regard to the workload that they can carry. We shall do that in a practical way.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I know that my right hon. Friend has not come to this part of the Bill yet, but I am concerned, as are some of my hon. Friends, about part II and contracting out. My right hon. Friend will know that that part of the Bill concerns the powers of the Minister or an office holder to contract out.

As Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission, I should like to say that the position of the Comptroller and Auditor General appears to be in some doubt under the powers of the Bill. Hitherto, and for 140 years, the position of the CAG has been in no doubt whatever; he is a servant of the House and is not subject in any way to ministerial orders. Will my right hon. Friend therefore give the House an assurance that the measures in the Bill will allow separate rights of contracting out by office holders, not through the aegis of Ministers? It would be quite intolerable if there were any suggestion that the CAG came in any way under the powers of a Minister, since the CAG has the power to pronounce on Government matters and he must be wholly independent of Government.

Mr. Heseltine: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend for raising that point, which a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends who are in their places have also raised. I anticipated the possibility of the matter being raised, so I can give a considered reply to what my right hon. Friend said.

Our policy in drafting clause 57 was to ensure that in the functions of an office holder, it would be the office holder —he or she alone—who could give the authorisation to make use of contractors, should an order be laid by a Minister and approved by both Houses. Any order could, therefore, be enabling only. Nothing in the order could suggest compulsion if the office holder chose not to make an authorisation; the powers are, therefore, voluntary. I am advised that clause 57(2), as drafted, gives effect to that policy. If, however, hon. Members believe that differences

in interpretation of the clause may arise, I have no hesitation in giving an undertaking to table in Committee an amendment to make the matter clear beyond doubt.

We have published a list of 55 measures that illustrate the sort of measures for which we consider the order-making provision would be appropriate. They are also listed in the publication "Cutting Red Tape", to which I have already referred. We recognise that how a regulation is implemented and enforced can be just as crucial for business as what is said in it. The task forces have helped to identify problem areas in enforcement. As a result, we have produced guidance material for enforcement authorities and business. Some 18 local business partnerships have been developed to encourage business organisations to work with their local authority to make it easier for them to comply with regulations enforced by local government. Most of the 70 enforcement agencies in central Government have now published codes of good practice.

Reducing the burden of existing regulations is only part of the process. We want to ensure that before new regulations are introduced, the implications are fully thought through. Before new regulations can be introduced, a full compliance cost assessment must be carried out. We are also strengthening the system for assessing the effects on business of EC legislation and we are persuading our EC partners to take more account of business needs. The Bill is only a part of our campaign, but it is an important part.

Chapter II of part I deals with a wide range of matters that the House will wish to explore in Committee. It includes matters as diverse as building societies, slaughterhouses, shop hours, children in pubs, market arrangements and competition law.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I imagine that the President of the Board of Trade realises that, over the years, major pieces of legislation have been reversed or substantially changed within a year or two; examples of that are the poll tax, criminal justice provisions, education provisions and the Child Support Agency. He will not, therefore, be surprised to know that the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain is afraid that clause 21, which appears to take away from local authorities powers over markets and fairs, will actually lead to an increase in the power of local authorities to interfere in the setting up of fairs and markets. Can the right hon. Gentleman put those fears at rest and confirm that that will not happen?

Mr. Heseltine: I can help the hon. Gentleman. Nothing in the Bill will increase the powers of local authorities. The Bill takes away the powers of local authorities, in some limited cases, to prohibit markets operating within six and two thirds miles of the central area. I hope that I have reassured the hon. Gentleman.

Chapters III and IV of part I make the licensing system for operators of goods and passenger vehicles much less onerous. The main provision is a move from licences renewable every five years to licences that can last for the lifetime of a person or of a company. As with all good regulation, the Government aim to deliver services according to need and with the least possible burden on the taxpayer. That means finding ways to encourage the delivery of quality services at the best value for money.

The contracting-out provisions in part II will, subject to essential safeguards, provide us with the means to sweep away unnecessarily restrictive distinctions between what can be done by contractors and what must be done by civil servants. It will, thus, widen the range of activities that can be tested in the marketplace. The provisions in the Bill provide an order-making power for that purpose, but one which excludes functions affecting the fundamental liberties of individuals. It ensures that accountability and legal liability remain unchanged and provides strong safeguards for confidential information.

There is one other matter, which was raised earlier and was raised previously by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I do not dispute the fact that many of the regulations that we are reviewing have themselves arisen over the lifetime of the present Government. Two things have coincided with that process. First, as I told the House a few moments ago, there has been the completion of the single market and, secondly, there has been a growing awareness of the need to intensify our drive to competitiveness in Europe and, above all, the realisation that Britain now has a real advantage over our European partners, which we are determined to maintain.

The single market required the completion of the Cockfield agenda. Initially, some 300 agenda items were listed for agreement across the 12 members of the Community and the implementation of those items in case after case required regulatory action in the British Parliament. If we have over-regulated, over-prescribed, or if we have overdone it, it is a sign of strength to recognise that and to put it right. It would be a sign of weakness to shrug our shoulders and allow the drift to continue.

It is a sign of neither strength nor weakness to do what the Labour party has done. It is a crass misjudgment to go on repeating what the Leader of the Opposition again repeated on Sunday. We, he said,

"will sign up to the Social Chapter".

That social chapter represents the greatest regulatory overload in history. It is the surest way to choke off the investment boom from overseas companies.

Howard Davies of the CBI put it starkly in the past week. He said that Labour's support for the social chapter

"ignores the rest of the world, ignores the whole purpose of the single market and ignores the unemployed".

He went on to say:

"The main aim of the single market is to make Europe more competitive, by increasing competition and expanding the size of European companies' home markets. The Social Chapter works in the opposite direction, imposing costs on European employers, for uncertain benefits".

That is the stark position that the CBI has put before the country. The social chapter means fewer jobs and longer dole queues.

Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition does not believe what the director general of the CBI has so clearly spelt out. It is difficult for the Labour party to square its assiduous courting of the CBI with the fact that every time it receives a piece of the CBI's advice, it is among the first to disown it. That is the real world. The Labour party still does not understand the need to make our companies efficient and to give them the climate in which they can compete. The Labour party still does not believe that it is compatible with national interests in Britain to have opted out of the social chapter, thus avoiding the dramatic costs which would have been put on us.

The Labour party cannot understand that our flexible labour markets are the envy of our continental partners and

[Mr. Heseltine]

that the social chapter would undermine all that we have fought to achieve in this country. In reality, it is yesterday's dogma masquerading as tomorrow's panacea.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): So that we can test the Secretary of State's rhetoric, will he answer this fairly simple question? He has given his enthusiastic support for the takeover of Rover by BMW. Give his analysis of the huge commercial advantages of operating in a country without the social chapter, as opposed to one with the social chapter, can he confirm that it is his view that if BMW is faced with the prospect of cuts in the future, it will make cuts in Germany where the costs of the social chapter are high, rather than in Britain where they are low?

Mr. Heseltine: The real danger to cuts in investment and jobs in this country is the fact that the Labour party has signed up to the European socialist election manifesto, which threatens our industry with a range of restraints that are incompatible with prosperity.

Labour Members need to understand what danger they pose to our industries. Let them understand what the Leader of the Opposition signed up to in November when he flew to Brussels. He signed up to a

"substantial cut in working time"

and the possibility of a 35-hour week; "European works councils" and "European sectoral collective agreements"; and "a guaranteed minimum wage". Those are the ways in which employment and investment in this country will be threatened.

Labour Members pretend that they have a solution to this problem. They say that they have a package of measures. On Sunday, the Leader of the Opposition proudly proclaimed:

"Like our partners in Europe, the Labour Party understands that economic success depends more than anything else on the knowledge and the skills of our people. We need to build a self-confident, acceptable, highly skilled and highly motivated workforce to meet the demands of a competitive, rapidly changing economy."

Let us take a look at those partners in Europe to which the Leader of the Opposition was referring. At present, there are two countries in the EC that have a guaranteed minimum wage—Spain and France. The former has a socialist Government; the latter only recently escaped from one. What have socialism and the minimum wage done for those two countries? In France, the unemployment rate is 11·7 per cent. and the youth unemployment rate is over 20 per cent. In Spain, the picture is even worse: unemployment is at 23 per cent., and rising, and 40 per cent. of those under 25 are unable to find work. Yet the Labour party threatens to impose the social chapter on this country and the economy.

Labour Members talk about an adaptable work force to meet the demands of a competitive, rapidly changing economy as part of their business plan for Europe and Britain. How do they square that with a cut in working hours, a minimum wage and European sectoral collective agreements? It is an impossible concept to understand.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) *rose——*

Mr. Heseltine: No. I am not giving way any more—*[Interruption.]* Okay, I shall give way—why not?

Mr. Burden: I am grateful to the President for changing his mind. I look forward to his changing his mind on one or two other things in the future.

If the right hon. Gentleman is so interested in lifting the so-called burdens of business, may we take it that he will also lift the burden on business caused by this Government's passing the buck on statutory sick pay? Will he lift the burden on business caused by the Government's failure properly to invest in nursery education? Will he lift the burden on business that was imposed in the past year by causing employers to seek from employees regular agreement to the check-off arrangement, which a great many firms have described as a burden on business? Will he lift those burdens, or just the ones that he picks?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for thanking me for changing my mind. I did so because I could see the fatuous nature of the question welling up in his mind. The House will have been in no way disappointed by my judgment on that occasion.

Britain today has an economic opportunity, the fact of which has rarely been more exciting in recent memory. One should remember Britain 15 years ago. For decades, Britain had had a declining share of world trade in manufactures. Britain had been bottom of the European Community and Group of Seven growth leagues for decades. Britain was widely described as the sick man of Europe.

We have come a long way since then. Our share of world trade has stabilised. Our manufacturing productivity has grown faster than in any other major industrialised country. Our industrial relations have been transformed and our inflation record during the past year is the best for 30 years.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development forecasts that we will grow faster than Germany or Japan. The German Economics Minister was quoted recently as saying that Britain provided a model for the German economy on deregulation. He paid tribute to the "exceptional results" that we have achieved in breaking down bureaucratic obstacles to starting up new businesses and managing existing companies. That is the sort of tribute which can be measured in terms of jobs and investment. It is in stark contrast to the willing acceptance and the posturing of the Opposition with every nostrum dreamt up in Brussels.

The Bill represents an important step in reducing the burdens on industry, particularly small companies. It is about helping to increase our competitive edge and will sweep away unnecessary burdens on business. It has the potential to save British industry and taxpayers millions of pounds. It will make a substantial contribution to the more efficient working of our economy, and I strongly commend it to the House.

4.22 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): The President of the Board of Trade, perhaps wisely, did not spend the greater part of his speech talking about the Bill which is before the House. Nevertheless, in those early passages which had some tangential relationship to the Bill, the right hon. Gentleman presented it as a measure which would cut red tape.

The Opposition are worried that what makes the Bill notable is not the extent to which it cuts through red tape, but the extent to which it cuts through the procedures of

Parliament. No business has a burden removed from it by the Bill to the remarkable degree to which the first four clauses lift from Ministers the burden of accountability to Parliament. Let us be clear what those four clauses propose. They propose that Ministers may be able to set aside Acts of Parliament by statutory instruments.

I understand that such clauses are termed Henry VIII clauses in disrespectful commemoration of that monarch's tendency to absolutism. They have, of course, become increasingly common under this Government, as we would expect, given their tendency to absolutism. To be fair, the Henry VIII clauses which the Government have produced have so far been slipped into the back of Bills. They have been consequential clauses, temporary in their powers and always related to the Bill which contained them.

The Bill is one big Henry VIII clause. It gives power to any Secretary of State to suspend any Act of Parliament by order. If there is any doubt, the opening subsection of the Bill, which the President wisely did not quote, says that the order may be made to suspend a full Act of Parliament if "a Minister of the Crown is of the opinion—

> (a) that the effect of the provision is such as to impose . . . a burden affecting any person in the carrying on of any trade".

While the President was speaking, the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) intervened to ask about the Food Safety Act. That Act was passed with support from both sides of the House. Under clauses 1 to 4 of the Bill, it would be possible for any Minister to come to the House and, by order, suspend an Act passed through the House only three years ago with all-party support.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Good idea.

Mr. Cook: It would certainly be possible to find Conservative Members other than the hon. Gentleman who cried "Good idea" about a full Act of Parliament being lifted by statutory instrument, who would regard the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 as a burden on business, and who would want to see it reduced, amended or repealed by order of the House. It would certainly be possible to find cowboys in the construction industry who thought that way.

I have not the slightest doubt that we would find Conservative Members who regarded the possibility of a Labour Government as a burden on business and, if they could find a Secretary of State who was of the opinion, would amend the Representation of the People Act 1989 accordingly. They may be wise to do so.

The President of the Board of Trade referred to the Department of Trade and Industry document "Cutting Red Tape". The first example of deregulation given by the Department of Employment in its chapter of the document is the abolition of the wages councils. That section is as bold as brass. It presents the abolition of the wages councils as an important step in deregulation because it

> "freed 2·5 million workers from the rigidities of statutory minimum wage fixing."

It took a Bill to get that abolition through the House.

Let us hear it from the President. Is that the type of measure that will be brought in by order under the Bill? That is what clauses 1 to 4 give him the power to do. A measure such as that, which took away protection from 2·5 million citizens, could be bounced through the House in 90 minutes.

I am surprised and sorry to see that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is not in his place. Undoubtedly, he has an important audience to address with his thoughts. I nurse the lively hope that we shall read about them in tomorrow's papers.

Five days before the Bill was published, the Chief Secretary lashed out at those who undermined great institutions. He particularly warned the nation about those who would do a hatchet job on Parliament, which he called the world's premier debating Chamber. No wonder that, in the same speech, he warned the nation of the spread of cynicism. Nothing does a more thorough hatchet job on the proceedings of Parliament than the Bill presented by the Government.

Let us be clear what would happen and what we would lose if clauses 1 to 4 were passed unamended. Ministers would be able to repeal full Acts of Parliament by statutory instrument. There would be no Committee stage in which the measure was considered line by line. Statutory instruments cannot be amended; they have to be accepted or rejected as they stand. There would be no Report stage in which new clauses could be considered. The House would have to accept the priorities of the Minister who presented the order.

There would be no Lords amendments in which the second Chamber gave us a chance to have second thoughts. We would not even have the now traditional debate on the guillotine motion, which is a standard part of the proceedings under the Government. Instead of that full, exhaustive process of legislation, we would have the miniaturised proceedings of a statutory instrument, which are usually taken last thing at night in 90 minutes dead, without even the troublesome need to move a guillotine motion.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I wonder whether my hon. Friend has considered whether Ministers have considered how a Labour Government might wish to use the legislation as it stands or even in marginally amended form. Do Government supporters really want to leave legislation such as this on the statute book?

Mr. Cook: I do not know whether Ministers have considered that. I have to say that I found myself fantasising about it last night. The very fact that Ministers probably have never thought about it points up the problem we have with the Government. They have been in power so long that they cannot envisage anyone but themselves in power.

Of course, there is an innovation in the Bill. That is that the proposal for a statutory instrument will first be put to a new Committee. I listened with interest to what the President had to say about the new Committee. He laid great stress on the new Committee and what it would say.

If the President of the Board of Trade is genuine and that Committee will be such an influential part of the new process, I find it strange that clause 4—under which the committee is appointed and given those procedures—does not give it the power to reject a proposal, but only creates an obligation on the Minister to "have regard" to its views. We have had a lot of experience of the extent to which the Government have regard to the opinion of anyone other than themselves—we have had 15 years' experience of it.

If anyone has forgotten the lesson of that experience, the Bill contains a good example. Clause 20 removes the rights of local authorities to object to new markets within the vicinity of an existing market. A year ago, there was some consultation about the proposal. The Association of

[Mr. Cook]

Metropolitan Authorities believes that 90 per cent. of those who responded were against removing that right, including the local authorities who would lose it, traders in existing markets who would have extra competition and the residents of those sites where the new markets might spring up, who would have extra hassle.

Yet, such is the selective capacity of Ministers to have regard to other views that they have chosen to have regard to those of the minority 10 per cent., who were in favour, and not those of the 90 per cent. who were against.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): On the subject of market rights, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that the city of Leicester has a right to control markets up to six and two third miles beyond its boundary. Is he aware that that includes the borough of Oadby and Wigston in my constituency, which is entirely outside the city of Leicester? The city therefore has power to control markets in another borough, although not one elector there has elected the councillors of that city—whether Labour or Liberal—or had any say in the matter at all. Is it right that that undemocratic practice should be allowed to continue?

Mr. Spearing: Change the statutory instrument.

Mr. Cook: I shall return to my hon. Friend's remark.

I am aware that Leicester county council, which includes the hon. Gentleman's constituency, has expressed grave concern that some of the car boot sales springing up in that county are creating dangers to life and limb. I believe that it is important for local authorities to have the right to object.

Mr. Garnier *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has put his finger on the problem. The hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) is perfectly entitled to his point of view, and Opposition Members are entitled to theirs. If a matter required primary legislation, that allowed us to debate it. We can debate the contents of clause 21, for example. So why does the Minister need powers to do something by order, which would prevent the hon. Member for Harborough from tabling any amendments?

The Bill contains one anomaly. Let us assume that the President of the Board of Trade really believes that his new procedures in part I are an improvement. Part II of the Bill concerns the remit of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is responsible for the Office of Public Service and Science. It deals with contracting out central and local government provisions and does away with the irksome need for Ministers to pass legislation through this House if they want to hive off another part of the public service. Instead, the power of Parliament is contracted out to Ministers, who will be able to do so by order.

Last month, the Public Accounts Committee warned us that the pace of the transfer of public functions to quasi-private agencies had led to

"a departure from the standards of public conduct".

Yet here we are, only two weeks later, debating a Bill which blithely refuses to have regard to the Public Accounts Committee and proposes powers which will pave the way for a more sweeping transfer of the functions of public service to the private sector.

The Bill has an explanatory guide, which lists 26 areas of public life which might be privatised under the provisions. Only two of those have ever been floated for market testing. The list includes the traffic commissioners, the Registrar-General, the official receiver, the rent registration services and court administration.

Bizarrely, the gas measurements service is one of the functions that may go out to contract under part II of the Bill. That service is responsible for measuring the energy content of gas sales, and the accurate calibration of gas meters. Only one private company has the expertise to provide such a service throughout the nation, and that is British Gas, so that would leave the policing of the honesty of gas sales to the company responsible for selling gas.

There is a simple test by which we can tell whether the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister responsible for the civil service believe that the new procedures in part I of the Bill will provide an increased and improved service. Why will not the orders to be laid under part II be subject to the same new procedures provided for under part I? Why will they not let a parliamentary Committee, such as the Public Accounts Committee, first consider any proposals to privatise another part of public life, so that it could monitor whether the Government have any regard for their own reports?

Why not insist on the same extent of consultation with the public, who are the customers of those public services? Why not ask the tenants whether they want estate agents to bid for the rent registration service? Why have two different types of order in the Bill?

There is another reason why we do not believe that the House would be wise to trust the Government with powers to do by order what they find too troublesome to do by Bill. It is as well to be frank about that other reason: we know the Minister to whom we are asked to give those powers. I do not mean the President, who is a big picture man, as he showed in his speech when he quickly moved off the Bill and on the big picture. I suspect that he will forget about the Bill as soon as he can decently slip away from the debate.

The Minister who makes the hair rise on the back of our spine and reach into our pockets for a clove of garlic is the Minister for deregulation, the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). He has wisely not been allowed to speak in the debate until after the 9 pm watershed, in case he frightens young strangers. May I make a confession: I have a sneaking respect for the hon. Gentleman, based on the fact that I know where he stands. Usually so many miles to the right, he is visible only on a clear day.

How did the Minister for deregulation choose to relax on the night of his Bill's publication? He spent it among friends, with the Libertarian Alliance—*[Interruption.]* I see that the Minister has other supporters in the Chamber. Among much else, the Libertarian Alliance has called for the deregulation of all drug offences; the abolition of a public police force; and privatising the currency so that every citizen will be at liberty to mint his or her own money.

Instead of telling its members, "Away with fairies," and that he had better things to do with his time, the Minister showed that he was a spirit after their own hearts. He assured them:

"Deregulation is really part of a much broader libertarian agenda which I fully share".

We are asked to trust that Minister with powers to extinguish Acts of Parliament by statutory instrument. We

are asked to believe that he will "have regard" to the views of a Committee if it asks him nicely to drop a proposal. The House would be wilfully negligent—so negligent that it could be sued by its constituents—were it to hand over those powers to such a Minister.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): Later, I shall address the hon. Gentleman, but that does not mean that I agree with anything that he says.

Mr. Cook: The Minister has removed a weight from my mind in suggesting that he agrees with nothing I say. It would be worrying if he did.

The Minister's candid expression of those trenchant views, however, helps this debate, because it shows where the real division on this matter lies between the two sides of the Chamber. It has nothing to do with red tape. We have no objection to a cremation of red tape that serves no useful purpose and binds the hands of business.

As the President observed, Labour did not, after all, think up the vast majority of the regulations that the Conservative Government are now reviewing. The Government brought them in. Of the 3,500 regulations referred to the task forces, 71 per cent. have been introduced since the Government took office, and 21 per cent. since the present Prime Minister entered Downing street. Of those regulations from the Department of Trade and Industry, 84 per cent. have been introduced since the Government took office, 27 per cent. since the present Prime Minister entered Downing Street, and 13 per cent. since the President was appointed to the DTI.

In the Queen's Speech debate, I pointed out that, when the Government came to power in 1979, "Butterworth's Company Law" was just under 500 pages—broadly comparable to a light novel by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) "Butterworth's Company Law" now runs to more than 4,000 pages—the equivalent of "War and Peace", the works of William Shakespeare and the Bible all rolled into one.

To rub home that point, in 1979, the annex to that volume had 80 forms that businesses might be required to fill in. After 15 years of Conservative Government, the annex to the 1993 volume contains 265 forms. It is not for nothing that the number of business accountants has increased by 75 per cent. under the present Government.

The Government are complaining not about our regulations, but about their own. It is their regulations which they believe to be pointless, burdensome and misplaced. Yes, if the regulations are pointless, we shall happily vote for the new provisions. For example, there is much merit in the new auditing proposals, which will significantly reduce the burden on very small companies.

We shall not, however, support any deregulation that reduces the safety of employees, the health of the public or the protection of the consumers; that is the real divide between the Opposition and the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs. We believe that Parliament has the right and duty to provide a legal framework to reduce those dangers.

In his heart, the hon. Member for Tatton believes that the state has no business interfering in such matters. That is why, whenever Ministers talk about regulation, they talk about it only as a burden, as did the President of the Board of Trade.

Regulations that cut accidents at work are not a burden on business; they are a benefit to business, because they cut the cost of injuries to the work force and reduce the production lost through accidents.

The Health and Safety Commission estimates the cost of accidents to business as between £11,000 million and £16,000 million every year. That is the really big burden on business; that is the burden which the Government should be trying to cut, instead of cutting regulations that reduce accidents, and the budget of the Health and Safety Commission which exists to police the regulations. It is another example of the Government being penny wise, pound foolish.

Nor do we impose burdens on industry by obliging companies to meet high environmental standards. On the contrary; we shall leave British industry handicapped in the competition for world markets if we encourage it to settle for lower environmental standards than other countries will accept. We believe that Parliament has a duty to regulate to ensure fair play between producer and consumer.

I understand that the Minister believes that consumers should be free to make up their own minds on what they want. Very well: consumers have made up their minds. They want Parliament to regulate for fair play. A recent poll by the National Consumer Council shows that 90 per cent. of consumers believe that the Government have a responsibility to provide regulations to protect consumers.

Even in the Government's reduced circumstances in the polls, that 90 per cent. must include somebody who still wants to vote for them. That 90 per cent. of consumers see regulations not as a burden that costs them money, but as important protection for the money in their wallets and purses—an enabling measure which helps them get value for money.

There is one consumer issue bigger today than it was before the Conservatives came to power. The operation of debt agencies has increased, because one of the real burdens imposed on the nation is the trebling of personal debt. The Government have published a list of measures that they might introduce under the new powers in clauses 1 to 4. One is to amend by order the Consumer Credit Act 1974 to reduce the obligation on credit agents to notify the Government about changes in their key personnel.

In their constituency work, many right hon. and hon. Members will have come across the sharp practice of those who prey on the needs of those who are desperately in debt. Those hon. Members who have not, have either been extremely fortunate or not very active in their constituency work. My own experience is such that I agree with the spokesman for one consumer group, who said that we should be tightening rules on debt agencies, not loosening them.

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): The hon. Gentleman seems to have missed the mood of the country. Many of those people who are helped with their debts are in the voluntary sector, and the voluntary sector is crying out for the cutting away of regulations, which are often more burdensome on them than on trade and industry. The hon. Gentleman has missed the whole point.

Mr. Cook: If articulating the views of 90 per cent. of consumers is missing the mood of the nation, it is the hon. Gentleman who has the selective hearing problem.

[Mr. Cook]

I understand why the Government missed the mood of the nation; it was because of the people to whom they listen. There were no consumers on the task forces that they set up to advise them.

The President of the Board of Trade made great play of the importance of small businesses and the importance to small businesses of cutting regulations. It is a pity that that was not remembered by whoever set up the task forces. There were no small businesses there either; it was the big boys. GEC, Bovis and Kingfisher were in the chairs of the task forces.

Membership of the task forces reads like a list of donors to the Tory party. Between them, the companies represented on the task force made 88 separate donations to the Tory party. Four of the eight chairmen of the task forces come from companies that together donated to the Tory party only a few thousand short of £1 million in the last Parliament alone.

They are the people to whom the Government are really prepared to have regard—not some Committee of the House—

Mr. Spearing: The Sleaze (Pay-off) Bill.

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South is very supportive, but he must allow me to continue.

One of the recommendations from the task forces that was carried into the Bill is that brewers can continue cheating us of the full measures in our pints. They can continue serving up to 5 per cent. of froth instead of 100 per cent. of beer. It certainly removes a burden from the brewers: the burden of providing a full pint to the customer who has paid for it.

Mr. Heseltine: Why did 30 Labour Members of Parliament sign an early-day motion asking us to do just that?

Mr. Cook: Thankfully, as the President of the Board of Trade does not yet have the power to act by order, those hon. Members will have the opportunity to argue their case when we reach that clause, and I shall listen.

If the right hon. Gentleman wants to quote to me 30 of my Back Benchers, he may recall that the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who was the Minister for Consumer Affairs until last year, said in the current issue of the CAMRA newspaper:

"Once more a Conservative Government has caved in to the brewers".

Nobody from the Campaign for Real Ale was on the task forces. I suspect that nobody on the task forces was from the drinking public. I doubt whether any of the exalted membership of the task forces has been in a public bar in the past 10 years.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough) *rose*——

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall give way in a moment to whichever of the hon. Gentleman has been in a public bar.

Bass was represented on the food and drink task force, as was Whitbread, which has given £250,000 to the Tory party during the lifetime of the Parliament. That is why the provision is in the Bill: it has nothing to do with cutting red tape and everything to do with paying back the vested interests that bankroll the Tory party.

Mr. Sykes: Leaving aside the fact that it is impossible to get a frothy head on a pint of London beer, how can the hon. Gentleman justify the extra expense on pubs across the country, when last year there were only 16 complaints, although 200 million pints of beer were served?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman concedes our case when he asks how they could meet the extra expense. Did we need any further evidence that the brewers are pocketing the money by short-changing the customer? That is where the money is coming from, and they are afraid of handing it over. The Government will have regard to those people, not to the House.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I have given way generously during this debate, and I have given way to the hon. Gentleman on many other occasions.

There is, of course, a double standard that is represented by this Bill. The Government are so keen to deregulate —*[Interruption.]* We have in the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) another spokesman for the brewers. I should not want the Tory party to lose the money that it gets from the brewers.

Mr. Riddick: Is the hon. Gentleman in favour of the brewers' imposing an extra 7p on the price of a pint of beer? That would be the cost of enforcing this provision. Let the hon. Gentleman now answer the question that has been put to him: why did 33 of his hon. Friends sign the early-day motion supporting the introduction of this provision?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman has put a precise price on the point that was made by his hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes). We have been told that brewers now admit that they cheat drinkers out of 7p on every pint. For once, I agree with the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, who, when he was the Minister responsible for consumer affairs, said that the drinker should get the pint he pays for.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No. I have given way often enough. The hon. Gentleman has earned his keep from the brewing industry and will now have to stay in his place.

Mr. Riddick: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to display total ignorance of the fact that brewers would have to introduce new glasses and new meters to correspond with these new measures?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Cook: None the less, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising it. Having consulted the Register of Members' Interests, I can tell the House that the hon. Gentleman is a parliamentary adviser to the Brewers Society. A more genuine point of order—although I shall not raise it—might concern whether the hon. Gentleman declared his interest before intervening in this debate.

Mr. Riddick: It is in the register, you berk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not sure that I heard that remark correctly, but if I did, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw it.

Mr. Riddick: I withdraw it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am most grateful.

Mr. Cook: We can lay the hon. Gentleman's point in the place from which the cheques come.

There is, of course, a double standard represented by this Bill. We have a Government who are so keen to deregulate the private sector——

Mr. Riddick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to labour the matter, but it is only fair to the House to point out that a Labour Member too is a parliamentary adviser to the Brewers Society. I can speak with some authority about this subject, as, unlike the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), I happen to know something about it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All hon. Members should be quite clear that if they have an interest in the subject of a debate in which they are taking part, that interest must be declared.

Mr. Cook: There is a double standard in this Bill. We have a Government who, while keen to deregulate the private sector, keep rolling out more central control in the public sector.

The President of the Board of Trade will recall that he began his career in the Government as Secretary of State for the Environment. Just after his appointment, he set out his strategy for the deregulation of local government. He said:

"We will sweep away tiresome and excessive control over local government. They do not need, they do not want, the fussy supervision of detail".

Fifteen years later, we have more central regulation of local government than any other country in Europe. If the right hon. Gentleman wants a bonfire of regulations, let us throw on that bonfire the red tape that ties up local democracy —the capping powers, the rules on compulsory competitive tendering and the Treasury regulations that prevent councils from using their own capital receipts to shorten their waiting lists.

What about putting the torch to red tape in the national health service—the mountains of red tape invented through the Government's reforms? In four years, the number of managers needed to control the red tape has increased by 400 per cent. That burden on business, which was created by the present Government, could be removed by them. Such is the gulf between the hype with which Ministers preach deregulation and their own record in office.

At his press conference to introduce this Bill, the President of the Board of Trade was strong on hype. He said:

"This Bill will save hundreds of millions of pounds."

When his Department was asked to quantify the hundreds of millions of pounds, it produced figures that added up to precisely £50 million. The Customs people, when they were approached, said, "We're a little puzzled by the figures." I suspect that the truth is that none of the measures in chapter II or in the background documents will make much difference, one way or the other, to the vast majority of British businesses.

There is, however, one obvious exception. The document "Cutting Red Tape" contains one item that will make a big difference to the budget of every firm, large or small. I refer to the first entry from the Department of Social Security. That Department claims, unbelievably, that the imposition of statutory sick pay on employers cuts red tape by reducing the administrative burden on the Department. It would take an Orwell to do justice to the double-speak which argues that imposing an additional bill of £750 million on industry reduces the burden on business.

But most of these measures are fairly harmless. The removal of the 1889 Act that prohibits the sale of methylated spirit on Sunday and the repeal of the Pedlar Act 1887 are no doubt worthy tidying-up measures, but they are modest provisions that will not improve our international competitiveness. They are not a substitute for the industrial strategy that Britain needs.

Last week, Britain's economy became the first major one in Europe without a car manufacturer. *[Interruption.]* Only five years ago, the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs warned that British ownership and control of the car industry must be a matter for the Government. He said that, if that fact were forgotten, the British car industry would go further up the cul-de-sac of extinction. Now that that is happening, he is laughing.

This week, a group of senior industrialists launched a report that highlights the long-term damage caused by Britain's obsession with short-term financial priorities. Since the new year, we have lost 1,900 jobs in our biggest exporting industry, aerospace. That is not only a tragedy for those who have lost their jobs but a handicap for the economy, which is losing its pool of skilled engineers.

These are the real challenges facing British industry. These are the big issues which the House should be debating. Instead, we have this mean-spirited little Bill, which will weaken our procedures in Parliament without doing anything really to strengthen our industry. It is the final proof of the bankruptcy of a Government who have been in office too long—too long to know how to solve the problems of the nation, because they are problems all of their own making.

This is no time for a uniquely unpopular Government to ask Parliament for yet more powers. It is time for the Government to give back to the people the power to decide who should govern them. In the Division Lobby tonight, we may not prevent them from giving themselves these extra powers, but the people will soon strip them away through the ballot box.

4.58 pm

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) may well pull out his binoculars when he hears me welcome this Bill. The hon. Gentleman has presented an awesome spectacle today. He has made very clear the extent to which we would be not only over-regulated but also deeply over-governed if—God forbid—we were to have a Labour Government.

I welcome the Bill very warmly. For a long time, I have thought that we in this country have suffered from over-regulation in every part of our daily life. It is interesting—and this is a very important point—that in the early 1980s, when a similar difficulty was caused by our employment legislation and the restrictions that it imposed, we took steps to introduce measures on an incremental basis. Although we started relatively slowly to reform our laws, we introduced more and more legislation, which incrementally opened up the possibilities for employment on a free basis and for the exercise of people's rights. I hope that we shall introduce further legislation after the

[Dame Angela Rumbold]

Bill has completed its Committee stage—successfully, but no doubt with some jollity, judging by the early part of today's debate.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade rightly stressed the importance of the Bill in relation to our industrial competitiveness. We should consider not only our ability to compete with fellow members of the European Union, but the increasing competition presented by lightly regulated Pacific rim countries. If our small businesses are to grow and compete we, too, must be lightly regulated rather than over-regulated.

Over the past few years, people and businesses have suffered as a result of regulation. Sadly, small businesses suffer particularly from over-regulation when there is a downturn in the country's economic fortunes.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Can the right hon. Lady explain how the current position has arisen—other than through the need to incorporate European Community directives in domestic regulations? For more than 13 years she has supported the current Administration, both inside and outside the House. If the current over-regulation is the fault of that Administration, why do they not reverse it? What could be simpler than to do that and admit that they are at fault?

Dame Angela Rumbold: Many of the regulations involved were introduced during the 1960s and 1970s when the Conservative Administration were not responsible for the legislation.

Most of our constituencies contain small and medium-sized businesses in considerable difficulties. Many of those difficulties were brought about by over-regulation and over-complication involving such matters as value added tax, sick pay and administration generally. I was enthusiastic about the measures introduced in the Budget because I thought it important to relieve small businesses of some of the burdens of form filling —especially in connection with VAT—that officialdom has created over the past year.

Many young entrepreneurs with certain skills—not necessarily accounting skills—start up small businesses. They are then confronted by a huge number of regulations. Some of the regulations relate to accounting procedures. Others, however, emanate from the DTI and other Departments which insist on burdening those young entrepreneurs with a plethora of regulations and forms, making it impossible for them to establish forceful, successful businesses which can compete with their rivals in other countries.

That is the world on which we should concentrate. A young engineer, for instance, may be suddenly confronted by the VAT man or some other official, and told, "You must do such and such today, or we cannot allow you to continue in business". He may also have an important contract to fulfil on that same day. When considering the way in which the growth of new businesses is constrained, we should take account of the amount of business that is lost as a result of time factors and the restrictions imposed by today's over-regulated world. Young and even middle-aged people starting up businesses should have some idea of the accounting and management skills that they will need to acquire. That is a question of training. As I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister will acknowledge, the one-stop shop approach has already proved helpful. I hope that that scheme will be expanded, as I believe that it will assist with the regulations that will have to be introduced at some stage.

I do not want to suggest that I am a total deregulator. I know perfectly well that we must live in a world containing reasonable restraints. I know that even in local government, which was cited by the hon. Member for Livingston, councillors and other officials often have to regulate and impose restraints, for good reasons. I should add, however, that I was a local councillor for some 10 years and I used to dread—and, indeed, leave—committee meetings dealing with what I considered to be interference in other people's business. In the development control and planning committees, every "i" had to be dotted, every "t" crossed; even the placing of dustbins was a matter for those committees. If we allowed some of the more enthusiastic regulators in the House of Commons to have their way, I believe that the House itself would be turned into a development control committee overnight. We would be dotting every "i" and crossing every "t" in every piece of legislation with which we were presented. There is no quicker way of obfuscating the proper business of the House—that of legislating on serious matters—than allowing ourselves to forget that we are not here to interfere in every moment of people's daily lives.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Are not the most welcome parts of the Bill those dealing with the fresh guidelines with which local authorities will be issued? No longer will an enforcement officer say one thing to certain groups of businesses while another officer in the same local authority says something completely different. At present, the arrangements differ from area to area. We need simple standard guidelines, full of common sense, which people will understand.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I could not agree more. My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. The regulations are so complex that it is possible for them to be defined in one way by a group of people in Birmingham, for instance, while another group in Bristol interprets them as requiring greater controls. When I was in local government, I found that it was possible to misinterpret every regulation that resulted from legislation passed in the House of Commons.

Before I became a Member of Parliament, I also spent some time examining the task force proposals on deregulation. I was encouraged by those proposals, but less encouraged by "Cutting Red Tape". I hope that the Government will not allow themselves to be over-cautious. I fear that with a Bill of this nature it would be easy enough to withdraw from the initial thrust of legislation which would otherwise produce excellent results in the future. That would nullify all the efforts not only of enthusiastic supporters such as myself but of those who have the pleasure of serving on the Standing Committee, although I trust that I shall not be among their number.

A raft of opportunities is available for us to consider. Many are set out in the task force proposals and others will emerge as we consider the Bill. It is important for hon. Members to recognise that the Bill should set a trend whereby it will become the norm for people to consider legislation and its regulations closely, and for those regulations to be not only clear and simple but written in understandable language, which has not yet been achieved.

I am happy, therefore, to support the Bill and the efforts of my right hon. and hon. Friends the Ministers to ensure that the Bill successfully progresses through the House.

5.10 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House, while welcoming the removal of unnecessary and out-of-date regulations, declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which proposes to remove these regulations without providing a mechanism for proper debate and which encourages the transfer of decision-making over public money to private individuals who are in no way properly accountable to Parliament."

The amendment makes it clear that I accept the case for getting rid of out-of-date regulations and regulations that are a genuine barrier to efficiency and understanding. I am more than willing to have constructive discussions with the Government to identify and agree on procedures that will achieve those aims. As the amendment makes clear, however, we are concerned about how those goals should be achieved, what the mechanism should be, and how we can ensure that the matter is properly debated. There should be a genuine attempt to strike a balance in the process; at present, the Bill does not do so.

In his opening speech, the President of the Board of Trade acknowledged the creative tension that exists and set out the case for regulations and the continuing need for them. I am not always sure whether the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs agrees with his boss. He sometimes gives the impression that he has not been convinced of the case for any regulation.

If one considers the task forces' report and the proposals that the Government have either accepted or rejected, it is clear that there was, even at the Department of Trade and Industry, tension on the subject of the task force. For example, the task force was opposed to the protection of hedgerows, whereas the Government were still committed to introducing legislation to achieve that end, which I welcome.

Other serious tensions, particularly on small businesses, were well drawn out in the Library brief. It is easy for hon. Members to provide a catalogue of information from individual small businesses on regulations, planning controls and health and safety factors. Those small businesses are required to respond to those regulations, which causes them considerable difficulty. That problem was acknowledged by the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) in his Social Market Foundation paper, which identified that big businesses are sometimes relaxed about regulations. They not only have the mechanism to police and enforce them, but they regard them as a barrier to market entry for some smaller businesses. That argument should be noted.

It is interesting that, in the same Library brief, the Small Business Research Trust showed the danger of not acknowledging the risks. It argues that many small businesses will concentrate only on picking up business on the fringes, because it is cheaper. That brings the danger that they will perhaps be tainted with the label that they are not of as high a standard as larger businesses. The legitimate questions that need to be asked are: should we abolish regulations for small businesses and give them derogations or should we help them to meet the regulations in two ways? First, we could ensure that they are simple and necessary—there can be a meeting of minds on that matter. Secondly, we could provide small businesses with practical assistance that recognises the difficulty that they have in meeting regulations, which have too often been drawn up by the Department in consultation only with the large businesses, which do not have the problems.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in considering how to help small businesses to meet levels of regulation, we depart from the real issue: was it necessary to impose such regulations on those businesses in the first place? Is not that nonsense? We should get rid of those regulations that are not necessary.

Mr. Bruce: We need to tackle both the problems that I mentioned because there will still be regulations that are necessary and which small businesses will find difficult. I accept the hon. Member's argument that we should always examine whether regulations are necessary and whether they create an unnecessary barrier or burden.

I want to pursue the argument that many regulations have been introduced by the Government in the wake of privatisation and the broadening of the market. It may well be that, as the market becomes more effective, there will be room to lower those regulations. But we have to be sure of what we are doing, because those regulations were introduced for good reasons. If conditions have changed sufficiently and changes are justified, it will not present a problem. But concerns will continue in some quarters.

The constitutional proposals in the Bill are of genuine concern. Clauses 1 to 4 represent a major constitutional change to the way in which the House does its business. As I said in my intervention during the President of the Board of Trade's speech, the Government, by recommending the new process, at least acknowledge that a radically different position exists and that the House needs to consider that. We should welcome that acknowledgement and consider the proposals.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): Is not the key difference that the Bill, for the first time, makes it much easier for regulations and legislation to be withdrawn? That is the key change from previous practice. Does not the hon. Gentleman recognise and welcome that?

Mr. Bruce: I am prepared to acknowledge that the Bill provides a better mechanism for removing the regulations than applied when they were introduced. If the hon. Gentleman will have a little patience, he will discover my concerns.

My first concern, which I mentioned earlier, involves clause 3, which seems specifically designed to avoid the possibility of judicial review. It states:

"Before a Minister makes an order under section 1 above, he shall—

(a) consult such organisations as appear to him to be representative of interests substantially affected by his proposals; and

(b) consult such other persons as he considers appropriate."

It goes on to state that if it is appropriate

"to vary the whole or any part of his proposals, he shall undertake such further consultation with respect to the variations as appears to be him to be appropriate."

I am aware that there have been occasions in the past when judicial review has been successful because parties that believe that they should have been consulted have not been consulted, and they have been able to have the matter looked into. The clause seems to ensure that all the

[Mr. Bruce]

Minister has to say is, "I did not consider it necessary to consult them, whatever their interest and however essential it was." The clause is too wide and I hope that it will be amended.

Mr. Sykes: Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that the two Select Committees will have the power to call before them whomsoever they would wish to call?

Mr. Bruce: The interventions are anticipating the arguments that I am advancing. I have acknowledged that the Government recognise that there is a need for new procedure. I am addressing their proposals. We should first recognise, however, that we do not yet know in detail how the new procedure will operate. All we have are recommendations from the Government that have to be considered by the Select Committee on Procedure. I understand that that Committee has not started to meet to discuss the matter, although it originally said that it might do so. It is waiting for the end of the debate and for the Bill to go into Committee. It would be extremely helpful if the Committee report were to be made available before the Bill reached its Report stage. Otherwise, we shall be debating in a vacuum without any clear idea of the Procedure Committee's concerns.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman has hit—perhaps untowardly—on a most important constitutional point. He asks that a body, perhaps a Committee of the House or, indeed, the Government, who no doubt have some views on the matter, present some ideas about the constitution of a Committee which, under Standing Orders, would discuss the probable views of the House. Would not it be more appropriate for that to happen only after Royal Assent has been granted because, prior to that, this House or another place might not wish clause 3 to remain part of the Bill?

Mr. Bruce: I respect the hon. Gentleman's constitutional niceties, but I am being pragmatic. The Government have a majority and I should like to hear what the Procedure Committee has to say, for pragmatic rather than constitutional reasons. Incidentally, the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments currently has no representative from the minority parties. I wish to put it on the record that, if the procedure is to be developed, I hope that the Committee will be more representative of the House as a whole. It is fine to talk about the theoretical and constitutional niceties of an alternative procedure, but I am worried about the practicalities.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is no longer in the Chamber, has already pointed out the statistical implications. We already face thousands of statutory instruments every year, but the Government are now asking for an additional procedure to deal with potentially thousands—or at least hundreds—more in any given Session. There is no chance of the Committee dealing with anything other than a tiny fraction of them. It will be able to undertake nothing more than a cherry-picking exercise, choosing to consider those that appear to be most contentious or those that are of most public interest.

The President of the Board of Trade has offered us only an unquantified self-denying ordinance that the Government would undertake to be "reasonable", but we are being asked to give the Government additional powers without any idea of what "reasonable" means. In those circumstances, the House is entitled to express its serious reservations about the implications of the proposals.

A further constitutional implication is to be found in part II of the Bill, which deals with contracting out. It extends the removal of parliamentary control and accountability even further than the measures that have been introduced in the past 13 years. It is a matter of genuine concern and it is interesting that the debate is coming out into the open. When the Conservative party was in opposition, I remember that there was a great campaign against the wicked quangos which were being created by the Labour Government, but no one has created more quangos and provided them with less constitutional accountability than the Conservatives.

The contracting-out provisions of the Bill take the notion a stage further. The provisions essentially mean that private contractors, private individuals, the employees of private contractors and the contractors of private contractors can act as if they were Ministers or civil servants and that the Minister can override local authorities and require them to transfer the powers of local government councillors and officers to private contractors. The Conservative party claims to believe in tight control and sound money, but it is creating a monster over which it has less and less control.

The Public Accounts Committee has already identified the extent to which money voted by Parliament is being spent by people who are not accountable to Parliament. We are talking not about millions of pounds but about hundreds of millions, if not billions, of pounds being transferred to people who are not accountable to the House.

I have often campaigned for fundamental constitutional changes to the way in which the country is run, and argued for a written constitution, a Bill of Rights and a fairer voting system, but let us leave that aside. Under the terms according to which the House chooses to operate as a sovereign Parliament, the basic rules are that Parliament votes money and Ministers are accountable to Parliament for spending it. Now, apparently, we are to be told increasingly that private contractors are responsible.

I hope that the Minister will explain the real meaning of clause 60, because I have heard two interpretations. One was that if the Minister intervened and stopped a contract because he believed that a contractor was abusing his power, the contractor might be able to sue him for breach of contract, which would presumably mean that more public money could be lost. What is the use of the safeguard in clause 60 if a contractor has already disappeared with the money, gone bust or is simply unable to account for it? I hope that the Minister will answer that question.

There has been a continual blurring of the proper role of Parliament and Ministers and of the proper control of money voted by the House of Commons for public services. That is unacceptable and it is why the Bill is much more important than it perhaps appears at first. Hon. Members, including those who, I regret, are not here today, should realise that we are not debating a simple Bill being promoted by the Department of Trade and Industry.

The Bill will fundamentally alter the pattern of Parliament and will affect every Ministry and Department. It could mean that any Minister in any Department could unilaterally amend, abolish or repeal huge rafts of

legislation without proper consultation or debate in the House. We should not underestimate the significance of the proposals.

Mr. Nigel Evans: The hon. Gentleman has spent some time talking about the aspects of the Bill with which he disagrees, but he has not once said what the Liberal Democrats would do to cut the red tape which is holding back our businesses and stopping them flourishing and growing. He should stop sitting on the fence and instead tell us what his party would do.

Mr. Bruce: I have no problem with the hon. Gentleman's intervention. The amendment makes it clear that we are in favour of sweeping away unnecessary regulations, but that we are concerned about how it is done. I can, of course, identify proposals that we favour. One of our concerns that has been mentioned, but which the Government do not share, is that the imposition of statutory sick pay on small buisnesses is a big burden on them. Even small businesses say that the lack of markets and cash flow and their inability to get their bills paid on time are far more serious than regulation.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) quoted the relief of the auditing requirement for businesses with a turnover of less than £90,000. I not only welcome and support that but point out that the Liberal Democrats advocated it in our alternative budget in advance of the Government's Budget. Indeed, we have made, and will continue to make, representations to the Government for the removal of unnecessary or overly restrictive regulations. If the Government approached the issue in a less partisan spirit, this would be a great opportunity to reach agreement to remove regulations which all parties agree are non-controversial.

One fact that I am sure the Minister has already indentified is that no one believes that it should continue to be a criminal offence to provide someone with more than a pint of beer when they have paid only the statutory charge for a pint. We welcome some of the proposals to change shop hours and the relaxing of restrictions regarding children in pubs. Indeed, we have advocated many such proposals, so the intervention of the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) was irrelevant.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the practical problem that was highlighted in the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) is that to overturn regulation on a large scale would take not years but decades if one were to follow the usual parliamentary procedures?

Mr. Bruce: I am not convinced. Let the Government be honest: we all agree on the regulations that can be removed relatively easily because they are out of date, obsolete or marginal, but others, such as those relating to consumer protection, involve a fundamental difference in philosophy. It is odd that, while one Minister is saying that he will deregulate, when there is a major scandal or row or someone runs off with the money, another Minister tells us what he will do to ensure that consumers are protected and says that we shall have legislation in a few weeks. I do not know whether at that point the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs will come over to the Opposition Benches and start to argue against it. It is only reasonable that the creative tension is acknowledged.

I can leave many details of the Bill to the Committee. However, one of the valid and legitimate objections made by the Association for Consumer Research is that the deregulation does not appear to have a coherent framework. That is a direct challenge to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. It will be helpful to Members of Parliament, to businesses of all shapes and sizes, to consumers and to all the relevant groups—whether it be for employment protection, health and safety, consumer protection, standards or whatever—to know the groupings of regulations that the Government are putting together to declare them obsolescent and get rid of them.

There is no clear framework. We are getting rafts of unrelated deregulations with no pattern to them. The Government will simply decide to get rid of the regulations, which will be discarded in their hundreds. If they are grouped coherently, people will be aware of the benefit and businesses will understand the sense of it.

My final argument is that the Government are in danger of pursuing a wonderful line of rhetoric—the hon. Members for Ribble Valley and for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson), who intervened on my speech, would do well to consider that—which they will find that they are unable to fulfil. They will create hopes and expectations in the small business community in their constituencies, who will ultimately be disappointed because it has not proved practical because there is no coherent strategy. We are already beginning to experience that type of approach.

The Government must also recognise that they are raising fears that consumer protection legislation will be weakened; that employment protection or people's rights, especially to redundancy payments, will be swept away; that health and safety provisions could be diluted. Those are the worries which will legitimately be addressed in detail in the Bill.

I would suggest to the Government and to hon. Members that we need to have a constructive and honest debate about how we can, get rid of unnecessary regulations, and about how we can, by all means, introduce a culture that enables us to review regulations properly before they are introduced. I would suggest that that mechanism, if it is good for removing regulations, ought to be good for introducing them as well. The Government should consider that. We should realise that that is not as simple as it appears.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am glad to hear the constructive tone of the hon. Gentleman's speech because I believe that there will be a great deal of agreement on both sides of the House on the meat of the measures that will be brought forth under the deregulation initiative. The order-making power will in general be used, as is evident from the nature of those which appear in this company document, for measures that will be uncontroversial. I believe, though, that the overall strategy is properly dealt with in that document and the other documents that were published at the same time as the Bill. Reviews are continuing over the range of Government policy in which consumers will have a full part to play when we consult them, before and after the Government make their proposals. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's fears are illusory.

Mr. Bruce: I hope that I am right, but, as we get into Committee, we shall obtain more detail. Many of the proposals in the meat of the Bill will not cause major problems for the Government. Some will, but most,

[Mr. Bruce]

probably, will not. The trouble is that most of the things that are identified in the accompanying documents are not in the Bill, and some are not clear.

For example, I do not understand why European time should appear. It is acknowledged to be a non-regulation matter. Is there any serious suggestion that we could be forced on to European standard time on the basis of a statutory instrument, among hundreds of others, which cannot be debated as primary legislation on the Floor of the House? The future of the Forestry Commission is mentioned. Does the privatisation of forestry, if the Government were to go down that route, require primary legislation or not? We should be told.

We are worried that fundamental structural changes could be introduced on the basis of a mechanism that will not allow for proper debate and amendment. If the Government are able to provide us with assurances in due course by the time that the Committee has sat, they will find that the Liberal Democrats respond constructively, but we shall have to be convinced that we are not discussing a constitutional outrage which will sweep away the proper responsibility of Parliament and the proper responsibility of Members of Parliament to scrutinise, to vote money and to hold Ministers to account for it.

5.34 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I hope that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) will forgive me if I do not follow him down the route that he has signposted. I shall confine my remarks to a very narrow sector—a point touched on earlier by my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) during an intervention.

I do not oppose the main principles of the Bill. Deregulation provides additional opportunities for businesses by removing controls and bureaucracy. It stimulates new ideas and can do a great deal to create a climate in which prosperity and jobs can grow and flourish.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, in his splendid opening speech, quite properly drew our attention to the benefits that will flow from the enactment of the Bill. I wish, however, to discuss a narrow part, and I am concerned about two clauses that might, at first sight, seem insignificant.

They are outside the main thrust of this measure, but they have serious implications for the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioner—the ombudsman. It is more probable that the Comptroller and Auditor General will also be affected, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham said. It is even possible that the Clerks of the House would be unintentional targets of the legislation.

My interest in the measure arises because I am Chairman of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. It is, therefore, my intention to confine my remarks to the implications that the Bill holds for that office, even though it may have implications for other servants of the House.

The relevant clauses are clauses 57 and 67. It will be seen that clause 57(2) and (3) draws attention to what might happen as far as the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is concerned. It would seem from at least one interpretation that a Minister would be able to instruct an Officer of the House.

I put it to the House that that would be something of a constitutional novelty. It has serious implications for the ombudsman, whose office was set up by the House and who is required to inquire into complaints made by citizens about the way in which Government Departments administer or implement Acts of Parliament. It is the ombudsman's duty—a duty that has been laid upon him by the House—to inquire into examples of maladministration —for example, in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Transport or the national health service.

The ombudsman is required to publish a report following his investigation, which sets out his findings and suggests remedies. From time to time, therefore, the ombudsman is seen to be clearly critical of the way in which a Government Department discharges its duties and responsibilities.

The Parliamentary Commissioner or the Health Service Commissioner can do that because he does not owe his existence to any Minister or to Government. He is an Officer of the House, and he is therefore independent and impartial, owing no allegiance to Ministers or Government Departments. If his office is contracted out, I believe that that impartiality will be substantially damaged. Like the judiciary, the ombudsman is involved in justice—justice for the citizen against an overbearing or maladministering arm of the state.

A recent report by the Select Committee on the powers of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration concluded that the independence of the ombudsman should be further emphasised and enhanced, and that it should be done by changing the way in which he is appointed and his office funded.

In the report—only the second issued by the Select Committee in about 25 years—that relates to the powers of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, the Committee said:

"We recommend that the Government introduce legislation to meet the expenses of the office from monies voted directly by Parliament on estimates prepared by the Public Administration Commission. We also recommend that the Government introduce legislation to provide for the appointment of the ombudsman by the Crown on an address of the House of Commons. No motion being made in such an address except by the Prime Minister with the agreement of the Chairman of the Select Committee and the Leader of the Opposition."

The Bill, or rather the part of it that I have mentioned, goes in the opposite direction, with powers being transferred from the House to the Government. I believe that my right hon. and hon. Friends in government would not abuse their new powers, but someone else, perhaps in some new Parliament, might be tempted to do so.

That is why I believe that the two clauses should be amended to remove the Officers of the House from the effects of the Bill. Alternatively, any decision conveying the powers and responsibilities of the Parliamentary Commissioner to any third party should lie firmly with the Commissioner himself. It should be his decision, not that of a Minister.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster invited my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham and me to meet him yesterday to discuss that specific issue. I thank him both for his courtesy and for his time. He showed considerable understanding of and

sympathy for the views that we expressed. I therefore hope that, when the Under-Secretary of State sums up, he will be able to reassure me on this matter.

I regard it as an issue of constitutional importance, which has a considerable bearing on an Officer of the House and on the House itself. I shall therefore listen with even greater care than usual to what my hon. Friend says when he winds up.

5.41 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): The day that the President of the Board of Trade published the Bill, he spoke on the "Today" programme on Radio 4, and was asked to give illustrations of the kind of burden that he meant to remove. Casting around for an example, he lighted upon school governors, and said that the governors he knew were always telling him that they were burdened with regulations. He did not pause to think where those regulations had come from. Therein is a microcosm of the story of the past 15 years. There we see the origins of the deregulation that is now being discussed.

The Government said that they were a new kind of Government, representing a new kind of Conservatism, which had nothing to do with the old kind. They intended to take up society by the roots and remake everything they could get their hands on—the health service, local government, education, the trade unions—you name it, and in they would go to legislate. Of course, the consequence is that we have never been so legislated against.

I am not sure whether I am allowed to say this, but the President of the Board of Trade was not telling the entire truth when he said, in his casual way, that Europe and the single European market alone had caused all that legislation. If one examines the figures, as I have done, and the pages and pages of Acts and statutory instruments dating from the 1980s, one finds that it was all there from the beginning.

The record shows the simple story: since 1979, the Government have issued on average 500 more pages of legislation a year than the Labour Government of the 1970s —and also on average 500 more pages a year on statutory instruments. That is the background to the issues that we are dealing with today.

Even more intriguing is the fact that, since 1985, there has been a deregulation unit inside the Department of Trade and Industry. Clearly, it has not been awfully successful, because in 1994 we apparently need a deregulation Bill.

Mr. Steen: If the hon. Gentleman says that there has been too much legislation, why does he disagree with a Bill that aims to reduce it? The fact that we got it wrong in the past surely means that he will now say that we should put it right. That is exactly what we are doing. How can he possibly oppose that?

Dr. Wright: I am grateful for that intervention, because I did not hear the President of the Board of Trade tell the story in quite that way. I did not hear him say, "Of course, we have rather screwed things up. We have got it all wrong since 1979. All those monstrous laws that we introduced were quite misguided, and we would now like to make a public apology for them. As a token of our remorse, we shall start moving in a new direction." In fact, I did not hear much of an apology at all, despite the fact that, as we all know, all the legislation that the right hon. Gentleman talked about was derived from that period.

What happened when the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) wrote his recent pamphlet on deregulation for the Social Market Foundation? He plucked out 10 or 12 Bills to illustrate what he was talking about—and of course, they were all Bills from the past five years or so. That conveys the fundamental truth about what is happening.

The larger truth, which we must also establish, is that there are good and bad regulations: sensible regulations and regulations that are not sensible. It is possible to tell the story of regulation in a way that makes it sound rather different.

For example, what about the demands from small businesses for a late payment scheme? They argue for a new kind of regulation that they would find helpful. The work of the Small Business Research Trust shows that regulations can be a spur to innovation and competitiveness. The environmental technology industry argued this week that the Government's failure to take environmental regulation seriously was holding that industry back from winning new markets.

The food and drink industry was mentioned earlier, so I shall cite a recent statement by an organisation representing that industry:

> "Reducing the complexity of legislation through simplification and consolidation, together with ensuring that it is enforced to the same standard not only in the UK but also across the EC, would provide similar, if not greater, benefits to the industry than piecemeal changes to existing legislation."

The Government have not persuaded even those they claim are the beneficiaries of their efforts.

That is all simply a preliminary. The heart of the matter, and the issue of fundamental importance, is the manner in which the Government want to proceed. We are being offered a Bill entirely without precedent. Many Bills—a growing number in recent years—carry large order-making powers. Both the Education Act 1993 and the Child Support Act 1991 give their respective Secretaries of State more than 100 such powers. Since 1979, there have been 143 Acts relating to local government, and so on.

There is no question but that the development of order-making powers is a phenomenon associated with the present Government. However, what is new and without precedent about the Bill is that the Government are saying to the House of Commons, "We would like you to give Ministers blanket powers to make orders to repeal legislation." Anyone who knows anything about the way in which Parliament has examined such measures in the past will understand immediately why that is unacceptable.

In 1932, the Donoughmore committee said:

> "The use of the so-called 'Henry VIII Clause', conferring power on a Minister to modify the provisions of Acts of Parliament (hitherto limited to such amendments as may appear to him to be necessary for the purpose of bringing the statute into operation) should be abandoned in all but the most exceptional cases, and should not be permitted by Parliament except upon special grounds".

Let us leap forward 60 years, because the House of Lords has taken an interest in the matter in recent times, to the House of Lords Scrutiny Committee, established in 1992. In its first report, it says:

> "In sum, the case for using Henry VIII clauses for updating lists, uprating for inflation and for making consequential and transitional provisions was recognised. In any event the Government should be expected to justify the use of such clauses as being necessary: they should not be used simply for convenience."

[Dr. Wright]

We are being offered a Bill for the convenience of Ministers, in contravention of everything that has ever been claimed about the relationship in the matter of legislation between the House of Commons and the Executive. Either the House says that that is fine, that we do not mind being rolled over like that, or we say that there is something fundamental going on here; and there is.

Deregulation never was much of a big idea. Indeed, it is a rather little idea. But the big idea that is going on is that Ministers can decide for themselves what to do in the matter of making orders, irrespective of normal parliamentary procedures. If hon. Members are prepared—particularly Conservative Members, because it is not, or should not be, a party matter—to accept and approve the first four clauses of the Bill, they are not, as they believe, lightening the burdens on industry and small businesses, but taking a major step towards the transfer of power permanently from the House of Commons to the Executive. That is precisely the choice.

Looking at the history of the House of Commons over the past 15 years—heaven knows, its esteem is low enough anyway—and the way in which it has consistently failed to stand up to the Executive, the promise of the scrutiny Committees as an offsetting device against the massive transfer of power looks small and pathetic here.

In the period since 1979, the Government have been defeated only seven times in the House of Commons. On two of those occasions, Members of Parliament ganged up on their pay and conditions; at other times it was to do with dogs and Sunday trading. The idea that somehow, through party-based Committees, the House of Commons will suddenly become, as the Prime Minister might say, "muscular" in relation to the Executive is a fraud and a delusion. This is a House of Commons matter. It is a parliamentary matter. It is a constitutional matter. It is a democratic matter.

One hundred years ago, Sir James Ferguson looked across the Chamber and said that he had heard many arguments which influenced his opinion, but never one which influenced his vote. I ask Conservative Members to reflect on that, to consider the importance of what they are being asked to approve in the Bill, and to support Parliament instead.

5.53 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): My colleagues will be relieved to hear that I propose to make a particularly short speech, because I shall address myself to the shortest clause in the Bill—clause 17, which must be one of the shortest clauses of any legislation, by only one word overlapped into a two-line clause.

The clause totally deregulates weekday shopping. As one contemplates that tiny clause, one is bound to reflect on how great a fire may be set alight by one small spark. The scale of the total deregulation for all weekday shopping can be gleaned from the fact that it will potentially and realistically add about 22 hours—or 35 per cent.—of additional shopping time to the existing Monday-to-Saturday shopping week.

Mr. Steen: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Alison: Perhaps I can illuminate my hon. Friend. There is an upside and a downside to the proposed change. On the upside, there is no doubt—my hon. Friend will endorse this and add his weight and approval to it—that total deregulation of weekday shopping will add many more opportunities for shopping through the whole of the working day for many people.

Women who work normal hours in employment quite different from the retail industry will find it possible to shop with their families until 10 pm, and to do the kind of shopping in which, hitherto, on Sundays only many were forced to engage. There will be many more opportunities for shopping as a result of the deregulatory change. I warmly approve of and endorse that aspect of it.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends, including the Minister, and Opposition Members will realise the downside to the change. I hope that my colleagues will use their imagination and brood a little about this.

The unregulated or deregulated shopping hours, both on Saturdays and, largely, on Sundays, will impose a colossal strain, but particularly on small shopkeepers. If a shop is run by a husband and wife, who may face Sunday opening as well, it will be difficult for them not to enter into competitive later opening hours. The strain of additional opening hours on small shopkeepers should not be overlooked.

I hasten to add that the potential pressure on shopworkers who are not shopowners to work long hours during the working day and perhaps at weekends should not be totally ignored as one contemplates the effect of deregulation in that area. I ask all hon. Members to reflect on the general shindy, noise and other aggravating factors of the typical working day for many homes and home owners throughout the country, where disturbance as a result of shopping already occurs during the working day, but tends to subside after normal closing hours.

Many residents in such pleasant residential precincts where there are shops, in places such as South Hams, Rugby, Hampstead, Hallam or Wyre Forest—just to draw a bow at venture—will be disturbed unexpectedly after normal closing hours by the fact that the shops there will be open until all hours. Some may be open until midnight, others until 1 am.

Mr. Steen: Throughout the night.

Mr. Alison: Some shops may indeed make a profession of opening throughout the night, although I doubt whether there will be any of that sort in South Hams.

The fact remains that many areas where the local population tolerate the coming and going, the shindy and general disturbance of shoppers in their streets during normal working hours, will find that extended indefinitely into all hours, including Sundays, if deregulation is carried in the Shops (Amendment) Bill.

We are rapidly approaching the time when, in the light of this welcome aspect of deregulation, we should look again seriously and deeply at the Shops (Amendment) Bill. Perhaps we should have a view to modifying and changing the permitted hours of opening on Sunday in the light of the proposals on weekday shopping.

I ask colleagues on both sides of the House to consider changing their position on Sunday trading in the light of the Bill. I am glad to have been able to make that short and simple point. I hope that I carry many of my right hon. and hon. Friends with me in urging that we consider Sunday shopping from a quite different perspective as a result of deregulation under the Bill.

5.59 pm

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): If the Bill were really about simple language and about bringing legislation up to date, as the President of the Board of Trade told us it was, we should all be on a one-line Whip. We would not be here debating a serious Bill, since we would all agree. In fact, the Bill is about democracy. As we are part of the democracy, we assume that Parliament drafts legislation in the public interest. The careful clause—by—clause consideration in Committee and in the other place is designed to fine-tune legislation, to protect the public, to prevent the misinterpretation of legislation and to close loopholes.

No Government, even one as misguided and incompetent as this one, would describe their own legislative programme as "a burden". The deregulation exercise has turned the democratic process on its head. The Government have taken provisions mainly designed to be a public safeguard out of a raft of legislation and renamed them "burdens on business". The provisions have been submitted not to public scrutiny but to the scrutiny of a task force of business interests; incidentally, the gender balance is four out of 65. The Bill then empowers Ministers to remove or to alter any provisions in primary or secondary legislation simply by statutory instrument, which is the minimum scrutiny that Parliament can give. It is astonishing that this undemocratic process has been led and driven by the Prime Minister himself.

Mr. Steen: I have been following the hon. Lady's argument. If she would not act as we suggest and if she accepts that quite a bit of repeal is needed, how would she go about it?

Mrs. Jackson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because in one of his contributions on the issue, he made me think how the matter should be dealt with. He bemoaned the fact that village halls have to provide public toilets if they are to receive a public entertainment licence. They also have to provide public toilets that are suitable for physically disabled people. That is done by regulation. As there is no VAT on toilets for disabled people, every community hall in the country, as the hon. Gentleman mockingly said, is now building toilets that can be used only by disabled people. That is a way in which regulations can be used for the positive benefit of everyone, which is welcome. We would use regulations in a positive way. We would not rename public safeguards "burdens on business".

There are many issues about which we should be concerned, such as lorries going through London. Restrictions were imposed to protect air quality for Londoners. Clause 24 removes the need for lorries to have exemption permits to travel at night or at weekends; instead, guidelines will be issued to lorry drivers. Can one imagine a lorry driver, driven by his time-related bonus payment, continuing the ban voluntarily? With air quality-related diseases, such as asthma, increasing rapidly, do hon. Members really think that the people of London see that safeguard as a burden?

Let us consider school bus safety. A recent example in my constituency concerned a bus operator who carried 81 children to school on a single-decker. The public's reaction in my constituency is to protect the children and not to protect the bus operator's business. Yet the Bill removes the requirement for public service vehicle operators to renew their licence with the traffic commissioners every five years.

The Department of Trade and Industry document "Cutting Red Tape" promises to

"meet the Task Force's desire"

for the

"lightest possible regulatory regime"

in waste disposal. The intention is to relax conditions, even those about pre-notifying authorities of the movement of hazardous waste. That is a further move from a statutory, enforced system towards a voluntary and self-monitored system. Do the public really want to weaken safeguards in that respect?

All the feedback that I get, especially from young people, shows that there is increasing concern about the environment and a desire to make a positive use of waste. The Select Committee on the Environment, of which I am a member, inquired into recycling and we picked up that enthusiasm. Any system of positive waste disposal, whether through heat recovery, recycling or energy recovery from landfill, requires careful management. The rubbishing of the word "regulation", which is a key element in any waste management strategy, will destroy that positive movement.

The task force recommends reducing the planning role of local authorities and the scope for planning gain. That is an amazing recommendation. The biggest planning problems that I have encountered stem from irresponsible developers and unauthorised development. Some developers know that the enforcement powers available to planning authorities are so weak and that the financial penalties are so severe if the authorities lose on appeal that they have nothing to fear.

A couple of cowboys in my constituency dumped a million tyres with no planning permission, just with a vague promise that they would buy a shredder when they had enough tyres. The pile of tyres caught light, resulting in a huge fire that threatened a vast area of community forest land and nearby communities. The penalty in court was a laughable £1,000 fine and 120 days of community service. Is it any wonder that the public are sceptical about the Government's "get tough" policies when public safety is treated so lightly?

The Bill will encourage the view, whether the Government like it or not, that anything goes if it is good for business and if there is money to be made. I quote the members of the Sheffield Trades Union Council. They said that they had to emphasise to us as Members of Parliament

"the strength of feeling amongst trade union members who feel that should deregulatory legislation be placed on the statute book, then many workplaces would no longer be safe places in which to work."

Mr. Nigel Evans: The hon. Lady has gone through a catalogue of her favourite regulations. She has described the areas where she would not only not deregulate, but further regulate. Will she share with the nation the areas in which she would deregulate?

Mrs. Jackson: I believe that the public should be able to expect Parliament to regulate more strictly if public safety is at risk. There are various small regulations that are outdated and I am sure that they will be debated in Committee. I should be more than happy to deregulate in some areas. There is one matter on which I am very keen to deregulate—the ability of direct works departments of

[Mrs. Jackson]

local authorities to bid for tenders and to work for other authorities or private businesses as they like. That would do a great deal of good for local authorities.

Mr. Sykes: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Jackson: I should like to continue. One of the difficulties is that if, as a result of public consultation, a need emerges to strengthen the regulations and the regulatory regime, the Bill prevents the Minister from taking action. Clause 1 says that the Minister can set up a regulatory system only if it is less onerous than the existing regime.

At the heart of the proposed legislation is another fundamental attack on open government and public accountability. For example, clause 9 deals with information that companies are required to give to the Office of Fair Trading. There are already provisions which require commercially sensitive information not to be open to the public, but business wants more secrecy. Can it be in the interests of the Government, given the recent business scandals, that even more is allowed to go on behind closed doors? In the end, the cost will be greater as scandals hit the headlines and Parliament and the public demand major inquiries.

In the past week, the Government have published "Charter News". Its lead story was, "Complaints—Why we should value them." That is a nice lead from the Government! Complaints depend on openness of operation so that people know their rights and have confidence in the regulations that protect them.

The Bill is riddled with more suggestions of contracting out, one of which, I was disturbed to see, relates to business statistics. I was interested in a report on business attitudes to statistical inquiries, which was placed in the Library only the week before last. It showed that if the request for information came from a private consultant, only one in four businesses said that they would offer any information, whereas only 4 per cent. of businesses would decline to give the information if the request came from a Government Department. If we are aiming for positive regulation, we shall need regulators and they will need accurate information. If the Government base their policy decisions on information collected by organisations that have only three quarters of the facts, the Government will be wrong at least 50 per cent. of the time. Perhaps that has already been proved by the Government more than we are to say.

Businesses are not always right about what is in their own interest and not always right about what is in the public interest. They look to the short term—they have to—and to the next year's profit, but it is the Government's job to see beyond, to the next century and to pass laws that will bring lasting prosperity and jobs. Regulations should be seen as a positive way in which to bring that about. Of course, we must consult businesses, but we must also consult the other organisations that represent public health, environmental protection, health and safety and local government. They also have at the root of their function the need to take a long-term view.

We should be concerned that the deregulation outlined in the Bill endangers the very substance of democracy and accountability in the country.

6.13 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this important debate on an important Bill. I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) because it would be difficult to have a greater contrast between two approaches. The hon. Lady and many of her colleagues, as somebody said about the Bourbons on the restoration of the French monarchy, have learnt nothing and have forgotten nothing. That is certainly true of the Labour party on this subject.

The Government had promised a wide-ranging, detailed and innovative Bill and have produced just that. The Bill covers a wide area and, at a glance, it covers most areas of government and public regulation. It is even more interesting to consider some of the further improvements which will occur in due course, by regulation or otherwise. In the words of President Reagan, "You ain't seen nothing yet."

As the Bill's title refers to regulation and contracting out, it reinforces our commitment to cornerstone policies which have guided us for many years. The Bill seeks to underpin the enterprise culture for business, based on a view of Government as a help to wealth creation and not a hindrance, which the attitude adopted by the hon. Member for Hillsborough showed. The view proposes that private sector business, and not Government, creates wealth and we must create, and in some cases modify, the framework in which that business wealth creation takes place.

Mr. Spearing: Both the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) are dealing with the issue seriously. But why is the limitation of creation of wealth justified if that creation of immediate wealth, especially for a short period shown in the balance sheet, means the undermining of long-term public health or of the long-term interests of the whole country? Surely that should be an area for proper regulation, even if, for the short term, productivity is thereby marginally lower.

Mr. Waterson: At a stroke, the hon. Gentleman underlines the basic misunderstanding of Opposition Members of the point of the Bill and the regulations that will flow from it in due course. We are not proposing a completely unregulated free-for-all in British business. What we recognise, and what the hon. Gentleman will never recognise no matter how many times I tell him, is that British business men and women do not need a mass of contradictory regulations, many of which do not serve the purposes which he rightly mentioned.

Mr. Spearing: Of course I recognise them.

Mr. Waterson: I must get on.

I am delighted that we began with some 3,500 regulations and the task forces have published 655 proposals, 250 of which have been accepted in full and 280 of which are still under review. Much of the Bill, which underlines the point that I made to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), seeks to return common sense to some activities and to remove wholly archaic rules, some of which should have been swept away years ago. If it proposes nothing else, I would support the Bill because it seeks to remove burdens from our business and public life, which weigh down business men and administrators, increase costs for everyone, including the

consumer, and in most cases benefit nobody. Surely, it makes sense to allow shopkeepers, for example, to decide if they will close early one day a week.

We must see the Bill in its full context. As I see it, it is a down payment, just the beginning and, perhaps the first wave. It is part of the Government's rolling programme of deregulation. The second wave is set out in the document "Cutting Red Tape", in which there are another 29 measures waiting in the wings to be tackled. It will come as an enormous relief to many hon. Members that one thing proposed in that list of secondary measures is the abolition of the so-called long pull offence—the repeal of section 165 of the Licensing Act 1964, under which, amazingly, it is a criminal offence to serve somebody with more alcohol than he or she requested.

I am also pleased to see the foreshadowing of the introduction of double summer time, to which the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred. That is a subject close to my heart, on which I introduced a ten-minute Bill and which I know would be welcomed by many.

I am secretary to the Back-Bench tourism committee and I also represent an area which is perhaps the prime seaside resort in the entire nation. Along with other hon. Members, I spoke in a debate in July on tourism and deregulation. I am delighted that so many of the general principles that were set out in that debate are contained in the Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who has been consulting other Departments as well as the Department of National Heritage, will be able to help to free one of our vital industries—tourism—from many burdensome regulations.

Mr. Steen: I understand that there were 300 or 400 proposals for tourism deregulation—I do not have the exact figure. Is not my hon. Friend a little disappointed that only one deregulation proposal is contained in the Bill?

Mr. Waterson: I would be disappointed if I were not utterly convinced that many of those matters will be addressed in what I call the second, third and subsequent waves.

I refer hon. Members to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage on 27 July 1993 in which he gave an interim report on the work of his Department in examining unnecessary regulations affecting the tourism industry. At that time—presumably, things have improved even more since then—he identified more than 80 pieces of legislation and regulations affecting the industry. He covered areas such as food safety and hygiene—I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the President referred to that as a matter for continued review—fire safety, package travel regulations, the electricity at work regulations, public entertainment licensing, tourism signposting and price display regulations. Those are all matters for ongoing review not only by the Department of Trade and Industry but by the Department of National Heritage.

I quote my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary:

"The preliminary overall conclusion of my review is that the complex proliferation of regulations is unquestionably having a damaging effect on the tourism sector. This should now cease. I intend it to do so."—[*Official Report*, 27 July 1993; Vol. 229, c. *770*.]

I am sure that we all support him in that endeavour.

It is worth remembering that, just as it is possible to have poor regulation, it is equally possible to have poor deregulation. One example that comes to mind is the Use Classes Order 1987, which the Department of the Environment is good enough to refer to as its contribution to deregulation. I cannot dwell on that issue at great length; suffice to say it has caused a phenomenon in many seaside resorts around the country with a great mushroom-like growth in Department of Social Security hostels.

Mr. Sykes: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a report before the Department of the Environment at present on a national survey that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) and I conducted on the effects of DSS hostels? We have asked the Department to look closely at changing the Use Classes Order. Apparently, ministerial advisers have said that much of our evidence is anecdotal. I can assure my hon. Friend that the evidence is not anecdotal.

In Scarborough last year, we had three murders. We are not used to murders in Scarborough, but two of those murders related strictly to DSS hostels and the activities that take place there. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have a solution to the problem in the palm of their hands by changing the Use Classes Order as soon as possible?

Mr. Waterson: I am well aware of the vigorous campaign being led by my hon. Friends the Members for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) and for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on this issue. Suffice to say—because it is not a central issue in this debate—it is a perfect example of how poor deregulation, without being thought through at the time, has brought about a truly disgraceful result: local authorities have no control over whether hotels and guest houses convert to DSS hostels and where they are located. I look forward to that and many other matters being addressed in the second, third and subsequent waves of deregulation.

There is an irresistible tide at work here to increase the volume of deregulation as we go along. It is right—to that extent, I agree with Labour Members—that these matters should be examined carefully and closely and should be the subject of careful and detailed consultation with those who are affected and those who legitimately have a view.

I welcome what is in the Bill, as well as what is not in the Bill but is yet to come. I hope that the bonfire of regulations has been well and truly lit tonight. I know that my right hon. Friend the President and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs will keep the bonfire going. If they are ever in danger of running out of suggestions, we will continue to keep them supplied with kindling. I fear that, unfortunately, the Opposition parties will merely remain jeering on the sidelines of this great bonfire, praying for rain.

6.24 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): It is with some trepidation that I rise to speak in a debate where the phrase used perhaps more than any other concerns the undesirability of "burdens". I must tell the House that burdens are not always undesirable. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] Tory Members may disagree—I do not know.

The Bill, like so many other aspects of the Government, is not really all that it seems and is not all that it is claimed to be. Of course, it comes from the team that promised low taxes and brought us massive tax rises. It is from the team

[Mr. Richard Burden]

that said that the national health service was safe in its hands, but which brought us bed closures and cancelled operations. It is from the team that said that it was the party of law and order, but which has managed to preside over a massive rise in the crime rate.

The fact that the Bill is not all that it seems should not take us too much by surprise because we are getting used to it. When this team came to power in 1979, it promised an expansion of individual freedom. However, in the years that it has been in office, it has presided over the greatest centralisation of power in the hands of the Executive. That is precisely at the root of what the Bill is all about.

Ministers have said that the Bill will liberate businesses from excessive regulation. Undoubtedly, that is a legitimate description of some aspects of the Bill, but many of its provisions, and some measures hidden behind its words on the paper, have a greater implication. Rather than liberating any businesses from excessive regulation, they will remove from citizens the protection of law where that protection is vital to their interests and their quality of life. Perhaps we should not be surprised that most of the danger of the Bill is lurking behind what is written on the paper.

Ministers will say that there is nothing to worry about; they have promised us scrutiny committees. Indeed, they have established a permanent deregulation unit to examine those sectors where red tape can best be removed. Undoubtedly, they will promise that there will be a proper, independent and objective examination. I am a little sceptical about exactly how objective that permanent deregulation unit is likely to be. When we look at who heads that unit, we find the name of Mr. Francis Maude, head of the global privatisation unit of Morgan Stanley and a former Tory Minister.

Some regulations are outdated and unnecessary. As we have heard, many of those regulations were introduced by the Government. There are pointers in the Bill to what its implementation—when we get past the Committee and Report stages and Third Reading, it is operating and the Minister has the power that he is seeking—is likely to mean for citizens and their rights in Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) referred to the likely effect of the Bill on the Companies Acts. We have been told that there will no longer be a need to register the business occupation, nationality or particulars of other directorships at Companies House. We have been told that that matter is not important and it is just red tape.

Those of us who are interested in piecing together certain matters think that they are of some importance to our citizens. Those matters include how trade deals have become mixed up with overseas aid and who is involved in those deals and how certain directors of companies that manage to get an amazing amount of the Government's overseas contracts also happen to turn up as the chairs of quangos and NHS trusts. Those are matters of legitimate public interest and they should be scrutinised. Removing the requirement for companies to be honest and open and to log such information at Companies House is important and does affect open government and democracy.

Clause 19, which deals with the provision to repeal any local building regulation, is open ended, but contains nothing about the need to maintain standards. When the Bill was first mooted, there were reports in the press of the great fear that there would also be a wholesale sweeping away of health and safety regulations. Ministers backed off rapidly at that point, saying that there was nothing to worry about and that there would be no reduction in standards.

There are some dangers contained in the words in the clause, although there are not many specific references to which health and safety regulations are to be repealed, but let us be under no illusions about what the Bill means. Ministers will tell us that all kinds of outdated and unduly complicated health and safety regulations have been replaced and updated since 1975, and indeed that has happened.

The Bill differs from previous legislation in an interesting way. All previous legislation has provided for the replacement of health and safety regulations, when replacement is deemed to be the right thing to do. Rather than replacement or reference to standards, the Bill provides only for wholesale repeal of such regulations. That is not obvious in the Bill, but it is sheltering behind the words on the page.

The Bill contains the provision that employers will be removed from the cumbersome burden of having to agree with, or even consult, their workers on how selection for redundancy can take place. Under the present legislation, an employer can argue why there should be a departure from normal practice on selection for redundancy. If the employer has good grounds for that, he can select for redundancy away from the normal procedures.

Mr. Sykes: As an employer, I should like to give the hon. Gentleman an example of how frustrating the process can be. I ran an oil depot in Leeds for many years, from which we delivered heating oil. Due to the rules and regulations—in other words, the last in, first out convention—I was unable to sack a driver who was probably one of the laziest men ever to draw breath. Unfortunately, the fellows who did work hard had to leave because they were last in.

Mr. Burden: The hon. Gentleman should perhaps have studied industrial relations laws a little more. If it turned out that he had a lazy employee, my understanding of the law is that that is a disciplinary issue, and not a redundancy issue.

Mr. Sykes *rose*——

Mr. Burden: The hon. Gentleman can come back at me when I am finished. No law or regulation says that redundancy has to take place on the basis of last in, first out, although such a convention is often agreed between employers and employees. Any employer or any representative of the employees can suggest a different way of selecting for redundancy, but the important thing is that the process must be fair. The employee must have the right to test the process at an industrial tribunal.

If the hon. Gentleman felt that it was fair to select for redundancy someone whom he felt was lazy, he had every right to try that. He would have to prove his case in front of an industrial tribunal. If he won it—I think that that would be unlikely in the case that he outlined—good luck to him. It is not appropriate for the law to be changed so that an employer can suggest the person he wants for redundancy, even if it is for a disciplinary matter. It is not appropriate for the employee to be denied the right even to go to an industrial tribunal to contest that decision. That would seem to be the wrong use of the law. Such a use of

law should not necessarily take us by surprise, as the Government have already been whittling away at the protections on redundancy.

Mr. Sykes: I do not wish to labour the point, but in the 1970s employers followed the convention to which I referred. I do not know how many people the hon. Gentleman has employed in his life, but I have employed 600 in my time. I have found it extremely difficult to prove a case such as the one to which I referred.

A driver might say that a wing-mirror had gone on the lorry that morning, or perhaps that his tyres had been let down the night before. Those little things built up gradually over time and added up to the problem. I am trying to explain to the hon. Gentleman, who has probably never employed people on the shop floor, why employers must be able to employ people who work hard for them rather than keeping people who do not.

Mr. Burden: I hope that, in years to come, employees who are considering whether it is worth while joining a trade union take the time to read that intervention from the hon. Gentleman. If ever they needed an example of the kind of attitude that underlines the value of trade unions, it is that one. I hope to goodness that the hon. Gentleman will not be in any position of responsibility at the Department of Employment in the future, given his attitudes to the rights of employees.

We should not be surprised by the Government's attempts to whittle away the rights of employees. A few weeks ago, I tabled a quite innocent question to the Department of Employment asking whether a particular employer who had announced redundancies had notified the Department, as is required by legislation. I also asked, if he had done so, on what date the employer had notified the Department. That does not seem to be too much of a big deal.

The answer that I received was that information as to whether an employer has obeyed the provisions of the statute is confidential. That is the type of mentality which exists at the moment. It is a matter of confidentiality whether an employer abided by the basic principles of employment law. Yet, when it comes to the apparent rights of an employer to sack people for a disciplinary matter, using the basis of redundancy, the law can be changed to permit that. That seems to be quite wrong.

The Bill has nothing to do with rights. If it had, its provisions on employment agencies would perhaps have been different. The Bill says that those agencies will be freed from the need to have a licence, but where is the acknowledgement of the rights of the employees of those agencies to decent terms and conditions? There is not a word about that.

There is the deregulation of markets and the abolition of traditional franchise rights, but where is the recognition of the rights of consumers to be freed from being sold shoddy and, in some cases, dangerous goods? There is relaxation of waste controls. It has been said that probably, in years to come, the National Rivers Authority—itself a candidate for market testing and privatisation—will be able to relax consent on effluent discharges. Where is the right of citizens to have a wholesome supply of water and decent quality rivers? There are the proposals for the freeing-up of the controls on third-party mortgages. That is said to be lifting a burden from businesses, but if the Bill were about red tape, it might be saying something else. The proposal on mortgages will not allow one extra home to be built. It will not house one extra homeless family.

If the Government are interested in lifting burdens and deregulating in housing matters, I suggest that they lift the regulations on capital receipts so that local authorities can build the homes that people need instead of being hidebound by the red tape that the Government impose on them.

Mr. Waterson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Burden: I have already given way enough and time is moving on. The hon. Gentleman has already spoken and I am sure that he will speak again.

We also have the provision on the head of beer. It is proposed that breweries will be able to charge for froth. That is hardly surprising in a Bill that is itself full of froth.

Mr. Pawsey: Like Banks's?

Mr. Burden: I shall not mention Banks's, although the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) will understand my interest in Banks's as he comes from the same region of the country as me.

Some regulations are petty and some regulations undoubtedly need to be removed by due process, proper debate and so on, but that will not happen as a result of the Bill. If Conservative Members are interested in deregulating and lifting burdens on business, why do they say nothing about statutory sick pay? Why do not they want to lift that real burden on business that they voted in?

Conservative Members expressed surprise when I suggested in an intervention that the absence of decent nursery provision in Britain was a burden on business. It should not take them by surprise. Do not they realise that the absence of nursery education means that working parents have to give up work when they should not have to do so and acts against the rights of women to be employed? That is a burden on business.

Mr. Pawsey: How much would it cost?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. There are too many sedentary interventions and conversation pieces.

Mr. Burden: That burden on business should be examined by the Government, but there is no reference whatever to it in the Bill. Conservative Members patently fail to understand that burden.

The Bill is not about deregulation. Excessive regulation is not the main problem with the Government. It is not the main problem with Britain. One of the main problems with Britain is the lack of democracy, which the Government have furthered by centralising power in the hands of the Executive. That has undermined what democracy existed at the workplace, in the neighbourhood and at local level. The Government have systematically stripped away from elected local authorities the right to decide things locally. They have handed those powers over to Ministers or quangos. The Government should deal with that lack of democracy. They can best start doing so by examining some of their own practices.

I do not see that it will further democracy—indeed, it will undermine democracy—to pass a Bill that strengthens the hand of Ministers not only in sweeping away petty regulations but in sweeping away, by ministerial order and with cursory consultation, any piece of primary legislation

[Mr. Burden]

that they care to sweep away. Anything more threatening to democracy is difficult to imagine. That is why the Bill is wrong and needs to be opposed. That is why we desperately need a Government who are interested in increasing the rights of citizens, whether employees or employers, to have a say, rather than a Government who are interested merely in the right of Ministers to create and destroy regulations in the interests of their friends.

6.43 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I suspect that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) would say that any Bill introduced in the House was about democracy. The Bill is not about democracy any more than anything else. It is about reducing the amount of rules and regulations that affect our lives. If I may make a poor joke, it is to reduce the burden of laws on life in Britain.

Life has become ever more complicated, frenetic, pressurised and stressed. More people have high blood pressure and heart attacks. Cancer is on the increase. There are more broken relationships. One in 80 marriages ended in divorce in 1961, compared with one in nine in 1991. In 1991, three in 10 children were born outside wedlock. We live in a society under pressure. The stress of modern life is intolerable. For many, it is not only inescapable but unbearable. The stress of modern life leads to social irregularities, emotional distortions and physical ilness and does nothing to enhance the quality of life.

As if the problems of living were not enough, over-officialdom and over-bureaucracy make things 10 times worse. As a nation, we have indulged in too many rules and regulations, many of which are simply not necessary. Who is to blame for all this? The answer is that all of us here are responsible. This place right here has made those rules and regulations. We are a huge law-making machine churning out legislation in the same way as Wall's produces sausages and Mars churns out Mars bars. It is a relentless, ongoing process.

What do we say to each other when we pass each other in the House? We say, "I have just written you a note", or "There is a letter on the board", or "Were you lucky enough in the ballot to secure a Bill?" The Bill turns into legislation. The whole building, with its thousands of support staff, is focused on thinking up ideas—good ideas —for more laws which directly result in an increase in bureaucracy and officialdom to implement them.

In the hurly-burly of politics, we pass too many laws that are not carefully scrutinised or thought out. Worse still, they are badly implemented by insensitive and often untrained public officials. If many of our civil servants ran private businesses, they would have gone bust years ago. Like the sun trying to shine through an increasing layer of cloud, small enterprises and individual citizens simply cannot see their way through. Rather than facilitating and improving the efficiency of the country, legislation filters its strengths and reduces its efficiency.

The Bill is so important because it is the first major attempt by the Government to slay the red tape dragon. The maxim that man learns nothing from history is often proved true, but the Bill shows the Government learning from history. Throughout the ages, Governments have repealed legislation. There is nothing new about repealing legislation. It is repealed either because it has proved unworkable or because it has simply outlived its shelf life.

In the new world in which we live, legislation has grown like Topsy and thus requires more drastic pruning. Those in the House who are gardeners know that shrubs grow irregularly. To keep trees and shrubs in prime condition, pruning is essential. So, too, with a mob of deers —which is a west country phrase—or a pod of seals. Culling is essential for their survival and health.

In 1989, there were five times more pages of legislation than in 1979. Brussels churned out five volumes of legislation before we joined the European Community. It now churns out 37 volumes each year. However, the cause is not simply too many Eurocrats in Brussels. Directives from the Commission are often sensible and come to Britain suggesting a simple way of dealing with the problem. Once the directive hits Whitehall, bevies of officials are stirred into action, taking time and effort to interpret and rewrite the directive.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Perhaps I may help my hon. Friend to expand that argument. He said that the regulations are often helpful, but the European Community passes general regulations to member nations' Governments for them to implement in detail. While the regulations may therefore seem helpful on the surface, they are the ramp by which all such regulations flow through.

Mr. Steen: I am not sure that that was terribly helpful, but it is useful to hear a diferent point of view. The directives come in a simple form and officialdom in Whitehall interprets and rewrites them. Those officials are rather like a horde of ants on a crumb.

I do not like to talk theoretically and I always give the House some practical examples. My first example is the private water supply directive. There are about 650 private water supplies in South Hams. One is to an old house called Lud house in the little village of Ermington, where my constituent Gordon Johnston has lived for many years and has enjoyed rude health—as did his father and grandfather and his children. He enjoyed drinking from his private water supply, but along came an environmental health officer—doing a perfectly responsible job—who told him, after testing it, that the water was not terribly good. Mr. Johnston said that he had enjoyed it all his life —as his father and grandfather had—and asked what was wrong with it. The officer said that it had too many nasty things in it and instructed that some chemical be poured into that large source of water to clean it up. Mr Johnston has never been the same since—he was a happy and a healthy man, but now he does not like the taste of his water. He has never felt well since and nor have his family. I hope that the environmental health officer, who charges about £50 or £100 a time to do the job, will not be so enthusiastic in future.

That illustrates part of the problem. We have created too many rules and regulations, which make people feel quite ill.

Mr. Spearing: Can the hon. Gentleman answer two questions? First, was it an indictable offence for the constituent to continue to drink his water? Secondly, was the charge for the unwanted treatment and inspection, which was perhaps statutory, the result of any legislation to

put charges on local government services which has been enacted since 1979 and voted for enthusiastically by Conservative Members?

Mr. Steen: I cannot answer those questions without some notice, but I do not dispute that we Conservatives may be responsible. We have a lot to answer for. That is why I am glad that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs is listening so conscientiously and enthusiastically. Conservative Members and my hon. Friend the Minister are concerned—as, I am glad to say, is the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). If we have made mistakes and been too free with some of the directives we should put it right.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The key point is that all the legislation that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is so concerned about was passed before I became a Minister. Things will be very different now.

Mr. Steen: The House will be greatly reassured by my hon. Friend's interjection. I always find it reassuring when he is sitting on the Front Bench.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister and the hon. Member for Newham, South will both be concerned about the many Acts of Parliament that have created self-financing regulatory authorities, or SEFRAs. They are new animals with powers to create rules and regulations, charge for licences and fine for enforcement. Rather like a Hitchcock film, the Government have created self-perpetuating organisations which are branching out all over the place with new laws and an increasing number of officials who get in our hair and into all aspects of life.

SEFRAs are the most dangerous of animals. They are the 1990 equivalent of the quango, but with real teeth. The Financial Services Act 1986, the Food Safety Act 1990, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the National Rivers Authority and the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service are all SEFRAs. They have armies of officials, are funded by charges which have resulted from their rule-making powers and they demand compliance and threaten penalties for non-compliance. I am sure that the Minister will be well aware of SEFRAs.

Mr. Burden: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steen: No, the hon. Gentleman spoke for 18·5 minutes and that was 18·5 minutes too long.

Changing attitudes among public officials is a crucial facet of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Minister must deal with the following question. I do not think that he will find it too embarrassing. His Department has 11,389 officials. What are they all doing? If it has a deregulation unit, should it not be studying those officials and asking whether there are not too many of them? We also have to change the attitude of the Opposition. I hope that all hon. Members present will help the Minister and show him where he has gone wrong and how to put things right.

The Bill speaks of educating inspectors to make them more sensitive to business realities and to help them to apply a common sense approach in their work. That is long overdue.

Perhaps you will allow me to tell another story, Madam Deputy Speaker, about Mr. Wheeler of Harbertonford, who is registered disabled and, I fear, hobbles with a stick. He went into Totnes—my market town, which you know well, Madam Deputy Speaker—just before Christmas to get some medicine because his wife was not well. Unfortunately, he jumped into her car, which does not have a "disabled" badge, and parked it where he should not have done. When he came out of the shop he got a ticket. He is a registered disabled person and has a disabled badge and a clock, but he got into the wrong car. A very apologetic parking warden, who knew Mr. Wheeler, said that he was awfully sorry as he had not recognised the car or realised what he was doing. He issued the ticket, but said that he was sure that if Mr. Wheeler rang up it would be cancelled.

The attitude of the public officials to whom Mr. Wheeler explained the situation was less understandable. They clearly had no humanity or sympathy. The official in Plymouth told him that it was his own fault for parking without a disabled badge, which he knew—although he did not expect to be told what he already knew. The official also said that

"he seemed to be full of self pity and looking for . . . sympathy"

when he asked for the fine to be cancelled. As a result of my intervention, the chief constable of Devon stepped in, but it took his intervention to get the charge cancelled. That is wrong and it should never have happened.

Mr. Pawsey: Well done—a good Member of Parliament.

Mr. Steen: My hon. Friend is right.

Over-zealous environmental health officers are causing immense and excessive costs, according to a survey published recently by the Food Hygiene Bureau and reported in January's edition of *Free House*, which I know that hon. Members read avidly. The survey of 300 west country business properties, where work had been carried out during the past two years as a result of action by environmental health officers, showed that there had been a 25 per cent. overspend—that is, over and above what they would have had to pay for the minimum legal requirement. The survey uncovered the fact that out of a total expenditure of £445,000—about £1,500 per property—£113,000 was for items that were not legally enforceable, such as fly screening of windows, fitting vapour-proof fluorescent lights and providing additional hand washing facilities, which might be helpful to Lady Macbeth but are not helpful to small companies.

It is not surprising that a visit from the environmental health officer is enough to strike fear into even the best managed kitchens, which is "right" according to the chairman of the Health and Hygiene Council, who goes on to say that,

"Heavy fines, closure or even prison can result from violation of the environmental health laws."

That sort of bullying attitude needs to be purged from organisations that were established to serve the public, not to crucify them. Only when the zealots have been weeded out will common sense prevail.

Quite simply, the Bill is about helping us to recover our efficiency. The principal means of doing that will be by diverting, reducing or getting rid of the quagmire of rules and regulations, and the accompanying officials, which divert our time, effort and energy—particularly in small businesses—from getting on with the job of running businesses, providing a service for the customer and creating wealth and employment for the nation.

The Bill will ensure that the laws enhance our quality of life, making the way that we live richer, more valuable and more purposeful, with less time spent on the senseless activity of filling in forms, making phone calls to officials

[Mr. Steen]

who are never there, paying bills for services that we do not want, and turning up in court for failure to comply with notices that have been served.

I should have thought that the Labour party would hail the Bill as one of the best measures that the Government have ever introduced—but not at all. The Labour party is a notoriously slow learner and has described the Bill as hopelessly out of step. I am not sure with whom it is out of step. It is probably out of step with public officialdom. It is certainly out of step with bureaucracy, but one must remember that the Labour party is the country's custodian of bureaucracy and the champion of red tape: it believes in the cause of overmanning and public officialdom as fervently as Arthur and his knights chased the holy grail.

If the Bill achieves nothing else, it will make politicians and, I hope, officials think twice—if not thrice—before embarking on the merry-go-round of passing more laws. Less regulation does not mean that we shall live in a more dangerous, unhealthy or unsafe society. On the contrary, it will result in giving greater legitimacy to the political process if people know that the Government pass only a minimum of legislation, expecting the public to exercise common sense. We want legislation emanating from Westminster and Whitehall which the public knows will be sensitively and efficiently administered and the officials put in charge of it intelligent, experienced and flexible. We must fell the current forest of ludicrous rules and regulations in which many of us get permanently lost.

Nothing undermines the credibility of Parliament more than the passing of too many laws. Too much law shows an indiscipline in Government and an inability to weed out what is unnecessary. Reducing the number of rules and regulations will help to put back an element of common sense into the political system. So next time any of us on either side of the House talk about changing the law or introducing a new Bill, I suggest that we should swallow our words, because more laws are the enemy of the people and of our traditional British way of life.

Madam Deputy Speaker: May I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches is now in operation until 9 o'clock.

7.2 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I am pleased to follow the witty speech of the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), but his speech and mine will show the contrast in approach between the two sides of the House.

I oppose the Bill because I have grave reservations about how existing legislation will be amended. I am also fundamentally opposed to two main areas of the Bill, particularly deregulation of health and safety legislation and of market franchise rights. Deregulation in those areas will not improve the quality of life, but will be detrimental to it.

The frightening thing about the Bill is that it is ill-conceived. It will not only be detrimental to ordinary people's quality of life but will impact on businesses in a generally detrimental way. The exercise has been presented as a way to widen business opportunity, whereas it cloaks a crude political device to justify deregulation, particularly of health and safety legislation.

The architects of the Bill say that it is essential to wipe away the archaic legislation that has built up on the statute book. In reality, however, the Minister knows that it is much more, especially concerning health and safety. I believe that there is a hidden agenda. Clause 27 will allow the Government to make way for 19th century working practices. Some companies—albeit only a small number—will be able to create the very worst of working conditions.

The seven sectoral task groups—STGs—set up to examine the individual regulations are expected to move with extreme haste in identifying those regulations which, it is argued, impose a disproportionate cost on business. In reality, evidence points to the fact that the regulations are being subjected to a superficial examination. On 20 July last year, the Secretary of State for Employment announced that the Health and Safety Commission would examine proposals to revoke 30 sets of regulations. When the Minister winds up the debate this evening, he may be able to say how the 30 sets of regulations were identified and evaluated when, at the time of the Secretary of State's announcement, they had not even been examined by the STGs.

The real burden of the health and safety review will be borne by the victims of occupational accidents and industrial disease. Health and Safety Executive figures estimate that, over the period of the review, 586 people will have been killed in British industry; 194,579 people will have suffered major injuries at work; and 6,355 people will have been diagnosed as suffering from industrial disease. That is the carnage taking place in British industry. The overall cost to employers of accidents and ill health is estimated to be between £4 billion and £9 billion. The cost to society is put at between £10 billion and £15 billion. The Government should ensure that firms comply with the law rather than deregulate health and safety legislation. In that way, more accidents would be prevented.

The other major area of concern to me is the deregulation of market franchise rights under clauses 21, 22 and 23. Currently, many local authorities have market franchise rights, which means that a rival market cannot be set up within 6⅔ miles of the local authority market.

Conservative Members have said that the deregulation exercise will free up trade, but it presents a threat to market franchise rights because local authorities have provided good conditions for market traders. They are motivated primarily not by profit but by the wish to provide a service to the community. The surplus that accrues to some local authorities is used, to give financial support to the general rate fund so that the entire community benefits from the operation. The protection of markets by the franchise rights has been wisely and responsibly used, to the benefit of markets and the community. It does not restrict trade, as some Conservative Members seem to believe. The removal of that protection will effectively provide an opportunity to anyone to operate a market in direct competition with the market already established.

Hon. Members should think about that for a moment. It will result in a proliferation of markets and car boot sales around towns. It will siphon trade away from town centres to the detriment of urban communities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) and I have launched a campaign to save market franchise rights. I urge Conservative Members who have

not already done so to sign early-day motion 84 to support the campaign. If they do not vote against the Bill tonight, I urge them at least to abstain.

7.10 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): We have heard many constructive comments from Conservative Members. In general, they have fully supported the Bill, although they have flagged one or two matters of concern. We have also heard some charming vignettes, such as that from my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), who told us about the tottering punter from Totness. With his inimitable superhuman assiduity, he solved his problem, and no doubt he will have the support of the entire village.

My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) told us about a lorry driver. He said how idle, indolent and lazy he was, and that he was now a Labour Member of Parliament.

My right hon. Friends the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) and my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) also made constructive speeches.

We have also heard a number of speeches from the Opposition, including the eloquent contribution from the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham). The speeches of the hon. Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) were articulate, but they are living in the dark ages.

The Opposition oppose every measure designed to encourage managers to manage their firms and to cut businesses loose. They are the enemies of the self-employed and small business men, and they approached the debate in a thoroughly negative manner.

It is appropriate that my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) is the Minister responsible for deregulation. He has thrown himself into the task with tremendous enthusiasm. I remember him as a deregulator many years ago, when we were both at the same educational establishment in the Fens. He once deregulated a pile of crockery.

My hon. Friend has matured since then. He deserves his post, and is moving from strength to strength. I am certain that the Bill will be a success, largely because of his determination and will power, and he has our support.

It is fair to say that, to some extent, the Government's policy on small businesses lost its direction in the late 1980s. My right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden said that, during a recession we over-regulate small businesses, but I consider that the reverse has occurred.

In the mid-1980s, we had a vibrant small business policy under Sir David Trippier and Lord Young. The deregulation initiative was given a great deal of prominence, and much was achieved in terms of lifting the burden on small firms and encouraging the supply-side economy.

When the economy picked up, unemployment fell and growth took off, we forgot about small firms and tended to give too much leeway to pressure groups that wanted more regulation on such matters as the environment, health and safety and transport. We gave in because the economy was strong, there was growth, and businesses could stand extra regulation without jeopardising jobs.

During the recession, it took the current President of the Board of Trade to redirect our small firms policy. The past two Budgets contained a number of important measures geared to help small businesses dealing with audit requirement, VAT and the business expansion scheme mark two. The Bill is in addition to those measures, and it is particularly welcome.

We have to redirect our small firms policy. Our economy will not move forward with the rapidity it should unless small firms are in the vanguard of wealth creation, entrepreneurial initiative and, above all, job creation.

There are a number of medium-sized businesses in my constituency, many of which are doing very well. Recently, we had the bad news that British Sugar is to close its sugar beet factory at King's Lynn. However, the new supply-side environment in the economy means that the conditions are right for small firms to get going, for start-ups and for existing small firms to take on more people. I should put on record my appreciation of the work of the West Norfolk enterprise agency, which, over the years, has helped a large number of people.

I must mention one small element of concern. I have heard that the new business development centre, which will be part of the business link, is to receive funds from the Department of Trade and Industry.

I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry is now in his place. The other day, I spoke to a small business man in my constituency. The manager of Sainsbury in King's Lynn was also concerned about the enterprise agency, but, as the borough council and the DTI are redirecting their support to the business development centre, there must be a question mark over its future. I hope that it will become part of the development centre, to provide advice on start-ups to people who want to know the nitty-gritty, instead of information that would be more applicable to companies that have found their feet and want to expand.

I should be grateful if the Minister would say a few words about the future role of enterprise agencies and how they will fit into business development centres. The Bill is about deregulation and helping small firms, and one mechanism for doing that is the enterprise agency network.

Small businesses want a strong economy and falling interest rates—I welcome today's fall of 0·25 per cent. They want corporation tax and small companies tax to remain the lowest in Europe. They want inflation kept very low. They also want a number of measures that only a Conservative Government can provide, and the Bill is one such measure.

The Government have done a great deal to support the supply side and, if we get it right, the Bill will be the icing on the cake. However, we have to be conscious of the conditions in Britain that are attracting foreign investment.

Why are we getting roughly 40 per cent. of all the inward investment into the EC? Out of the top 25 firms in Europe, why are a staggering 14 British? I find that quite remarkable. We have heard much about BMW taking over Rover, but out of the top 25 firms in Europe, only four are German. We should be proud of our achievements and shout them from the roof tops. The miseries among the Opposition only run the country down.

We have an opportunity to move forward into sustained growth, but we have to be careful about our policy towards Europe. The Bill encapsulates the Government's intention to do all they can to lift the burdens, and to remove petty regulations and other burdens on business.

[Mr. Henry Bellingham]

We must not fall for the lure of some of the federal ideas that resulted from the Maastricht treaty—parts of which I support, particularly those relating to subsidiarity. The one provision that would undo a great deal would be the move towards a single currency. That would re-erect at the centre of Europe the power to issue directives and regulations and increase the burden on business.

Having given that warning, I urge the Government to get on with their policies and let businesses manage their own affairs. We in Britain have a tremendous amount of initiative and entrepreneurial verve and expertise and we must allow people to create jobs and wealth. The Bill will be the icing on the cake, and I support it.

7.19 pm

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): Like the President of the Board of Trade, the hon. Member for Nottingham, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) talked a great deal but said very little about deregulation. We heard about small businesses, a federal Europe and the exchange rate mechanism, but we did not hear very much about the Bill.

I, too, have to depart from the Bill to some extent, as I am worried not so much by what it says as about what it does not say. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) let the cat out of the bag when he said that the Government do not have any proposals for tourism, but that these will come later, and that other fields will be covered in the second, third and subsequent waves of deregulation.

It is quite clear that we are not talking just about the 250 proposals to which the Government have already agreed —in most cases without consulting any consumer or safety groups—or about the 280 proposals still being considered, the details of some of which we do not know.

We are not bothered about any of the 605 proposals. What bothers us is the fact that this Bill will give Ministers the right to change primary legislation without going through the current procedures. What Ministers want is a blank cheque to cash in the future as they please.

I am not talking just about Conservative Ministers—the same thing could be done by a Labour Government. Ministers are asking Parliament for a blank cheque in all sorts of fields—fire safety; the transfer of waste, including nuclear and highly toxic waste; road safety; health and safety at work; building; the environment.

I mean no disrespect to hon. Members on either side of the House when I say that we must not be drawn into looking simply at specific proposals. Specifics are difficult enough to debate, but how much more difficult the situation is made by the fact that this Bill is a real dog's breakfast. It deals with matters as diverse as the froth on beer, the welfare of animals in knackers' yards, market charters and unfair dismissal. These things are all chucked together in one piece of legislation.

However, they are at least specifics, about which I could talk tonight if I had the time. In future, I shall not be able to oppose change as I can tonight; in future, because of the 40-day time limit, the press will not be able to oppose change as it can at present; in future, Parliament will not be able to oppose legislative change as it can now; in future, the people of this country will not be able to oppose legal changes in the way they currently can.

The Government have presented their proposals as merely a means of dealing with red tape. We have heard about the red tape dragon. I did not realise that the Lambeth worm is probably a tapeworm. Many of the people I talk to tell me that they want more regulation.

Just over a week ago, I saw in my local newspaper an article about the number of children injured by fireworks during the Guy Fawkes period. In this field, our regulations are tighter than those of any other part of Europe. Germany produces bangers five or six times the capacity of ours. I do not want to see our regulations relaxed so that continental standards become our standards. The number of children in Nottingham who were injured last Guy Fawkes night was higher than in previous years, despite the fact that Nottinghamshire county council had run a big awareness campaign. Many of those children were under 13. How were they able to come by the fireworks that injured them?

In a radio interview, the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) described these legislative changes as the froth —I do not know whether he was talking just about beer. You say that there will be consultation. I wonder how many people know what is being looked at?

Do you think that members of the public know that these task forces have been looking at the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations, which stopped manufacturers putting foam into furniture? Deaths in 1987 caused such an outcry in the country that the Government had to introduce those regulations. Then there are the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985, which were introduced for the protection of young children wearing nighties. I remember television warnings in which people were shown how to roll up in a carpet a child whose nightie had caught fire.

Do we want to go back to that situation? I have letters showing that the Government have been looking at such legislation. A week ago, the Prime Minister echoed the words of the President of the Board of Trade in referring to this exercise as the biggest bonfire of controls in modern history. If you tamper with such regulations the Prime Minister's words may prove to be horrifically apt.

I should like some sort of guarantee about safety, but the truth is that you are reviewing legislation on health and safety. Do the public know that you are writing to bus companies to ask whether drivers' hours of work should be relaxed, and whether the right to breaks should be removed? Do the public know that you are talking about enabling bus drivers to work as long as they like regardless of the danger to the public?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am always reluctant to interrupt speeches, but I must remind the hon. Gentleman that he is addressing the Chair, and that I am not responsible for any of these things.

Mr. Heppell: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was a little carried away by the importance of the issues.

When we talk about froth on beer, I can get annoyed, but when we are talking about people's lives, I can get angry. We hear constantly about things being done on a cost-benefit basis. Is it valid to ask whether the implementation of safety regulations is worth while on that basis.

Let me give an example. I am a bad traveller—particularly bad in aircraft. I am one of those people who grip the seat as the aircraft takes off and comes down. But

I am always grateful for the statistics that show that flying is the safest form of travel. Do you realise that, under your formula——

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Under the Government's formula.

Mr. Heppell: Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Do Ministers realise that if their formula were carried through, the fact that there is less risk in air travel than in other types of travel would indicate less need for regulation? How many jumbo jets is it acceptable to write off? If one or two were written off, would the risk be seen as acceptable?

When we try to legislate for an ideal situation, we still have accidents, deaths and disasters. If we legislate to make safety regulations less than ideal, the numbers of accidents, deaths and disasters will increase. No Government would be entitled to ask Parliament and the people to accept legislation putting profits before people's safety and lives.

7.28 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Let me begin by gently reminding the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell)—whose speech was long on rhetoric, but a little short on balance—that no Conservative Member, and probably no Opposition Member, wants to dispense with regulations in a deregulation drive if either safety or consumer protection would be substantially affected. The Health and Safety Commission asked for powers to repeal unnecessary regulations not only because such regulations impose burdens on business, but because they encourage people not to take important existing regulations seriously enough—which is against the interests of health and safety in the economy a whole.

I support the Bill for two reasons. First, I think that, in an increasingly competitive world, it will reduce the burdens on business—especially small business—thereby enabling it to create far more jobs; secondly, it accords with my vision of the relationship that should exist between Government and country.

Let me deal with the second reason first. I have always believed that good government is primarily small government. I believe that, ironically, it was Khrushchev who said:

"Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river."

Sadly, politicians of all hues experience that temptation. It is regrettable that, after 14 years of Conservative administration, no less than 45 per cent. of our gross national product goes through Government or their agencies; Ministers are tempted to see their ministerial macho in terms of the size of their legislative programmes.

We need not read Osborne and Gaebler's "Reinventing Government", from the other side of the Atlantic, or "Small is Beautiful"—written by Schumacher back in 1974—to be interested in the kind of government that involves the genuine devolving of responsibilities to communities, thus energising them rather than making them feel more remote. That is my personal vision of government, which I want to be limited to activities in which a valid contribution can be made.

The Bill has the merit of reducing companies' costs. It is significant that it was Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, who pointed out—in a speech in Glasgow on 17 January—that, according to research carried out by Newcastle university, between 1982 and 1991 2·4 million jobs had been created by companies with fewer than 20 employees. Such companies are generally the owner-drivers, and tend to have more to lose in terms of heavy regulation. The larger companies—which generally have less to lose in terms of regulation, and may even have something to gain as a result of the barriers that it imposes—had lost about a quarter of a million jobs over the same period.

The Federation of Small Businesses has said that operating a business in today's climate will cost about 3 per cent. of turnover, and the reading of about 400,000 words. Surely that does not provide an incentive for people to enter the business world and create jobs. Someone wishing to open a local supermarket will be less likely to create jobs if he is faced with the possibility of having to jump through 23 regulatory hoops in the form of licences.

The great unsung hero of the deregulation debate is not the small business man—although he will be assisted indirectly by the Bill. Unfortunately, the only available research seems to be American; but that research suggests that the consumer will benefit most. The Brookings Institution recently completed a study of deregulation in America, where a substantial amount took place between 1987 and 1988. According to that study, the economy benefited to the tune of about 7 per cent. of gross domestic product—between $32 billion and $46 billion; the consumer secured $32 billion of that amount in the form of better services and lower prices.

That is where I hope our deregulation initiative will show its teeth. I am glad that the DTI task force identified 3,500 regulations that it wanted to examine, although I must tell my right hon. Friend that I think it slightly sad that only 450 were specifically identified as being redundant. Equally important, in my view, are the continuing activities of the DTI unit chaired by Francis Maude, which will insist—through advice on future regulation, risk assessments and other such measures—that the necessary consumer safeguards remain, while unnecessary regulations are abolished.

Let me refer briefly to an issue that has been a subject of general debate in connection with the constitutional implications of the order-making powers taken by the Government, particularly in the first part of the Bill. Along with the rest of the House, I do not underestimate the importance of the principle involved: Ministers should not be able to undo Acts passed by the House of Commons by ministerial order diktat. That is a democratic principle which we give away at our peril. It is nothing new; as long ago as 1932, the Donoughmore committee—whose findings have already been quoted—spoke of the dangers of Henry VIII clauses. Indeed, the committee wanted to set up a Select Committee on delegated powers, which the House of Lords established in 1992.

I think that the Government have gone some way towards the desired position in recommending a 40-day consultation period—although I agree with the Council of Civil Service Unions and the Confederation of British Industry that it should be an open period, and that those consulted should be identified so that the range of consultation is made clear.

I also believe that the Government are right to establish two separate Select Committees to examine specific legislation, and I am glad that the House will be enabled to debate the matter by means of the affirmative resolution procedure. I think, however, that the scrutiny procedure

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could be improved further: some people, including me, want the bonfire of controls that are unnecessary for consumer protection, but also want to ensure that changes are debated adequately. That is an honest feeling which I hope hon. Members will respect.

I do not think that the powers conferred on the Government should be open-ended. It was, I believe, the Donoughmore committee that said that order-making powers must meet two tests. First, they should be essential to the passage of the legislation involved; secondly, so fundamental was the constitutional precedent that they were setting that they should be time-limited. The committee mentioned one year.

In 1991, the Lord Chancellor said:

"Obviously this is a power which has to be given with discretion."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 19 March 1991; Vol. 527, c. 519.]

So say all of us.

I suggest that these proposals—which are far reaching, and could affect not only past but future legislation—should be time limited in the first instance, and that the House should then be invited to debate them again, precisely because of their constitutional significance. We cannot overlook that with impunity. Moreover, I think that Select Committees should be given powers not only to consider the specific legislation, but to examine all delegated legislation, as now happens in the House of Lords. Order-making powers in existing legislation should be inspected. I also think that there is a case for the extension of these powers to clause 57, but we shall need to discuss that in Committee.

I welcome the Bill, which will increase competitiveness and reduce the size of Government; but I have the reservations that I have mentioned.

7.38 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) has made constructive comments on the Bill and if his suggestions were carried out, it would be less bad than it is. I hope that by saying that I will not put him at a disadvantage among Conservative Members. I particularly agree with his comments on the Select Committee. Consideration of the role of the Minister would be best done—and seen to be done by the public—by a Select Committee rather than by the normal Standing Committee procedure.

The use of the word "burden" in the Bill is a mistake. One assumes that a burden is something which one has not taken on willingly and about which one cannot do anything—an illness or something that should not happen. Regulations do not fit that sort of definition—they are the way in which we in society reach a mutual agreement on the obligations of corporate or private organisations, balanced against the importance and sanctity of individuals' interests.

Primary legislation gives Ministers power to make what were originally administrative adjustments—but the Bill assumes them to be otherwise. Many hon. Members believe that they are inherently wrong, but any state that claims to be democratic must have such structure and must ensure that the protection of interests and the ability to be free and to innovate are properly balanced. There will be more regulations as life becomes more complicated, with more scientific devices, and faster travel and communication. People are subject to more disadvantages, so there have to be some forms of protection.

The fact that this is a Government Bill reminds me of satan protesting about sins. None of the arguments of Conservative Members has been convincing because the Conservative party has been in power for 13 years. If the Government wanted to abolish statutory instruments, they could follow normal procedure. Such measures need not be renewed or could be revoked. The phrase used in most Acts is "the Minister may", not "the Minister shall"—although some Acts do use that wording.

I want to concentrate on the part of the Bill that has not received much attention and which, in effect, gives greater opportunity for more quangos and for more public services to be contracted out. Although the first half of the Bill is important, the final part will be its trademark or, one hopes, its epitaph. By definition, quangos are unaccountable, often unknown and, for practical reasons, often consist of unidentified people.

Returning from a welcome visit to Scotland last weekend, I read in *Scotland on Sunday* that a conference of Scots in the west of Scotland had, by a narrow majority, agreed

"quangos are a gravy train for Tory supporters".

A full majority of the members said:

"there were too many quangos in Scotland."

Those were the decisions of the conference of west of Scotland Conservatives. But the Bill will create more quangos; it will create more contractors.

The public service ethic was born in the early years of this century and was perhaps at its best during the period of great administration from 1906 to 1914. It was reactivated between 1945 and 1951, but it has now virtually disappeared. It was often not party political; people of all parties believed in public service and admired public service administrators, particularly those in local government. Now they are being undermined by the rat race that has been hotted up by Conservative Members in the past few years.

Of course, regulations were not always perfect. The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) was right—it is up to hon. Members to criticise officials, and badly drafted and unnecessary regulations. That is part of our job; that is what Parliament is about. But we are discussing a Bill not for business but for undermining Parliament. The hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), who is no longer present, said that the Opposition run down the country. We do not. Some of us are proud of it, especially its parliamentary democracy, or what is left of it. Time and again, Conservative Members undermine not only parliamentary democracy, but local government democracy where it counts most and where people are being ground down by lack of facilities and accountability. That will also be one effect of the Bill.

One of the most trenchant clauses in the Bill is described in the explanatory memorandum. Despite the time limit, that description deserves to be read out. It states:

"Clause 60 provides that for all purposes, except those relating to criminal proceedings or contractual relations between the Minister, office-holder or local authority and the contractor, the acts of the contractor shall be regarded as the acts of the Minister, office-holder or local authority when the contractor carries out the functions for which he is authorised."

Of course, the contractor is authorised by Acts and, probably, by the very statutory instruments and regulations

of which Conservative Members complain, and which will create more contracting out, more compulsory competitive tendering and more quangos. The explanatory memorandum explains that contracting out will extend to the functions of the traffic commissioners, the Registrar General for England and Wales, the public trustee, the Comptroller-General of Patents and the courts service.

The measure is an extension of an unwelcome development in British society. Other than those who benefit from it, I do not know of anyone who supports or wants it. Whether knowingly or not, Conservative Members have created a cascade of patronage and sub-despots. They took their cue from a super-despot who is no longer in this place. Her rather nice successor and some other Conservative Members cannot tackle the problem because it is not in their nature to do so. The Government are beginning to fall apart because they are split on the issue of public service. The Bill further undermines service to the public and the social contract that the representatives of the people have a right to determine. It puts more power into the hands of Ministers who may be rivals in the creation of small pyramids of sub-patronage. Authority is being taken from the House and transferred to a Cabinet of sub-despots—there could even be another super-despot.

Some people would judge that the developments show that we are moving towards what might be called a quasi-fascist authoritarian state. I have heard no argument that convinces me that we are not.

7.47 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I noted the declaratory and rather frightening ending of the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). I want to concentrate on some of his remarks and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs).

It is my recollection that, since 1979, my party and I have gone around proclaiming the fact that we overregulate. I know that the Opposition Front-Bench team is much attached to election addresses. I sometimes complained in my election addresses about the over-regulation in our country. Of course, during general elections in 1983, 1987 and 1992 the same rubric was cited. It is not a rubric any more, but a rhetorical argument —we were never able to grasp the nettle. The problem was how to deregulate a range of Bills passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom. We could not pass such powers into the hands of an Executive. We are now having a bonfire of the vanities of previous Executives. It is the constant search for more legislation with attendant statutory instruments that causes us problems. For many years, I have campaigned to change the procedures of the House as they are affected by the use of the guillotine. Our bonfire of the vanities is a response to our legislation in haste and our repentance at leisure.

Before Christmas, during a debate on yet another guillotine motion, I said that I could not contemplate handing to the Executive the right to do away with legislation completely, not through debate or scrutiny and the testing of propositions but in an hour and a half's debate after which we have unamendable legislation. We do not know, however, whether that will be the procedure recommended by the Select Committee on Procedure. We are, in effect, buying a pig in a poke—*[Interruption.]* I understand the Bill, but, at the end of the day, it is the House that in theory makes the regulations and the Standing Orders. It is up to us—*[Interruption.]* I do not intend to engage in bickering across the Floor of the House.

The substance of my argument is that clauses 1 to 4, and possibly clause 6, give the Executive powers that we should be cautious about giving away. We all want to do away with regulation, but it is a slow process. The reasoning behind my argument is our regard for the rule of law. This is the most remarkable country in the European Community—or the European Union, as I should call it now—because we expect obedience to the law and we do so because we can change the law.

Looking over the history of our party back to Burke, we have required that the rule of law should be not merely the stroke of a Minister's pen or the wish of the Executive but due process. That process confers on the law the solemnity and regard that we expect every citizen to have for it. To provide a bonfire of the vanities by sweeping away all that for which we so cautiously and carefully legislated—and, in recent years, so carelessly and incautiously legislated —means a constitutional crisis for the working of the Chamber.

There has been no reflection on what the Bill means to the balance between Opposition and Government. I am mindful of the fact that one day we may be in opposition and all the powers that we take unto ourselves or confer on colleagues in the Executive whom we trust will be available to any Executive. There are moments when, of course, our own Executive is unsuccessful and not to be regarded. Why should I give to those whom I do not necessarily trust powers to wipe away laws that have been crafted by the processes of Parliament? That is my question to the Government. I know why wiser and previous Governments have held back from taking unto themselves such powers—caution.

The Chamber has lasted for centuries and has been able to change from autocratic and oligarchical forms of government to a democratic government. I should like to have thought that that was the last development in our constitutional process, but, as I see the constant nibbling away by the impatience, or other means, of Europe or Executive design, I want to hold on to the integrity of the House of Commons to ensure the liberties and freedom of our people. That is why I urge the Government to undertake a cautious rethink of the Bill because, without regard to the process of legislation or to the ability of the House to examine, amend or reject measures and to consider the balance of the arguments, we do not have a proper function.

The making of law is our most solemn first responsibility. The attestation that that law can be borne or can at least be acquiesced in by our constituents is our very solemn duty. Clauses 1 to 4 are, in a sense, a repudiation of the history of a democratic House of Commons.

7.53 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): It is a privilege to follow such a speech, especially as it came from a Conservative Member. It was a powerful denunciation of the Government's attitude and of their claims about what the Bill will do.

The Bill has major constitutional implications, but that fact does not appear to worry the Government who, in recent years, have become cavalier about observing the

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constitutional proprieties. We have heard about the so-called Henry VIII clauses which give Ministers the power to repeal and amend primary legislation with the stroke of a pen. The civil service unions, local authorities associations and others are wary of the new and highly centralised powers and the ineffective parliamentary scrutiny that goes with them.

Among the trade unionists and others outside the House who are worried is the former Employment Minister and Defence Minister, Alan Clark, who told *The Mail on Sunday:*

"I find it incredible that any Conservative, unless suffering from megalomania to an extent that is medically significant, could put his name to such an authoritarian provision."

I can think of one such Conservative, and he opened the debate for the Government this afternoon.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, the second part of the Bill gives Ministers the same sweeping powers as the first part. It removes the statutory obstacles to the contracting out of functions that are currently within the civil service and local government. However, as I understand it, there is no provision for additional scrutiny by the special Committees of both Houses, which Ministers have mentioned.

Like me, many people fear the privatisation by stealth, and without proper debate in the House, of major public services. Several of those were mentioned in the short list read out by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South, and they include the Forestry Commission, the Patent Office, the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, which is so important to my constituents, and the administration of the courts service. Others fear that the Benefits Agency, medical services and local authority revenue collection services could be privatised, a point raised yesterday by Conservative Members. They fear that even the functions of the official receiver could be privatised.

The local authority associations that have scrutinised the Bill carefully have asked some pertinent questions. They want to know whether the Bill will allow the contracting out of sensitive functions such as the determination of planning applications. It is not inconceivable. What about the contracting out of licensing functions or even of decisions on school admissions? Such ideas may appear to be fanciful, but they are not. I look to the Minister for assurances on those points.

The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) mentioned the bonfire of the vanities. I shall say a few words about the President of the Board of Trade, whose speech tonight I have heard a thousand times before. It is now very well worn. He talked about rolling back the frontiers of the state as long ago as 1980 and here he is again, still rolling back those frontiers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said that the task force had considered 3,500 regulations of which 71 per cent. have been introduced since 1979. No fewer than 21 per cent.—just over one fifth—have been introduced since 1990 when the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) became Prime Minister. It is ludicrous for the Government to suggest that regulations are a burden or a spillover from a socialist past and that we need the Conservatives to wipe clean the legislative slate and get back to some super-competitive nirvana. There is so much hypocrisy in what the Government are doing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston mentioned double standards. The Government have double standards, as was graphically demonstrated at Prime Minister's Question Time today. When the Prime Minister was asked to comment on the £10 million pay-off to the chairman of British Aerospace plc, John Cahill, after the Rover-BMW deal, he said that it was not a matter for him. However, the scrapping by the privatised British Telecommunications plc of its peak rate for weekday calls was apparently a matter for him and he said much about it.

The President of the Board of Trade has the same double standards. He says that the regulation of the private sector and quangos, which spend millions of pounds of public money, is not a matter for him, but the regulation of the public sector is a matter for him. One regulates some things but not others. When he was Secretary of State for the Environment 15 years ago—it seems much longer ago than 15 years—he promised the Association of Metropolitan Authorities Review a "bonfire of controls". He spoke about freedoms, but we know what Conservative freedoms amount to. He spoke about freedom from detailed controls in housing; we have more controls in housing than ever before. He spoke about freedom from circulars; we have more circulars than ever before. He spoke about freedom from 300 controls, but we know from what Conservative Members said that most of the regulations have been introduced since he made that statement 15 years ago.

The President of the Board of Trade said that local authorities had the freedom to use 50 per cent. capital receipts for housing and we know that that means nothing. He said:

"Central controls are so detailed and stringent that we are drawing back from this web of detail."

Exactly the opposite applies. He said that every local authority should be able to raise as much money as it wanted from the rates. That has been changed. There is central control. He said that block grant—now replaced by the revenue support grant—would not prevent an authority from determining how much it wished to spend. That is not true. New central controls are pinning down local authorities.

The President of the Board of Trade told the "AMA Review" in September 1979:

"I believe in giving greater discretion to local government."

Fifteen years later, local government has never been more constrained.

The President of the Board of Trade says that he wants local authorities to have discretion. The fact is that we live in the most centralised state in the western world, where opportunities for free democratic expression are being curtailed by Conservative Members and where the market is being deregulated even when it can be shown that that is against the national and the public interest.

The Government are creating freedom to exploit—as in the abolition of wages councils—freedom for people to say what they want to say, as long as the Conservatives determine that what they say is okay, and freedom to do what the Government allow them to do. The Conservative party has a corrosive antipathy to the public sector and public provision. The Conservatives abolished elected local authorities—the Greater London council, ILEA and the metropolitan counties—and they abolished elections in 1985, before those authorities had been statutorily wound up. They imposed, as I have explained, myriad central controls, removing discretion from local authorities, and

they transferred en bloc many functions that used to be held by democratic councils to unaccountable, unelected quangos stuffed full of Tory placemen and placewomen.

The Conservatives have created in Britain a new magistracy, and that is not in the public interest. Parliament is told that it must protect the public interest. I will conclude at this point——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I call Mr. Peter Ainsworth.

8.3 pm

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): Listening to the hyperbole of the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice), I cannot help but feel that he could have done with a little self-regulation in his remarks to the House.

It has long been accepted that one of the prime responsibilities of Government is to encourage enterprise and to foster prosperity, because from them come not only jobs, not only the personal satisfaction that millions of people get by going to work to improve the quality of their lives and to provide for their children, but the funds to furnish a flourishing public sector and to provide standards of health care and education that the country rightly demands.

The Government's direct ability to generate prosperity is heavily circumscribed. It is not Governments, after all, who create wealth, so it is not easy to legislate for prosperity. Obviously, low interest rates, low inflation and low taxation can help. It is simpler, however, to legislate for poverty and for decline, with excessive taxation, excessive and self-defeating social protection, excessive restrictive practices in the workplace and excessive interference in free markets.

Labour Governments have proved how easy it is to legislate for decline. I have no doubt that, given the opportunity, Opposition Members would prove that they have failed to learn from their mistakes. We need to look no further than to adherence to the social chapter, the minimum wage, the European workers councils and so on, to realise that.

Excessive regulation is one of the most insiduous and widespread impediments to prosperity and enterprise. As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade was brave enough to admit, that tendency has by no means been confined to Opposition parties. Over the years, it has woven its way into the very fabric of Government culture. It is easy to see why. My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) mentioned a few reasons.

Not all regulation is bad. Much of it is necessary; much is desirable. None of it is ill-intentioned. Invariably, regulations are introduced for what seem to be worthy reasons at the time, but times change, and the regulations do not. A willingness by Government to listen, to be responsive, is generally a good thing, but inevitably, on almost any issue, among those people clamouring the loudest in the Government's ear—often supported by Opposition Members—are the "something must be done" brigade.

Equally, it is perfectly natural for members of the Government and their civil servants, and indeed the enforcement agencies, to want to be seen to do something about the something that must be done, so the regulation grows and multiplies.

It is because the Bill confronts that issue that it is so important. I will return to that later. Before I do so, I shall comment on some of the specific measures. They are welcome in their own right. The Bill makes a useful start. I especially welcome—in this respect, I differ from the hon. Member for Pendle—the enabling provisions that remove statutory obstacles to contracting out in central and local government. Conservative Members know very well the benefits, in terms of value for money and quality of services, that have accrued from the process of contracting out.

The hon. Member for Pendle makes several mistakes. First, he seems to assume that public ownership is somehow better than private ownership, and then he confuses public ownership with public services. That is a serious error. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) implied the same, when he said that when something stops being in the public sector, it stops being a public service and becomes somehow part of a rat race.

All hon. Members have their own favoured candidates for further deregulation. I am a consultant to S. G. Warburg Group, an investment bank in the City, and I, wearing that hat, very much hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs will re-examine the recommendations of the deregulation task force in relation to financial services.

The Financial Services Act 1986 has imposed on one of our leading international industries substantial additional costs, and it has to be said that the benefits are far from clear. I especially commend to my hon. Friend's attention page 55 of the excellent book by the deregulation task force, which deals with client money regulations. Those are extremely onerous, costly to operate, and are wholly inappropriate for the vast majority of transactions, which take place between professional investors. Will my hon. Friend reconsider that?

Just as Rome was not built in a day, so the process of demolishing the labyrinth of needless regulations will not be completed overnight. The Institute of Directors has written about clauses 1 to 4, which I have no doubt form one of the key parts of the Bill:

> "The order-making power contained in the Bill allows Parliament to repeal or reduce legislation through a procedure which has previously been reserved solely for increasing it".

That is the key point. I know that it has caused considerable consternation. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) is exercised by it, and spoke eloquently about it, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs). However, the obstructive attitude of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and other Opposition Members towards deregulation is eloquent testimony to the need for those clauses.

It is ironic that procedures used so regularly to increase the burden on business through regulation run into such difficulty when it is suggested that they be used, for the first time, to reduce the burden. That is especially strange given the additional safeguards that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has wisely incorporated into the legislation.

I fear that the Opposition's bogus constitutional arguments about clauses 1 to 4 are simply a cynical attempt to hide their rooted objection to the principle of deregulation. We have heard that objection voiced clearly by Opposition Members today. If there is a constitutional issue at stake, it centres on the fact that the Bill, for the first

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time, makes it almost as easy to reduce regulation as it already is to impose it. Conservative Members will certainly support that.

The Bill is important because it marks a psychological sea change in the Governments's attitude towards business. It is only a first step, and it must be vigorously pursued if our business community is to operate efficiently in highly competitive international markets. As some of my hon. Friends have said, it is on smaller businesses that the burdens of regulation bear down hardest. Therefore, as the process of deregulation continues, it is they who will benefit most.

The Bill offers hope to millions of people running smaller businesses men such as Mr. Stanley Gibson, proprietor of the Oxted gallery in my constituency, who for 20 years has run an excellent establishment making and selling oven gloves to eager customers. Mr. Gibson had not had one complaint in all that time, until the other day, when some bossy people from local government informed him that his gloves failed to meet the approved standard.

If Mr. Gibson takes that criticism seriously, the results will be obvious. His costs will rise substantially, and so will the price of his oven gloves, so he will suffer lower sales. That is the dilemma which many small businesses face when they are hit by such needlessly interfering regulations.

The Bill will be widely welcomed for what is on the face of it, but its real strength will be seen as what it promises is fulfilled.

8.13 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): The hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) should consider carefully what he has said because, having praised the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), he went on to describe criticism of clauses 1 to 4 as bogus. That is a fundamental contradiction—

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Miller: No, because I have only just finished my first sentence.

Several hon. Members have asked whose regulations we are talking about and have pointed out that they were imposed by the current Administration. In view of the classic quote that I heard earlier during Prime Minister's questions, I guess that today will go on record as the day when Ministers' cry was, "Nothing has anything to do with me. "

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): "It wasn't me guv."

Mr. Miller: That is right: "It wasn't me guv."

Regulations do become out of date, and everyone knows that there must be proper mechanisms by which they can be adjusted and corrected. Several Hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, all with far more experience than I have of the way in which this place works, have described the effective ways that already exist to ensure that regulations are kept up to date.

Hon. Members will be aware that a serious chemical fire occurred in my constituency last Tuesday. I have lost count of the number of regulations that govern the running of the plant concerned, but I know that the Minister is familiar with the site—indeed, he opened one of the plants—so I ask him to tell me in his winding-up speech how many of the current regulations governing that site he envisages wiping out. I hope that he will say none.

The President of the Board of Trade said earlier that the safety of workers and customers in the environment was an important issue. In that case, I hope that the Minister will clarify the curious anomaly mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden), and specifically set out in the research paper published by the Library:

"Clause 27(i) of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill allows for the revocation or repeal of the above mentioned existing enactments without direct replacement. This includes regulations made under those Acts as well as subsequent (post 1974) regulations introduced to replace the earlier ones. In other words, recent provisions could be repealed, but only if they had been introduced to replace pre-1974 legislation identified in Schedule 1 of the Health and Safety at Work Act."

That needs clarification, to say the least, by the Government.

In inviting the Minister to comment on the incident in my constituency, I hope that he will agree wholeheartedly with a paragraph from the Chemical Industries Association brief sent to hon. Members yesterday:

"The chemical industry believes that much of the framework of existing Regulations specifically affecting the chemical industry—e.g. the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, the Environment Protection Act 1990 and the COSHH Regulations —is fundamentally sound; in many cases however there is a need for greater clarity and consistency in interpretation and implementation."

The chemical industry does not want the regulations to be wiped away. The Chemical Industries Association, in its wisdom, says that what it wants is clarity and consistency of interpretation. In other words, there is nothing wrong with regulation. What this country needs is better regulation.

The President of the Board of Trade mentioned some of the rather silly regulations now on the statute book, but he had to acknowledge that the examples that he cited were regulations established by the Conservative Administration. It seems a bit odd that we should entrust that same group of people with the power of wiping legislation out left, right and centre. If they cannot be trusted to set up regulations properly, how can they be trusted to wipe legislation out unilaterally?

The most effective mechanism for dealing with the Government's lack of competence concerning regulations is for them to resign and let someone with a clearer head have a go—[Hon. Members: "No."] Well, we shall see in a year or two. The Government should let someone with a clearer head have a fresh crack of the whip.

The regulations' impact on redundancies is bizarre. Again, I refer the House to the CIA, which says:

"In principle we consider that the part of the Section in question that deals with collective agreements ought to be retained because we believe that companies should honour such agreements, although it would be helpful if tribunals here could be encouraged to take a more flexible approach interpreting 'special reasons justifying a departure' from the agreed procedure."

In a recent meeting with the CIA, I pointed out that its member companies were partly responsible for the situation that needs that caveat. Those companies, along with many others in Britain, made the tribunal system more and more legalistic.

It was clear from the exchange involving my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield that the hon. Member for

Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) had little understanding of the operations of the industrial tribunal system. That is not surprising, because it was the Conservatives who made the system so incredibly legalistic and a paradise for rich lawyers, and who undermined the general principle that was established in the tribunal system in the first place —that the merits of an individual case should be taken into account. Against that background, the CIA's advice should be heeded by the Government, and the reference to clause 26 dropped forthwith.

I hope that the Government will realise the error of their ways and withdraw many of their clauses in Committee, if the Bill gets that far. Hon. Members have referred to local authorities that are concerned about markets. Those are valid arguments, I have received letters from one of the two councils in my constituency. I have also received representations on how the protection of the historic cities of this nation will be maintained if wholesale deregulation is allowed to go ahead. Do the Government really intend to allow Ministers to have powers to wipe away such regulations, which protect our ancient heritage? If so, it is a bad Bill.

Clause 20 refers to the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and an additional clause being inserted. The Government have been hoist by their own petard. In their attempt to sweep away regulation, they have drafted a clause which will require more regulation to enable it to work. I shall give a simple example. The clause refers to "a series of transfers between the same parties of waste of the same description".

If acid is the waste product from an industrial plant, is it really the intention that another carrier shifting the same acid, but in a more concentrated form, should be allowed the same single licence? If the House means that, it should say so, but I am sure that it does not, and to enforce the clause in the way that the Government seem to intend will require more regulation. That is another example of the inadequacies of the Government's approach.

8.23 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I am delighted that the Government have at last decided to take their part in reducing regulations. I am also pleased that they have consulted business and intend to consult business before regulations are published in future. As part of that process, as perhaps the House will know, eight task forces from the business and voluntary sector were formed to examine any of the 3,500 regulations affecting their own sectors. Seven of those task forces have reported to the Government. Their 605 proposals were published in January.

The task forces have suggested three principles which, it is argued, should guide Government Departments in reviewing existing regulations for the future. First,

"Make sure you start by measuring the impact on small firms of new regulations."

That is fine and fair enough. Secondly,

"Avoid regulations that are out of proportion to benefits to be obtained."

Again, that is fine and fair enough. Thirdly,

"Make regulations goal-based rather than over-prescriptive."

That may be a wonderful aim, but it is disgustingly phrased. If regulations are to be dealt with, I trust that they will be dealt with in better English than that.

That infelicity of language seems to have flowed over into the Bill. Clause 5 deals with amendments to the Fair Trading Act 1973. In paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) one will see references to something called a monopoly situation. To my mind, we are talking about a monopoly, not a monopoly situation. I hope that that sort of language can be done away with, I hope equally that, in the spirit of plain English, we can do away with the sort of provision that we find in Clause 21(1)(b), which says:

"The appropriate authority may by regulations repeal, or as the case may be, revoke . . .

(b) any provision of regulations under section 15 of the 1974 Act (health and safety regulations) which has effect in relation to a matter in relation to which a provision which was an existing statutory provision for the purposes of the Part had effect."

I am sure that that is well intentioned, but it is not well expressed and I trust that in Committee something will be done about such language.

I shall now deal with some of the effects of the Bill that affect small business. The task forces were quite clear that regulators should think small and frame new regulations with the interests of small businesses in mind. Small businesses are most vulnerable to over-regulation and have to struggle hard against red tape. They cannot spread the costs of complying with regulations as easily as larger firms. We as a country cannot afford to stifle the spirit of one of the most important areas of our economy. I say that as a Member whose constituency is largely populated by people working in small businesses. To ease the burdens on small business is a fine thing to want to do.

We can be proud of the way the Government have tackled the regulations that have emerged from the European Commission and European institutions. We can also be proud of their attitude towards the approach by local government and Departments to over-regulation. I trust that under the Bill and future deregulating measures we shall ensure that European over-regulation is well filtered before it hits those whom we wish to elect us.

I shall now deal with some of the measures in the Bill, some of which I am happy to commend and some of which cause me concern. I shall not repeat the intelligent remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) and for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). Clauses 1 to 4 contain, in spirit, some welcome material, but the means by which we go about seeking to produce deregulation causes me some constitutional concern. I shall not repeat their submission, but I would add the following. Those clauses, especially clause 2, seem to provide Ministers with the ability to amend the criminal law. I suggest that it is not safe to allow Ministers to change the criminal law—albeit they may, by doing so, reduce penalties or make less burdensome some of the consequential effects of any breach of an existing regulation or Act. I merely put that down as a marker so that my hon. Friends do not dismiss—as I did, I regret to say, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth)—as bogus any constitutional objections. They are not bogus; they are well meant and sincere, and they deserve to be listened to.

I am happy to give a fair wind to clauses 21, 22 and 23, which do away with so-called ancient market rights. My constituency contains two local authorities—Harborough district council and Oadby and Wigston borough council. Oadby and Wigston council is adversely affected by the socialist city council in Leicester. Leicester city council attempts to exert market rights over the entire territory of Oadby and Wigston borough council which, sadly for that council, lies within six and two thirds miles of the centre of Leicester. People who have not been elected by the citizens of Oadby and Wigston are telling them what they can and cannot do within their own local authority

[Mr. Edward Garnier]

boundaries. The sooner that position is done away with the better. I say that despite the fact that I have nothing particularly kind to say about the Liberal Democrat majority on Oadby and Wigston borough council. However, I suggest that the Liberal Democrats' giving support for this provision is about the best thing that they have done since being elected and I wish them success in that.

The other provision that I especially welcome is the amendment of the law relating to children's access to public houses. It is ludicrous that in this day and age—I am sorry to use a cliché, although it is not the first time that I have done so—parents should not be permitted to take children into public houses where a special room is set aside to allow them to enjoy lunch or supper, as a family, in proper surroundings. I am glad to see that amendment introduced.

I also draw the attention of the House to clause 18 which deals with the enforcement of functions relating to slaughterhouses and knackers' yards. At the other end of my constituency—that is, outside Oadby and Wigston—my constituents are very much involved in farming. As my hon. Friend the Minister will appreciate, the grass in Harborough is second to none for the fattening of cattle. The EC regulations concerning slaughterhouses have not been greeted with much enthusiasm. I trust that clause 18, which affects the functions relating to the welfare of animals at slaughter and which amends the Slaughter of Poultry Act 1967, the Slaughterhouses Act 1974 and the Slaughter of Animals (Scotland) Act 1980, will allow better and more sympathetic governing of the way in which slaughterhouses run themselves, to the benefit of those who make use of them, including the farmers and butchers in my constituency.

I welcome the Bill in principle, subject to the warning points to which I adverted at the beginning of my remarks. I trust that in Committee the Bill will receive the welcome attention that it deserves and requires so that at the end of the day it will be but the first of the many deregulating measures for which our constituents—certainly my constituents—have been crying out for many years.

8.33 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): Let me make my position clear. I am opposed to unnecessary red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy. Ther can be nothing worse than coming across a person who wears a Jobsworth hat, and who has the rules and regulations in front of him. Such people will implement them, stupid though they may be. There is unnecessary red tape, there are unnecessary regulations, and there are people who are only too willing to exploit that position.

However, the Bill is fraught with danger to consumers and workers who rely on appropriate regulations to protect them from unsavoury practices and exploitation. There is also a clear constitutional danger with the catch-all, so called Henry VIII clauses which the Government are trying to foist on the House. They are flying in the face of constitutional precedent and advice. They are laying themselves open to more charges of arrogance, despotism and worse—words that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, might rule out of order, so I shall not use them.

Government motives for pushing through these dangerous and widely criticised proposals are clear. They are concerned about their business friends and their financial backers who want to reduce standards in health and safety at work, and reduced control over business practices to the detriment of the consumer and the worker. The Government must not be allowed to use the Bill to lower standards or to enable more and more standards to be attacked.

The Government's plan to increase their power in relation to the power of Parliament must be a cause for concern. It is a constitutional concern, because it is a move which will undermine Parliament, and because of the potential use and effect of measures that the Government may introduce in future on important aspects of health and safety legislation, among other legislation.

That power should be used only in exceptional circumstances, yet the Government have made increased use of that method, most notably in the various Education Acts. The fundamental point is that if a Minister wants to change legislation passed by Parliament as a whole, he should come back to Parliament and go through the normal procedures. No proper case has yet been made for the Government having such power. Until such reasons are given, the House should not approve the Bill.

If the Government really see deregulation proposals as such an important plank of their programme, Ministers should not be frightened of bringing those proposals to the House and having them subjected to proper parliamentary scrutiny. There are understandable concerns that, once the power to make deregulation orders has been passed, a whole range of legislation will come under fire.

With Departments and agencies reviewing regulations at the moment, we are being asked to pass a carte blanche measure which could allow all kinds of regulations to be repealed and weakened. There is no mention in the Bill of what the changes will be.

The Government claim that the Bill will reduce the burdens on business, but they choose to forget that what is a so-called "burden" to business is a safeguard to consumers and workers. The Government have made it clear that the views of their pals in business should come first, second and third.

There is widespread concern that the so-called Henry VIII clauses will be used at a later date to attack health and safety legislation in detail. Although no major changes are proposed in the Bill, we have only to look at the Government's attitude to health and safety to know that those clauses pose a threat to health and safety and to consumer protection legislation.

The Government have cut the funding for the Health and Safety Executive for the next two years. In 1993-94, the HSE has lost £13 million. It expects to have to cut 230 jobs just to cope with the shortfall in its budget. Nothing shows more clearly the Government's lack of commitment to health and safety.

The Government have also been busy weakening safety controls in other areas, the most notable example being coal mining. We had a system that was second to none. It was torn apart and replaced by codes of practice. The role of pit deputies has been abolished, and the safety regulations have been weakened. Those codes of practice are designed to make life easier for a privatised coal industry. Lives will be put at risk, and few in the coal mining industry doubt it.

While the Bill is supposed to be about getting rid of unnecessary red tape, it also represents a further centralisation of power, because of the power to make deregulation orders and the decision to change the common law relating to market franchise rights. It will take more power from local authorities, to the detriment of local people and local business.

The policy will have a massive impact on the economic and social well-being of people in Doncaster, and will threaten many jobs. The proposals will undermine the viability of existing markets. The loss of rental income and the likely decline in the number of traders operating in market halls and open markets will transform the character of towns such as Doncaster, which has one of the best and largest markets in the north of England.

Hundreds of families depend on that market for their livelihood. Why is the Secretary of State determined to bring more misery to Doncaster families? Is he not satisfied with the misery already caused by his pit closure programme? Markets have always been an important part of community life in Doncaster, and it seems that nobody outside Whitehall wants that to change. The Government are once again trying to impose their political dogma where it is not needed or wanted.

If, as I suspect, the abolition of market franchises has been included in the Bill in response to special pleading from one small part of the retailing sector, the Government ought to say so. The electorate will quickly realise that it is yet another part of the continuing strategy to strip valued traditional powers from local authorities.

Where is the evidence that the existing system is frustrating additional traders or consumer choice? The Secretary of State is attacking the life blood of Doncaster, the small towns of Thorne and Stainforth in my constituency, and many other towns and cities. I ask him to drop this ill-founded proposal, and save the Doncaster people from yet another vindictive policy of his failed Government. The Bill is possibly the most dangerous that the Government have introduced, and it should be resoundingly defeated.

8.43 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I unreservedly welcome my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, who I know is pushing ahead of all of us in considering all the regulations, and may be relied on to support the full initiative of deregulation.

We have heard a couple of especially perceptive speeches on the constitutional changes proposed in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) have dealt with the main concerns of clauses 1 to 4, which contain most of the main constitutional issues. I find it difficult, as ever, to disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills, since he talks so movingly and directly to the issues, but the problem goes back to the 1980s.

The House has fallen down over scrutinising the European legislation. The fact that we must bring in such measures now is an example of how little serious scrutiny has been carried out on so much legislation which has poured through on the back of the Single European Act, especially.

It is that failure to consider the detail of what was coming across the Europe which has led to the amount of abuse from which many small businesses are suffering. Therefore, it is important to understand why the Conservative party, especially, is the party of deregulation, as we wish to be known, and are known. After recent years, we are tackling deregulation specifically.

The constitutional concerns over the Bill are relevant and, in Committee, we need to consider some of the constitutional points made, especially in view of the time-limiting devices, so that we can return to the House some element of debate and scrutiny, which has already gone. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will accept that those possibilities need to be considered.

Having said all that, I welcome the Bill, because if it encompasses the ideals and ideas of one person, they are those of Chris Booker. I wish that we could rename it the Chris Booker Bill, because he has been so determined in his efforts to force the Government and all the parties to recognise what has happened in the process of excessive regulation which has not been properly scrutinised.

Although I realise that Mr. Booker would not necessarily want to be associated directly with the Government, it is important that his part in such a move is recognised and that he continues to push us further into greater and wider areas of deregulation. The effects of the single market are the aspects which Mr. Booker has been most successful in identifying, and I hope that we take those elements on board.

About the initiative to deregulate, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade said:

> "The Government's aim is to remove unnecessary regulations which waste time, add to business costs and threaten competitiveness and jobs while protecting vital interests".

Notwithstanding any possibilities of excess, that encapsulates our drive and they should be our watchwords.

It is also important to consider the comments of the Director-General of the CBI:

> "This is the start of what must become a continuing process. Deregulation must not be a nine day wonder."

Stan Mendham, chief executive of the Forum for Private Business said:

> "Sadly, we have seen too many false starts on regulation. To understand the law, business owners need to read over 400,000 words and complying with red tape costs 3 per cent. of turnover."

It is important to understand the problems that have existed for business men over the years that we have been pouring regulations on their heads; perhaps now we can start to row back and reconsider the whole role of Government. Essentially, we accept that there is a need to protect the weak and vulnerable. That goes without saying, but I am sure that it will be restated continuously in Committee.

The problem is that, through a process of events, Ministers have found themselves under pressure from pressure groups, lobby groups, colleagues and almost anybody else who has seen something wrong and has wanted to ban it, regulate it or stop it. We have all been guilty of putting that pressure on our hon. Friends.

Blaming the civil service is madness, as it is not civil servants' fault that we have passed to them stupid regulations which fail. In its excellence, the civil service has gone about making such regulations exactly what they purport to be. The trouble was that the regulations were everything to every man and woman, which resulted in a flow of regulations.

[Mr. Iain Duncan Smith]

The questions we must therefore address are, why do we in the first place make such absurd Bills and, as a result, why do we need to employ so many people to ensure that every regulation is imposed? Deregulation is important because we must be aware that, while some regulations work well, events are always changing. Often, regulations give rise to a whole number of unforeseen problems. I shall not go into detail, because we see it about us all the time.

Review is constantly required, because regulations have gone too far. The crucial elements are to assess how far we meant to go and why have we extended regulations into areas in which we never intended to go. Essentially, this Bill must be about redressing the balance and pulling us back from areas in which we never intended to be, as people like Mr. Booker have pointed out time and again.

Small businesses suffer the most from regulations. I know that, at times, people say that they stand for small and medium businesses. Frankly, someone must stand for them, because they are the most crucial element of growth in the economy. Sometimes, it is most important for us to understand that the strength of an economy is measured by the number of small and medium businesses.

As has been proven time and again, and as my hon. Friends have pointed out, the response of small businesses to growth and changing circumstances is always much faster than that of bigger companies, because they have lower overheads and fewer problems with their work force. That is the most important point. In over-regulating, we have ensured that the life of small businesses has become more difficult over the same period. It is important to see whether that was unnecessary and change it.

When we examine this whole area, we must consider the position of the purpose versus the cost, leading us to the ultimate effect of what we do. One could argue that the problem is always understanding the point at which possibility for a small minority of the population becomes probability for the vast majority of the population. In other words, the likelihood of harm is now a probability, and we must regulate that.

Before we reach that point, regulation should be about information—telling people about the possibilities and allowing them to make value judgments and choices. After all, when people go to cross the road, we do not put barriers on streets across the whole of the country saying that they cannot cross here—they can cross only where we put crossings. We say that there are crossings there—if people cross there, they judge the excessive danger; if they want to, they can cross at the crossing point. That is the principle of regulation, and deregulation should get us back to that.

I welcome the Bill. While I have some concerns—as I said earlier when I referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills—about some of the powers that we are taking, on which I wish we would think again, the Government's powers should be taken in the context of the way in which we have moved over the whole draft of European legislation. It is time to think again, and this Bill provides the right opportunity to do that. I welcome it unreservedly.

8.52 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Bill is not really about deregulation. Indeed, it provides the Minister with a great many more order-making powers, apart from the clause 1, which provides him with special powers to remove primary legislation. That is not unprecedented: in the past, many statutory instruments have provided for powers to repeal bits of primary legislation. They are known as Henry VIII clauses because they cut off primary legislation, often at the head.

When the President of the Board of Trade introduced the Bill, he made a number of jokes about obscure language. It must be pointed out that, for the most part, statutory instruments are signed by Ministers. That gives them authority. If they want to make jokes about statutory instruments, let them do so at their own peril. They will look foolish, having quoted from instruments that they simply signed, or signed without bothering to read them, and took on trust the word of a civil servant. That is not a courageous attitude to take, especially when the self-same Ministers are claiming that they are improving the position by simplifying language—language that they did not simplify when they signed the instruments.

Time and again, the Government, through the Leader of the House, have refused to provide a Standing Order so that the report of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which may report on ambiguities, the unusual and unexpected use of Ministers' powers and, especially in the context of the President's speech, badly drafted instruments, could be in front of us before we debate either a prayer or an affirmative motion. What sort of attitude is that for a Government who mock statutory instruments and say that they want to make them clearer? The machinery that the House establishes ostensibly to clarify procedures often withholds that opportunity.

I shall give the House an example. It is not simply a trivial instance. The health and safety in mines instrument was laid on 6 August 1993 when the House was not sitting. it came into operation before the House returned after the summer recess, and the debate was held before the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments made its report. The Government dare to come to the House and say that they are concerned about clarity in statutory instruments and the excessive powers of Ministers, when they deliberately brought an instrument before the House without any opportunity for debate before the powers came into operation.

It is worth examining the way in which the Government have used their powers. On average, about 2,000 statutory instruments are produced each year. No one denies that some regulation is required, because we must protect people from danger. We must improve health and safety at work, because work accidents cause changes in production and losses of production. They are costly; they produce ill feeling; there is a loss of time; and they may cause an injury or possibly a loss of life to those involved. Therefore, some regulation is accepted as necessary.

We have about 2,000 statutory instruments a year. In 1948, there were 2,858. That figure was topped by the Tories in 1962, who passed 2,877 statutory instruments. In the years of the last Labour Government, there were 2,224 in 1974, 2,251 in 1975, 2,248 in 1976, 2,202 in 1977 and 1,977 in 1978. In 1979—the year of the election—there were 1,770. According to this Government, those were the years of regulation when the Labour Government were pressing down on people's backs.

What have we had since this Minister took office? In 1991, there were 2,952 statutory instruments. In 1992, there was the all-time record in the history of Government and in the history of Parliament. No other Government

have produced the number of statutory instruments that this Government produced in 1992—3,359. That is nearly 1,500 more than the last year of the Labour Government.

Incidentally, if the Government now say that it is the problem of the Common Market—which they support—I would point out that only about 20 per cent. of the regulations come from the Common Market. The bulk of the regulations derive from the Government's tentacles, which are reaching into every aspect of life. The Government are not decentralising but imposing highly centralised bureaucracy. In 1993, the Government must have made an effort, because the number was down to 3,279.

I say to the Minister that he does not need this deregulation Bill, with its excessive powers for Ministers. All he need do is go round Departments and tell them to reduce the number of statutory instruments they produce, and they can do it. For example, if a national health service trust transfers its property, that is an instrument. When the Government go through all the NHS trusts, which have been created by statutory instruments, another 50, 100 or 150 statutory instruments have been produced.

The Government are pouring out statutory instruments like confetti, and the Bill is an excuse to try to cut the number. They could at least try to approach the number there was at the time of the Labour Government. How could the Labour Government manage with just over 2,000 statutory instruments a year, when they were supposed to be oppressing the nation? Surely it is not beyond the wit of the Government to tell their Departments to have as their target the number of statutory instruments in 1978 or 1979. The number would be reduced by 1,500 a year.

Some Government Members are like renegade Trotskyists, in constant revolution with every institution of our society. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury talks about cynicism affecting our national institutions, but the Government are up-ending every national institution we have.

The Bill deals with markets, for example—a subject raised by other hon. Members. Ordinary and decent markets provide a service, and they are run by small businesses, but some of them have empty stalls. Rawson and Kirkgate are two examples—excellent markets which my wife and I frequently patronise. The markets have some empty stalls, and the people in charge say that they do not want car boot sales and suchlike, which will knock out their livelihoods and put them on the dole. Some of the people involved say that they were traditional Tory voters but, like a lot of other people, are no longer. Why should the Government hammer on their backs by creating problems?

The Government have an obsession with the free market. The Minister has it more than most, although they are all tainted with the same madness. The Government will find that there are more problems and more people on the dole, not fewer. The situation will not be improved.

I turn now to the Government's attack on health and safety. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, as everyone who has read it knows, had its own system for overhauling old regulations. The Secretary of State for Employment had the power to tell the Health and Safety Executive to overhaul its regulations. The executive would then submit its reports to the Minister, who would put them before Parliament. Has the Minister done that? Of course not. It has never been done. The Health and Safety Executive has been required to produce more regulations, with no consolidation.

There are at least 350 statutory instruments that apply to health and safety at work. They should be consolidated, and the Minister has not done so. The Bill does not simplify health and safety at work, which, goodness knows, everybody needs. Why could we not have the health and safety legislation in one document? That would help workers, employers and people who are affected by the legislation. Why do we not go down that path?

Under the current system, the Minister can repeal health and safety legislation. Will the system take into account the section of the 1974 Act which requires that all delegated powers should be used to maintain and improve existing standards of health and safety at work? That was an important component of the legislation, and I look forward to the Minister saying that it is guaranteed in the Bill.

I want to make one last point—at least one other hon. Member wants to speak—about contracting out. Clause 57 is quite extraordinary. It is an order-making power which is separate from the order-making power at the beginning of the Bill, which provides an extra Committee to see whether the Minister is doing the decent thing. That Committee will be stuffed to the gills with Tories, so it will always say yes. In any case, the Committee will be organised by the Whips. We know what happens in this place.

The clause will take away the powers of Ministers and give them to outside contractors. I ask Conservative Members—do they want another Child Support Agency? Do they want more chief executives? When an hon. Member puts down a question, the Minister says it is not for him, and adds that he has sent the letter on to Ros Hepplewhite. She is on £50,000 a year for a 36-hour week, and she is always out of the office. The hon. Member then gets a letter back from the business manager of the CSA.

There is no ministerial accountability or, at best, there is diminished ministerial accountability. Clause 57 gives powers for affirmative orders. No affirmative orders are okay, although they are better than negative procedure. The debate will usually be one and a half hours after 10 o'clock, and no changes can be made.

Only about two Acts have ever been passed which allowed statutory instruments to be amended. The vast bulk—this Bill is no exception—do not allow amendment, so hon. Members must take it or leave it. That is difficult for the House to accept. An hon. Member might like some part of the Bill, and dislike another part—even a single clause—but one has to take it all.

That is simply not good enough when we are being asked to transfer powers out of the House, out of the ministerial box and out of Whitehall. The powers will be transferred somewhere else, which affects accountability. No Minister said during the election, "I am going to shift my job outside. I do not really want a Ministry with such a range of powers. I am going to reduce them." Of course they did not. So what they are doing is outside their brief. It is against democracy. That is why we should oppose the legislation.

9.4 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Just as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has great passion about what he believes in, Conservative Members have

[Mr. Nigel Evans]

great passion about removing the red tape which has tied down our businesses for far too long. If I have any reservation about the Bill, it is that it has taken so long to reach the Chamber.

I am the vice-chairman of the Small Business Bureau. There are 3·5 million small businesses in Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) said how important small businesses were to the economy. They employ the vast bulk of the employed population. Small business men are the sort of people who work all hours. I should know, because I was a small business man once. They are the people who invest their life savings in their business. They risk everything to make sure that their business succeeds. They are the bedrock of Britain. If they fail, Britain fails. We must also pay heed to the many millions of people who are self-employed in Britain. If the self-employed are successful, they become employers.

It is the role of the Government to encourage small businesses. How can they encourage small businesses? By getting out of the hair of those small businesses. The Government create the conditions in which small businesses can grow. Today's interest rate cut will go some way to help them. The banks must pass on the interest rate cut to their businesses.

Many measures in the Bill will receive wide applause from our wealth creators. Another such measure is the rolling programme of deregulation. The Bill is a bonfire of regulations, but it is only one small bonfire. I sincerely hope that after this first bonfire many others will follow. The new rolling programme and the new task force led by Francis Maude will have plenty of work ahead of them in the years to come.

No regulation must be left unturned. If it is unnecessary, it should be scrapped. If it is complicated, it should be simplified. If it is not working, we should either repeal it or reform it. Labour Members have made accusations that we do not care about public service. That is patently not true. But we also care that our businesses should not face public strangulation.

The guidelines that are given to local authorities need to be made absolutely clear, to ensure that they are used in a way that is fair to all our business people and implemented uniformly. The same rules and regulations should be interpreted in exactly the same way throughout the country. I have heard all sorts of stories from my constituents about rules and regulations being interpreted in one way in one area of the constituency and in another way by someone else in another part of the constituency. All rules and guidelines should be cleared up.

We also need to ensure that our town hall bureaucrats are more helpful to small businesses to ensure that they can become far more profitable. I ran a small convenience store in Swansea. The environmental health officer visited me one day. He looked at the sink at the back of the shop, and said, "You wash your utensils here. Where do your staff wash their hands?" I said that they washed their hands either in the sink or in the toilet and cloakroom upstairs.

The environmental health officer said that that was not good enough and that I must tear out the sink and replace it with two sinks—one for washing the utensils and one for staff to wash their hands. I asked him to show a little common sense because we had carried on the business for many years and had never had a problem. I asked him to show just a smidgen of common sense, but he refused. In the end, the heavy hand of the town hall came down and we had to tear out the sink and put in a new one at a cost of more then £250. The staff still washed the utensils in one side and went upstairs to the cloakroom to wash their hands, as they had always done. That is an example of where I hope that the deregulation Bill will prove effective.

Several hon. Members have mentioned recent abattoir legislation. There are many abattoirs in my constituency, some of which are very small, and I have received many letters from their owners, who are burdened by the extra cost of the new European Community regulation. It is costing one abattoir an extra £20,000 a year with no perceptible benefit to the consumer. We need to clear up that problem—I hope that the Bill will do so—so that one person can inspect abattoirs and do the work of both the meat inspector and the veterinary surgeon.

I know that I do not have time to mention all the measures contained in the Bill as another hon. Member wishes to speak, but many of them will be welcomed by businesses, both small and large. We must constantly study the rules and regulations. One criticism is that we have been in power 14 years, so why have we only just started to consider them.

Mr. Illsley: Tell us about it.

Mr. Evans: As we have heard today, the Labour party loves regulations and treats them in the same way as it treats taxation and spending. Rules and regulations are the very creed and heart of the Labour party. Labour Members think that they must keep on spending, taxing and regulating and that is the difference between the Labour and Conservative parties. It is one reason why, come the next general election, people will remember what we have done about rules and regulations, how we have freed businesses from unnecessary burdens and helped small businesses to flourish and earn more profits so that they can reinvest in their businesses and grow. Profit is not a dirty word, although we might think otherwise to hear Opposition Members talk.

The Government need to consult business more widely, especially small businesses. We need a litmus test whereby we consider how beneficial a rule or regulation will be to the consumer and how much it will cost industry. If it does not measure up, will be expensive, or if the consumer will hardly notice any benefit, that rule or regulation should not be introduced. We must stop rules and regulations before the Government introduce them, and that is one of the main reasons why I welcome the Bill and will back it.

9.12 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): In the few minutes left, I shall confine my remarks to that section of the Bill that relates to markets. It is clear that the deregulation task forces were made up from the private sector. There was no local authority involvement, which is probably why the Bill will not legislate for the private market sector and private markets will not be deregulated.

The Bill simply attacks local authorities that provide markets. It is also an attack on the National Association of British Market Authorities; its members have opposed, to an authority, its provisions. I took up the issue with members of the association, but, in all the replies I received, not one local authority that was a member of the association supported the Government viewpoint. Nor

does the National Market Traders Federation, which views the deregulation of markets as a threat to the livelihoods of its members.

In view of their responses, it is surprising that the Government decided to press on with those clauses. The Minister is aware that many of the local authorities wrote to him to complain about them and have raised petitions, which will be presented to the House or to the Prime Minister. Those authorities are campaigning against the provisions in the Bill.

It is said that the deregulation of markets will increase competition, but it is likely to be unfair competition from private markets set up on a temporary basis, operating for a few days a year in a certain area. There will be no consumer protection, continuity or permanence as private markets spring up all over the country.

I refer the House to a letter from the Department of the Environment on the idea that the regulation of markets will frustrate commercial initiatives. I cannot read the whole text, so I shall read just the salient points:

"It was also made clear to the Commission that we had received very few complaints about market rights and that in 1987-88 the Government had reviewed the system. It concluded that legislation would be needed to abolish all market rights and that franchise rights, which are treated as property in English law, could not be compulsorily appropriated without compensation. Expropriation without compensation would also seem to infringe the European Convention on Human Rights which requires compensation for expropriation of a person's 'possessions'. In view of the requirements to pay compensation, the scarcity of complaints, the minimal part that markets play in U.K. trading activity and the possible damage to centuries of tradition and heritage that abolition would cause, the Government decided not to pursue the question of abolition any further. That remains the current position."

That letter was written in March 1991. What has changed in the past couple of years to encourage the Department of Trade and Industry to deregulate market rights? In that time, there have been very few, if any, complaints about the operation of local authority markets.

As some of my hon. Friends have said, many markets are in town centres and have a tradition that goes back for years. Many are historical or even tourist attractions. Many towns receive a lot of income from the establishment of their markets. My town is no different. Barnsley market was established under a royal charter in the 13th century. By the mid-1960s, Barnsley was known as a market town and its market was well known throughout the north of England. That tradition is likely to be lost through deregulation as a result of the Bill.

You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Barnsley is also a former mining area. The Government are to close down all the collieries, so I use the word "former" advisedly. As a consequence, the local authority has introduced a number of initiatives to try to regenerate the town centre and replace the trade lost as a result of the income reduction in the area. Those include the business partnership scheme, about which the Minister knows because he came to my constituency to launch it, and the local authority's partnership with Costain. The local authority is also spending city challenge money to regenerate the town centre. By the same token, the deregulation of markets will jeopardise the local economy.

At present, any organisation affected by proposals concerning market rights has the opportunity of judicial review and, more recently, of complaining to the ombudsman. Local authorities therefore have a duty to act reasonably, so there is no need for regulation.

We heard earlier about the proliferation of car boot sales dealing in stolen or counterfeit goods. A car boot sale in Barnsley took place at junction 36 of the motorway every Sunday morning. The police were out at 6 am every Sunday morning because people parked not only on the slip road and hard shoulder but sometimes on the inside lane of the M1. That is the type of hazard caused by unregulated car boot markets throughout the country.

Who will compensate market traders for their losses? According to the letter to which I referred, the Government decided that they could not proceed in 1991 because of compensation. As sole traders, market traders invest a lot of money in their businesses and will be affected by private, unregulated markets springing up in competition with them.

Many market traders go from market to market within a particular area. There are not so many market traders that we can service unregulated markets the length and breadth of the country. Market traders pay substantial rents for their market facility. Those markets will be undercut by private, unregulated markets with cheaper rents.

Markets also provide a direct income to the local authority which compensates for the loss of revenue support grant over the past few years through charge capping. Many local authorities will be looking to the Government for compensation in future revenue support grant because of the loss of income that they will suffer as a result of deregulation.

Finally, we have seen report after report about the amount of money that goes into the black economy. That money is lost in taxation revenues. Unregulated markets will contain more stolen and counterfeit goods. The markets accept that they do not need deregulation. They need, if anything, further regulation against the cowboys.

9.20 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): As was almost inevitable with a Bill such as this, we have had a wide-ranging debate. My hon. Friends and Conservative Members have touched on such issues as markets, health and safety and consumer protection. At one point, we almost drifted into discussing European monetary union.

Three of the points that were raised may have shown some common ground between the two sides of the House. First, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said that there were 1,500 more regulations in 1992 than there were in the last year of the Labour Government. The figure decreased slightly in 1993, but remained well above 1,300. As my hon. Friend said, it is not a one-sided business, and those Conservative Members who try to pretend that it is should know that the figures simply do not add up, as 71 per cent. of current regulations were introduced by the present Government. It would have been helpful had a few Conservative Members recognised that and occasionally said that they were sorry if they believed that they had made mistakes. However, that word does not easily cross the lips of Conservative Members.

The second point of agreement is that virtually all hon. Members, except those who stuck slavishly to the Conservative Central Office brief, recognised that some regulation is necessary for good business standards, good consumer protection, good health and safety at work and good employee relations. Good regulation is an essential part of business. The difference is where we draw the line.

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

It is foolish and naive to suggest that those on one side of the argument believe that there should be no regulation and those on the other side are in favour of all regulation. There is a genuine recognition, except on the part of those too ideologically blind to see it, that some regulation is necessary to maintain good business standards.

Thirdly, it is readily recognised that regulation can be outdated. The President of the Board of Trade in introducing the Bill, gave us examples of those outdated regulations, as I am sure the Under-Secretary will when he replies to the debate. They are often amusing and there is no doubt that such regulations should and can be removed from the statute book. The difficulty is drawing the line, in terms not of outdated regulation but of regulation that is relevant, up to date and may be designed legitimately to protect certain interests.

My hon. Friends' speeches spotlighted a number of issues where the line between regulation and deregulation is not easy to draw. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) spoke of consumer protection, fire regulation and fire safety. In all those sectors it is difficult to draw the line, but I argue that the House of Commons should err on the side of safety and of the consumer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) talked about environmental protection and environmental standards. It is interesting that Conservative Members who, less than a year ago, were talking about the Government's success in terms of green policies and about the importance of such policies are now taking every opportunity to argue that environmental protection standards are a burden on business.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) raised a number of important points about health and safety and the public interest. My hon. Friend is well versed in those issues as he represents the constituency in which last week's fire took place. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will know, those of us who live in areas that have experienced substantial chemical fires realise how important it is that the House of Commons should have no intention of relaxing health and safety standards. The public interest must be paramount.

Finally in terms of the divide, I should like to draw attention to the fact that several of my hon. Friends talked about health and safety at work. We heard about what accidents cost individuals—loss of life or serious injury —and what they cost firms and society. All those bills are substantial. I should like to ask the Conservative ideologues why any reduction in standards is even being contemplated. Speech after speech showed that the new Conservative approach is to lower consumer standards, lessen environmental protection, disregard the public interest and reduce health and safety standards at work.

Let me give an example of the Government's intentions. In other parts of the Bill they say, in effect, "Believe us, trust us. We will do the right thing." Anyone who wants to examine as nasty a provision as the Bill contains should look at clause 26, which deals with redundancy. That provision breaks all traditional agreements and custom and practice in industry, yet there was no great pressure from employers for it, and there was no consultation whatsoever with employees or their organisations.

There may be an explanation. We are told regularly that good practice in industrial relations means honouring agreements, that it commits people on both sides of industry to keeping their word. I understand why the Government bob and weave, why they do not worry unduly about keeping their word. After all, it is they who said that there would be no tax increases, that there would be no increase in VAT. We have here the Government who have reneged on every promise made to the electorate in 1992. Now they are trying to inject into industrial relations the practices that have so devalued our political system. In that sense, let us keep them clear of industrial relations. We have agreed on some points, but their line on regulation and deregulation is one of contention, not of objectivity.

The key issue in the debate has been the constitutional implications of the Bill. Clauses 1 to 4 deal with the real issues—issues which should unite the House, not divide it. I wish that more Members had been present to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd)—as I say regularly when I have the opportunity of winding up a debate in which the hon. Gentleman has taken part. It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman's speech should have come from the Government. His was the kind of speech that every hon. Member should make and to which we should all listen. It was echoed partly by the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs). Both hon. Gentlemen were concerned about the great new powers that can be assumed under clauses 1 to 4—the further centralisation of ministerial power, the further erosion of the power of the House of Commons.

I hope that I do not do the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) an injustice in saying that he let the cat out of the bag and provided grounds for people's worries when, referring to the deregulation initiative, he quoted ex-President Reagan saying:

"You ain't seen nothing yet."

Later, he said that the Bill is just "a down payment". Is not that what concerns us—the fact that this Trojan horse of a Bill contains miscellaneous measures, deliberately designed not to generate much public opposition while creating a general power that will enable Ministers to get rid of provisions protecting the environment, health and safety and the consumer?

Ministers are empowering themselves to repeal and amend primary and secondary legislation. In practice, the House is being offered a debate lasting an hour and a half, after 10 pm, and no ability to amend the orders that we debate. Any hon. Member who has been in the House for some years understands the way in which such procedures work: we know how much interest will be taken in those debates. That is self-criticism, in that it is criticism of the House, but it is also an argument against giving Ministers more power without adequate safeguards.

The Government say, "Do not worry. Believe us: we will provide new safeguards. The new mechanism will not be autocratic or authoritarian." Let us examine those safeguards, and the way in which they will work. There will be a new scrutiny Committee, but at this stage, we know very little about it, because we await the findings of the Committee chaired by the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). However, I suspect that we already know two things.

First, as was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South, the scrutiny Committee will have a Government majority: its members will be selected by Government Whips to ensure that. I can confidently say

that all hon. Members who have expressed doubts about the mechanism will not find a way on to that Committee under the patronage of the Whips. Secondly, Ministers have said in the Bill that they will not be bound by the advice and recommendations of the Committee. Given a Government majority and recommendations without force, what faith can the House put in that Committee?

The Government will tell us that they will adopt a new approach—that they will consult outside interests. I simply do not believe that, after 15 years, the Government have discovered the meaning of the word "consultation". Go and ask nurses and doctors in the national health service whether they believe in consultation with the Government; go and ask teachers about education changes; go and ask the police and the Lord Chief Justice about criminal justice legislation. Every interest group feels that the Government simply do not care about consultation: the mechanism will not work in that respect.

The power taken by the Government, however, does not relate merely to this deregulation initiative; it is an indefinite power, enabling the Government—by means of the mechanism in clauses 1 to 4—to repeal tomorrow's mistakes. It is not time limited: mistakes in future legislation, primary and secondary—legislation approved by the House of Commons—can be repealed under those clauses. The definition of what constitutes a burden will be left to a junior Minister.

I read with interest the Under-Secretary's speech to the Tory party conference.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Good speech.

Mr. Fatchett: I note that it won approval. Its timing and content struck me as apposite, given the overall theme of the conference. This is the Minister who will take all the various interests into account, in a sensitive manner. He said:

"In fact, the Prime Minister urged me to behave like an absolute bastard."

That Minister was the first member of the B team to acknowledge that openly, and that is the first occasion on which the Prime Minister has no need to urge a Minister in that regard—for he is one; he needs no urging. That Minister is responsible for the judgments on deregulation.

Constitutional issues are raised, not only clauses 1 to 4, but in part II. They will set up the Government's new world and establish the way in which they have operated for a number of years. It is a world of new quangos, new agencies and new private contracts. It would be churlish of us to suggest that there will be no beneficiaries from that process. There will, of course, be beneficiaries because there are jobs to be had on the quangos.

We know to whom those jobs go—Tory party members and supporters. One of the key criteria for selection is whether a person has paid his or her party membership. We know that sometimes, particularly in the health service, jobs go to those who have just finished their service in the House of Commons or who happen to be married to a member of the Conservative party. Those appointees include, as a director of the King's Lynn and Wisbech trust, Thomas Shephard, the husband of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and, as a director of the Addenbrooke's trust, Mary Archer, wife of Tory peer Lord Archer.

The Bill is part of the Government's sleaze philosophy. They produce jobs for themselves. The wheel turns full circle because, as part of the process, there will be contracts to be won in the private sector. Who will the Bill help but directors and consultants, including Conservative Members, whose earnings outside the House will be boosted? About 600 directorships are disclosed in the Register of Members' Interests and many of them have a direct interest in privatisation.

The Government may argue that the Bill will improve efficiency and standards in public life. Before the President of the Board of Trade advances that argument, he should consider the Child Support Agency and the way in which Group 4 has operated in our prisons. Before the Government talk about new standards in public life, they should consider Westminster city council, the Welsh Development Agency and the national health service trusts up and down the country, and then take note of the comment by the Public Accounts Committee that there has been a substantial decline in the standards of public life.

Before Conservative Members vote for the Bill, I remind them that the parts of it that deal with contracting out will further reduce the accountability of Ministers. Surely it is a basic principle of our democracy that those who spend public money should be accountable for it.

There cannot be a Member of Parliament who has not been irritated because he has tabled a parliamentary question or written a letter to a Minister, only to be told that the reply will come from the chief executive of an agency. We want proper democratic constitutional accountability. The Bill will take the process of undermining that accountability a stage further because it will mean that, in some cases, the body that will be held accountable will be not even the agency, but a private sector organisation or contractor.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) made an important point when he rightly argued that the role of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, the ombudsman, could be subject to privatisation. Does not that show the nature of the Government's proposals? We want assurances on that matter and I hope that the Minister will provide them.

The sections on contracting out are part of what Professor Peter Hennessy has called the "alibi society". When challenged about British Aerospace this afternoon, the Prime Minister said that it was not his responsibility. All the clauses in the Bill are designed to underpin the alibis. The Government are saying, "We are just the Government, we do not know what is happening in society and we do not know what is happening with public money."

One thing has been clear in much of the rhetoric of Conservative Members' speeches. While the Government have no vision of an industrial strategy for Britain, they have a view that Britain can survive and compete with a low-wage, low-security, low-skills economy. That is simply not the case in the 1990s.

The Bill is a missed opportunity. The Government should have produced an industrial strategy that allows Britain to compete in the 1990s and beyond, a strategy that invests in research and development, in skills and in the industries that will make Britain successful. Instead, we have heard a great deal of 19th century rhetoric coupled with a Bill designed to give more power to the centre. It has authoritarian and draconian implications, which is why it is a bad Bill.

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to oppose the Bill. I hope that, even at this late stage, some Tory Members will

[Mr. Fatchett]

have that courage to stop this centralising measure and the creeping undermining of the power of the House and join us in trying to protect our democracy.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): A moment ago, the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) said that the order-making powers in the Bill could be used to repeal parts of future legislation. That is not so. Evidently, he did not get very far in his reading because clause 1(5)*(c)* states that the Bill will apply only to Acts passed

"before or in the same Session"

as the Bill. That appears at the bottom of page 2, so I hope that he will get a little further into the Bill before the Committee stage begins.

A wise man once said—I am not going to quote from my speech at Blackpool—*[Interruption.]* I thank hon. Members for the advertisement. Perhaps I should take a leaf out of the book of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and sell the video. A wise man once said:

"Trade and commerce, if they were not made of rubber, would never manage to bounce over the obstacles which legislators are continually putting in their way."

I have always believed that government had a limited capacity to do good and a virtually infinite capacity to do harm, but the Opposition have a touching faith in government and legislation as a universal cure-all and restorative. Of course, experience teaches us—I hope that I shall now carry Labour Members with me—that government is part of the problem, not part of the solution.

There is in this country today a widespread demand for deregulation. It is expressed in the columns of newspapers by luminaries such as Mr. Christopher Booker, who was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith). Every Member of Parliament's postbag has been groaning with complaints about excessive regulation. Small and large businesses— *[Interruption.]* Perhaps constituents do not consider it worth while to write to Labour Members, but mine certainly write to me.

Small and large businesses, charities and the voluntary sector are prone to complain. They say that regulation is intrusive, time-consuming, irritating and, more to the point, they say that it reduces our competitiveness as a nation, which was the mainspring of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade's opening speech.

Mr. Sykes: My hon. Friend mentioned Mr. Christopher Booker, who writes for *The Sunday Telegraph* and who made some disparaging remarks about this excellent Bill in the most recent edition of that newspaper. I am the secretary of the Back-Bench deregulation committee and I twice invited Mr. Booker to address our committee. I did not receive a reply to either invitation which must mean that Mr. Booker has been drowned under a welter of paperwork.

Mr. Hamilton: I am not prepared to criticise Christopher Booker in this instance because he has done a good job in drawing to our attention many of the absurdities of regulation. I shall, however, consider cancelling my subscription to *The Sunday Telegraph* and taking up *Viz.*

The Government resolved to do something about the burden of regulation. We put together a programme to attack the regulatory overload at every level. It has not been over-hasty or ill thought out. Indeed, we have devoted a great deal of time not only to the Bill but to all the other deregulatory measures referred to in the explanatory documents that were published at the same time as the Bill.

I warned my colleagues at the beginning of the exercise that we were in danger of producing a policy that would be popular in the country. Undeterred by this departure from normal practice, we plunged ahead with what I believe is the most comprehensive initiative the country has ever seen. The Bill deals with just one aspect of that, but a very important one—the problem of over-regulation in Acts of Parliament.

I have been subjected to much criticism, as my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) mentioned a moment ago. On the one hand, I have been criticised by Christopher Booker, who recently described the Bill as

"a mouse from a mountain of bureaucracy".

On the other hand, I have been described in different language by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). In some respects he is a natural deregulator—I have always been impressed by his deregulated approach to English syntax—and he is, as we know, a master of understatement. He described our proposals for deregulation as

"unleashing the killing fields of industry."

The General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union produced a very nice photograph of me in a magazine that it published recently, under the headline:

"Deregulation Minister Neil Hamilton: Stop this man"—

with an article that, as usual, was full of unfounded alarmist scaremongering. The union does not even seem to recognise the benefits that its members could derive from a substantial programme of deregulation.

We do not have to take risks with health and safety, or any other measures involving the protection of the community at large, to make huge deregulatory gains. I am sorry that the hon. Members for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) and for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) failed to recognise that and launched into hyperboles accusing us of despotism and goodness knows what else.

Mr. Heppell: I spoke about the subjects that I did only because I have written evidence. I have received a letter from Lord Strathclyde about the legislation about foam in furniture and the legislation about children's nightwear, which were investigated by the task force. I have received letters from the Department of Transport about the review of bus drivers' hours. I spoke only about things that were documented by Government Departments.

Mr. Hamilton: Every regulation in existence is under review and will be measured against the test of cost and benefit. Where the costs are justified by the benefits, nothing will happen to the regulations. For the hon. Gentleman to take the view, however, that we should never reconsider any legislation in sectors where there is significant emotional appeal, smacks of the attitude that the Roman Catholic Church had to Galileo in the 14th or 15th century. We must ensure that all the legislation currently in force in this country is proportionate and that it does not go further than is necessary. That is not to say that we must

throw the baby out with the bathwater. The trouble with people like the hon. Gentleman is that they want to throw out the baby and keep the bathwater.

I take as an example health and safety—a subject which tugs at the heart-strings. Opposition Members have placed great emphasis on that during the debate, especially on clause 27, which the hon. Member for Leeds, Central mentioned. What that clause permits us to do is what we can do in respect of legislation that has been passed since 1974 under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. The problem with legislation that was on the statute book before 1974 is that even when it is utterly redundant we cannot remove it because of a provision in the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 that compels us to keep it on the statute book.

I can give the hon. Gentleman several examples. I do not think that I have much time in which to do so, but let us take as an example the Agricultural Ladders Regulations, which go into great detail about the joints to be used in ladders, the distance between the rungs and the number of nails that have to be used in their construction. Today, there are British standards covering all those artefacts and a modern set of regulations is in the process of being introduced. There must, therefore, be a case for removing from the statute book useless legislation that does not contribute to people's safety. We are clearing away a clutter of redundancy.

During the investigation that was performed by the Department of Employment in respect of health and safety measures, we discovered about 30 statutory instruments, the primary legislation governing which was repealed long ago but which were still on the database and presumably still being observed by many businesses long after the statutory provisions had been repealed. We have, therefore, got rid of those—for example, the Florists Overtime Regulations 1938; the Bread, Flour, Confectionery and Sausage Manufacture (Commencement of Employment) Regulations 1939; the Glass Bottles and Jars (Overtime) Regulations 1938. All that garbage has been cleared away from the statute book. In no way does that prejudice the health and safety of people working in those industries. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is a joke."] I leave the jokes to sit on the Opposition Benches.

I am concerned to rebut the criticisms of the Bill. While Christopher Booker has accused us of unleashing a farrago of trivia, the accusations of the Opposition would give anybody cause to believe that we were indulging in the legislative equivalent of the slaughter of the first-born. There are two extremes—first Mr. Booker saying that we are not going far enough, and then the Opposition saying that we are going too far. I find myself cast in an unfamiliar role as a middle-of-the-road moderate.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) urged us not to be too cautious, as did my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), who has done sterling service in the cause of deregulation. Although the Bill, and the measures that will be introduced if the order-making power is granted to us, may constitute small and modest changes in themselves, when they are taken together in sum there is a great gain in prospect. Of course, there are complaints that the Bill does not go far enough, but the Bill is only one part of a wider package of deregulation.

For example, enforcement officers' decisions can cause inconsistency of interpretation in different parts of the country. The ability of environmental health officers to classify Tipp-Ex correction fluid and Brillo pads as substances hazardous to health under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 must be examined. The European Community's generation of regulations must also be examined, as must delegated legislation currently in force, to ensure that we do not impose unnecessary costs on businesses—that does not need the powers in the Bill. Finally, primary legislation must be examined, and that is the purpose of the Bill.

As hon. Members know, the contents of the Bill come in two forms. First, there are items of deregulation that will not be the subject of the order-making power, but stand on the face of the Bill. There are a couple of dozen such measures, including market charters and other provisions that have been mentioned during the debate. Secondly, there is a list of about 55 items illustrating how the order-making power could be applied. If hon. Members considered the way in which those two sets of proposals are put together they would discover that the order-making power is designed to be used almost entirely in wholly uncontroversial areas, where I hope that we shall have no difficulty in securing a consensus across the Floor of the House.

I do not believe that the contents of the Bill are trivial. The Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, the Forum of Private Business, the Federation of Small Businesses and the chambers of commerce do not think that they are trivial either. Even the Consumers Association has said some nice things about the Bill, saying that the so-called King Henry VIII provisions represent

> "a partial improvement on the current procedures for parliamentary scrutiny and secondary legislation. They could help avoid the kind of low-profile law-changing that takes place when statutory instruments are debated in the middle of the night in an empty House of Commons."

That goes to the very essence of the difficulty that we are here to discuss.

Even under the much-vaunted procedures for primary legislation, legislation is often passed by the House with inadequate scrutiny. I am as committed as any Member of the House to a proper measure of scrutiny for legislation. I yield to no one, not even to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) in my attachment to parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I am sorry, but I have only seven minutes. There will be plenty of time for me to debate with the hon. Gentleman in Committee.

Judging by the criticisms levelled against us in the debate, anyone might think that the present procedures of the House were exhaustive. They are often exhausting, but the scrutiny that we apply to legislation is still not exhaustive. I have often sat in the Chamber or in Committee when pages and pages of Government or other amendments have been introduced in the last stages of the discussion of a Bill, and the Whips are scurrying about across the Floor trying to get people to stop talking and sit down, so that we can all get home early. Vast tranches of legislation go through without any discussion. The difference between the failings of the legislative procedures that we have had hitherto and what we are proposing in the Bill is this. Whereas those failings are in respect of burdens that are imposed on the country, if there

[Mr. Hamilton]

are procedural failures in respect of our proposals at least they are in areas where we are reducing the burdens that are imposed on the people.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) complained that these powers were introduced for the convenience of Ministers. They are being introduced for the convenience of the country and for the convenience of the businesses that generate the wealth and the jobs that Opposition Members profess to support. A large number of proposals in the Bill will protect parliamentarians against the charge that despotism is being imposed on businesses.

I believe that our proposals will receive significant scrutiny. That scrutiny will be much greater in practice than that received by the measures that we propose to repeal. We have, of course, been subjected to the usual criticisms from Opposition Members—that this is all a put-up job to line the pockets of our friends in the City, and so on—but nothing could be further from the truth. The idea that reducing costs on businesses is only of benefit to businesses is extraordinary, because those costs feed through into the wider community in the form of higher prices in the shops and, in particular, unemployment.

Opposition Members are not concerned about unemployment or they would saddle this country with the greatest single package of regulatory measures and business burdens that this country has ever seen by signing up to the social chapter and the whole package of socialist garbage that they have in their knapsacks and which they are afraid to bring out at the moment. No doubt they will be revealed towards the next general election.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) was right when in the debate on the Queen's Speech he said

> "I welcome the legislation in that context, and I shall not be offended if its basis is the use of statutory instruments. Indeed, I find it difficult to conceive how it could be done otherwise". —[*Official Report*, 24 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 484.]

I agree.

Deregulation is not entirely a new issue, because another Conservative Government, in 1896—nearly 100 years ago—produced a very important deregulation measure. In the Locomotives on Highways Act 1896, which hon. Members will no doubt remember, the provisions of the Locomotives Act 1865 were repealed. In particular, it said that any locomotive in motion must be preceded by not less than 60 yards by a man carrying a red flag, constantly displayed. When we repealed the "red flag" Act, we enabled the British motor industry to be set up—*[Interruption.]* Times have certainly changed since the Labour party was in Government, when the British motor industry was flat on its back. Today it is up and running and we will again be the biggest exporter of cars in Europe.

Opposition Members would have been opposed to getting rid of the Locomotives on Highways Act, because no doubt they would have accused us of unleashing the killing fields on the roads of this country. The environmental extremists would have opposed any change on environmental grounds, no doubt supported by the latter-day political gerbils in the Liberal party. Without that change, a modern economy could never have developed. Labour's policies would put a man with a red flag in front of British industry once again. Of course, Labour is not so keen on the red flag these days. By its opposition to the Bill, it proves that it is still the party of red tape.

The Bill will slice through red tape. It will free the businesses of this country, which generate the wealth and the jobs, from the bonds of useless and excessive regulation. That will be an extremely popular policy. Just as the Opposition, as Johnny-Come-Latelies, have had to adopt our policies in so many areas of national life, whether on taxation, ownership in industry or whatever, they will come to see the wisdom of adopting a policy of deregulation. The country knows that that is what it wants. We know what it wants. That is why we shall use this policy to get elected once again in however many years' time it is.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 283, Noes 320.

Division No. 110] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*

Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. Nigel Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael

Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 319, Noes 282.

Division No.111] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa

Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*

Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Deregulation and Contracting out Bill

[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified——

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums required by a Minister of the Crown, an office-holder, the Forestry Commissioners or the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce for making payments under contracts entered into under or by virtue of the Act;

(b) any administrative expenses incurred by a Minister of the Crown or office-holder in consequence of the provisions of the Act; and

(c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act; and

(2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable into the Consolidated Fund under any other Act.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

10.28 pm

Mr. Cryer: The resolution is extremely unusual because it not only authorises

"the payment out of money provided by Parliament of . . . any sums required by a Minister of the Crown",

but requires exactly the same authority to be given to "an office-holder". That provision relates to clause 57, which provides that a Minister's powers can be transferred to a person designated by the Minister as an office-holder. It has to be done through an affirmative order, but it is an extraordinary power as people who are not elected to this place or appointed by the Prime Minister can, in essence, carry out all the duties of a Minister of the Crown. There are three relatively minor exceptions to that rule. For example, such people cannot produce delegated legislation.

The House should not approve the motion, which gives a person designated as an office-holder the power to demand money given to him by the measure. We are talking not about authorising a Minister to obtain money from Parliament but about giving money to someone outside Parliament and Government who is appointed by the Minister. *[Interruption.]* People who are outside Parliament can be authorised to spend money—a serious erosion of Parliament's authority to spend money. From a sedentary position, my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) asked whether people like him and me would be those designated persons —termed "office-holder" in the motion. The answer to that question is no, because the Minister would not appoint us. He would appoint people whom he considered to be suitable to carry out the deregulation of the legislation.

Experience shows that giving such powers to office-holders outside Parliament has proved less than satisfactory. There have been occasions when giving Ministers the authority to spend money has been less than satisfactory. To take the process one stage further to give authority to the person termed an "office-holder", as the motion provides, seems to be much less satisfactory. That is why we should vote against the motion.

In its eighth report, on the proper conduct of public business, the Public Accounts Committee has guided the attention of the House to the very measures that the Minister asks us to approve in the motion. The office-holders would be akin to the services of PSA Services that were required to operate on a fully commercial basis from 1 April 1990. On page 9, paragraph 3 explains what happened. It states that the

"PSA Services' financial system broke down to the extent that they had to charge £65·6 million to their own Vote instead of being able to recover it from their customers."

The motion asks us to give authority to one of the office-holders, if he makes a mess of things, to demand money to spend on whatever service—deregulation or anything within the terms of the legislation, which is widely drafted. We would be giving carte blanche to the office-holder, whose expenditure would be authorised by the motion.

The PSA service is perhaps not the best example. Paragraph 12 on page 11 of the Public Accounts Committee report refers to the Welsh Development Agency, which parallels the office-holder mentioned in the motion. The agency was criticised by the Public Accounts Committee, which at paragraph 14 stated:

"We remind the Welsh Office of their obligations for effective oversight of non-departmental public bodies."

That is severe criticism of a Government body and Minister of the Crown. I shall not go into the details of why they were criticised, but it was for careless and irresponsible control of taxpayers' money in the Welsh Development Agency, which was not controlled by the Welsh Office.

A Minister now asks us to support a money resolution, despite the fact that the improper control of lavish expenditure has been criticised by the Public Accounts Committee, which had to remind the Department of its obligations to contol money. In that context, we should hardly support a money resolution that authorises

"the payment out of money provided by Parliament of . . . any sums required by a Minister of the Crown, an office-holder"

and two other bodies.

Incredibly, the resolution also authorises the expenditure of any sums required by

"the registrar of approved driving instructors".

For a Minister who is trying to simplify matters to ask the House to approve a money resolution that gives carte blanche to the registrar of approved driving instructors as well as those peculiar "office-holders" who, under the terms of the resolution, include

"the holder of an office the remuneration in respect of which is paid out of money provided by Parliament"

is a dangerous precedent to set.

I opened my speech by saying that this was an unusual money resolution. From time to time, I comment on money resolutions, the majority of which do not extend to this degree. Parliament's powers, which are supposed to be safeguarded carefully, are twofold: first, the right to control revenue from taxation; and, secondly, the right to control expenditure. Those rights will be taken out of Parliament's hands.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am worried. My hon. Friend has drawn my attention to the interesting clause 57 and how it would apply in this case. Will the traditional role of the accounting officer change if the money resolution operates as my hon. Friend suggests? Will the accounting officer, who would normally be the permanent secretary, have to give evidence to the Public Accounts Committee?

Mr. Cryer: The clause would not allow an accounting officer to hold his usual powers. As my hon. Friend said, the accounting officer is normally a permanent secretary. Under the Exchequer and Audit Control Departments Act

[Mr. Cryer]

1886, the accounting officer has the duty, obligation and power to draw the Comptroller and Auditor General's attention to expenditure with which he disagrees.

An "office-holder" could be a contractor—let us say, Seedy Services Ltd., set up by half a dozen Conservative Members——

Mr. Fatchett: Ex-Conservatives.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right. Four or five Conservative Back-Benchers with an inside knowledge may set up Seedy Services Ltd. and put forward their case to the Minister in order to undertake the services listed in the Bill. The accounting officer has a duty to report to the Comptroller and Auditor General and allow the Public Accounts Committee to examine expenditure which the Comptroller and Auditor General recommends to the Property Services Agency.

Money resolutions such as this are the defining characteristic that allows an accounting officer to go to the Secretary of State and say that he does not agree with the expenditure. That is a powerful check within a Department.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I wonder whether Ministers have it in mind that office-holders would give evidence to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Cryer: There is no doubt that office-holders would fall under the general powers of the Select Committee to require persons to give evidence before it and papers to be presented. If the PAC required an office-holder to attend, presumably that office-holder would be required to do so under the general powers of the Select Committee system.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I served on the Public Accounts Committee for 12 years and I do not recall one occasion when we took evidence from anyone other than a civil servant. If a change is to be introduced, Ministers should make it clear at the Dispatch Box today.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend will recall that the Child Support Agency, which is a good illustration of the powers contained in the money resolution, referred to an office-holder—a person appointed to carry out the duties of a Minister. Ministers who introduce an ineffective Act which produces great bitterness and anger among ordinary decent people who are meeting their responsibilities should be accountable.

The equivalent of an office-holder in the Bill and money resolution has been appointed—Ros Hepplewhite. If we write to a Minister or table questions in the House about office-holders and accountability in respect of the money resolution, will we get a reply from a Minister?

When we write to the Child Support Agency we are told by a Minister that the chief executive has been asked to reply. We then get a letter from an assistant to the office-holder because she is out of the office. I do not know whether that is the characteristic experience of my hon. Friends, but I do not get letters from Ros Hepplewhite. She is paid £50,000 and attends the office for 36 hours a week. That seems to be a generous payment.

If that is the position that the office-holder will occupy, my hon. Friend has lighted on another reason why we should vote against the money resolution because it stands for the diminution of day-to-day parliamentary accountability.

Parliamentary questions by Back Benchers are universally accepted as an important method of accountability. There has been a long argument lasting two of three years about placing the letters from the executives of the variouis agencies—the equivalent of office-holders under the money resolution—on the record. At first, they were put in the Library; now, some are incorporated in *Hansard*. It was a long struggle and we do not want more diminutions.

It is unsatisfactory to receive letters from office-holders or directors of executive agencies instead of directly from Ministers. Ministers are elected and reply at the Dispatch Box to debates on Second Reading. Secretaries of State start the legislation. Ministers should answer any charges through questions and cross-examination in the House.

There is little point in electing people to the House of Commons unless we maintain the scrutiny and examination that we were elected to carry out. The money resolution provides an evasion of that responsibility. It is alarming that authority is being given to bodies, persons and individuals outside the House to spend money raised by taxpayers.

I recall suggestions during the 1970s and early 1980s that we should nationalise on a large scale through delegated powers and enabling legislation. The press were up in arms; they said that we would be turning the country into a Marxist state overnight. That was simply untrue, but there is no balancing criticism from the newspapers today at the erosion of parliamentary democracy that the Opposition consider important. We want to enable the scrutiny to continue.

I should like to refer to another case on which the Public Accounts Committee commented. It is the case of Wessex regional health authority—an outside body provided by a Minister with money voted by Parliament. We are told:

"The authority acknowledged that a fundamental conflict between their interests and those of Wessex Regional Integrated Systems Ltd arose when the authority appointed a director of the company with whom the regional health authority had a contract to supply computer services to act as regional information systems manager. The authority also allowed a secondee from IBM to advise them on the purchase, without competition, of an IBM computer for £3·3 million at a time when it could have been purchased for £500,000 to £1 million less."

If this money resolution is approved, will that sort of scandal occur again and again and again? How will the Minister hold such people to account?

It is quite true that the office-holders will be appointed, under clause 57, by order. That clause says:

"(1) this section applies to any function of a Minister or office-holder—

(a) which is conferred by or under any enactment; and

(b) which, by virtue of any enactment or rule of law, may be exercised by an officer of his".

Under the existing system, where a Minister of the Crown delegates power to a senior civil servant the Minister continues to be responsible. We all know the tried and tested formula whereby, if we claim that civil servants are becoming too powerful, the Minister says, "Civil servants should not be attacked as they cannot answer back. I am the Minister responsible." The Minister allocates duties to civil servants but is himself accountable to the House of Commons.

When a duty goes outside, to an office-holder, direct responsibility is diminished. The Minister is shaking his head. I hope that he will say that the office-holder will be just like a civil servant, in which case all the questions tabled by Members will be answered by the Minister, and

the method of expenditure will be the same as previously. Why, therefore, should the money resolution contain a reference to

"any sums required by a Minister of the Crown, an office-holder"?

Thus a person in addition to the Minister will have authority to receive payment out of moneys provided by Parliament.

This is a matter of considerable concern. The Public Accounts Committee has produced a quite damning report entitled "The Proper Conduct of Public Business". My hon. Friends will have read that report, and I shall not go through all the cases with which it deals. I have already mentioned one or two of them. The Committee mentions cases in which there has been a less than adequate standard in the expenditure of taxpayers' money. In the case of IBM, it is clear that there was a degree of favouritism, if not downright corruption, when a person from IBM recommended a computer that would cost the taxpayer more than £500,000, and possibly as much as £1 million, extra.

We want some autonomy, subject to tight ministerial control. But a move right out to private contractors acting as Ministers means that the only accountability that we have disappears. As has been said, we have a system whereby the accounting officer can report to the Comptroller and Auditor General. That is a very powerful weapon in the hands of the accounting officer, who is normally the permanent secretary. It is a threat intended to guide expenditure—a threat that the Labour Government had to withstand several times between 1974 and 1979. When the Department of Industry financed Concorde, there was no minute from the accounting officer about the expenditure—research and development costs were £1 billion. The only three minutes ever recorded concerned the workers' co-operatives in Liverpool—at KME—at Meriden and in Scotland, at the *Daily News*.

We are talking about a powerful check on expenditure. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), I believe that that check should be retained, so that it can be carried through in the Public Accounts Committee. That is a reaction, however. The money has already gone. In the case of Wessex health authority, the computer has been installed, and is probably barely working; it will probably be discarded and sold to a technical college for about £10. The money has gone, and a report has been produced saying that it should not happen again.

The motion produces a basis for repeating the errors of the past. We do not want the PAC to examine things and report to the House that they are wrong. We want a secure system to be installed beforehand. The Government claim to care a great deal about taxpayers' money, although they do not seem to mind handing over large chunks of it to their friends through private companies. This may well be such an occasion—which is why it is so important for checks to be made on motions such as this. The Minister did not give a very good response in his winding-up speech; I hope that he will give a comprehensive account now.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Under the training programmes of the old Department of Employment, the Comptroller and Auditor General could, in effect, follow public money all the way to the trainee. All along the line —particularly when the skill centres existed—there was an element of accountability for public moneys, right down to the last instructor, who was basically paid by the state for the skills agency.

Today, that arrangement does not exist. Accountability for public moneys extends only as far as the last civil servant in situ. The moment that the money is transmitted from the training and enterprise council to the training contractor, the National Audit Office can go no further. Interestingly, the NAO visits TECs but seems to go no further than that point. Is that not an example of what happens when functions previously performed by civil servants are privatised? Is not an element of accountability lost?

Mr. Cryer: I shall be interested to learn from the Minister how the NAO will examine office-holders. He mentioned the Department of Employment; the PAC refers to that Department, and to monitoring expenditure on the technical and vocational education initiative. The Department accepted that there was not adequate scrutiny. If there is not adequate scrutiny within government, what will it be like outside government, at one stage removed? It will be even worse.

We know the proclivity of certain private enterprise organisations and their members to line their pockets. It appears that, without adequate control, the bent and corrupt will have a field day. I hope that that will not happen, but it is a possibility.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cryer: I must demur. Debates on money motions are becoming increasingly popular.

10.53 pm

Mr. Illsley: I want to raise the question of compensation for market authorities. I mentioned it earlier, but I would like to hear a more detailed explanation from the Minister. Will compensation be available to authorities that will lose their market franchise rights as a result of the Bill, and have the Government made allowance for that compensation?

Let me quote from a letter written by the Department of the Environment to the National Association of British Market Authorities in March 1991. The letter deals specifically with compensation and states:

"It was also made clear to the Commission that we had received very few complaints about market rights and that in 1987-88 the Government had reviewed the system."

In a written reply to a question tabled by the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 31 March 1993, a Minister said that the Department of the Environment had received 15 complaints about local authority markets in the two years since January 1991. I am sure hon. Members will agree that that is a very small number. It therefore seems that we are to spend a great deal of money on deregulating local authority market rights although there have been very few complaints about the markets. It appears that much of that money could be spent on compensation claims made against the Department. The Minister shakes his head, but I shall read on.

The letter from the Department of the Environment stated that it had been concluded that

"legislation would be needed to abolish all market rights and that franchise rights, which are treated as property in English law, could not be compulsorily appropriated without compensation."

[Mr. Illsley]

Under English law, market rights are treated as property. That was the Government's advice to the association when it was decided in 1991 not to go ahead with deregulation. At that time, the Government concluded that compensation would be payable in respect of the rights that were being appropriated. What has changed since then and, in view of the likely cliams, why is there no reference to compensation in the Bill or the motion?

The Department's letter to the National Association of British Market Authorities continued:

"Expropriation without compensation would also seem to infringe the European Convention on Human rights which requires compensation for expropriation of a person's 'possessions'. In view of the requirements to pay compensation, the scarcity of complaints, the minimal part that markets play in United Kingdom trading activity and the possible damage to centuries of tradition and heritage that abolition would cause, the Government decided not to pursue the question of abolition any further."

That was the position in 1991 and, as far as I am aware, nothing much has changed since then. The question of compensation is still open.

NABMA has already told the Minister that it is likely strenuously to oppose any deregulation of market franchise rights which does not include the payment of compensation. In its submission to the Government, it stated:

"While the Government may decide to legislate to deny local authorities compensation the Association wish to make it clear at this stage that such a proposal would be strenuously opposed."

I take that to mean that there will be a legal challenge to the Government on the basis of the position outlined by the Department of the Environment in 1991, which was that compensation should be payable.

The Government have argued that there is no case for compensating local authorities because there is an idea that, as public bodies, local authorities should not receive compensation for any deregulation of their rights. However, NABMA has challenged that notion and I agree with that challenge. The Government have changed their mind since 1991. The property rights of local authorities are the same as those of private individuals. I believe that compensation claims will be laid at the Government's door. Indeed, the association mentions taking the matter to the European courts. In its submission to the Government, it stated that the Government had ignored the principles set out in the Department of the Environment's letter of 1991. It continued:

"It appears to the Association that if such a proposal is pursued then there is an opportunity for making an application to the European Courts."

In other words, the Government will be challenged in the courts in this country and in Europe. If those compensation claims are successful, it could lay a substantial bill at the Government's door.

It is useful to consider the most recent Bills about market rights—the Bexley London Borough Council Bill in 1986 and the Redbridge London Borough Council Bill in 1991. I recall them well; I spoke in one of the debates. A private Bill came before the House to establish a market in the Redbridge area. At the time, both private Bills—one relating to Bexley, the other to Redbridge—made allowance for compensation before they left the House. The authorities that were affected by those Bills received compensation.

The House of Commons has, therefore, acknowledged recently that compensation shall be payable to a local authority in respect of the loss of market rights. That is a very recent precedent and I think that the Government will be required to follow it.

As I said earlier, many local authorities are members of the National Association of British Market Authorities. I said earlier that I wrote to all 133 of them. Of all the replies that I received, not one agreed with the Government's proposals. Every one of the local authorities disagreed, partly because those local authorities were denied any form of consultation by the deregulation task forces.

One of the authorities informed me that the direct income that it received each year from its market was £750,000. If one multiplies that by the number of market authorities in the country and by the number of years' trading that authorities will lose, the compensation bills start to add up.

The motion ought to take account of that compensation, which the Government are likely to have to pay.

11.4 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) has mentioned the serious compensation problems that arise from the Bill and some of the shortcomings in the motion. He has spoken eloquently about the difficulties that it will cause market traders and the apparent lack of compensation from Government. My hon. Friend could have gone a stage further because, as a result of the Bill, there will be a number of potential losers who could rightly demand a compensation package from Ministers, yet there is nothing to that effect in the motion.

First, market traders are potential losers—for example, the traders at the Darlington market. I met local market traders earlier this week and was informed that there were about 140 full-time employees and 200 part-time employees. Darlington's indoor market, which has been well-established for many years, is professionally managed and provides high standards of consumer care. Similarly, there are 200 stalls in the outdoor market. Each of those small businesses is potentially implicated by this deregulation measure. I ask the Minister, on behalf of those traders, what compensation will be available to each of those small businesses in the event of the door being opened to cowboy operators, operating on the outskirts of town, artificially undercutting the legitimate business work of the established market traders in the Darlington market?

The Bill, and the motion, will not only affect the traders. As in other market towns, Darlington's market acts as a magnet for shoppers into the town centre in general, and I know that there are some worries among town centre traders about the potential loss of income that will arise from the measure. Yet I see nothing in the way of a compensation package for large or small companies operating in Darlington town centre.

The third set of potential losers are the people about whom I am sure that all hon. Members are concerned—the ordinary consumers. They now have certain guarantees, because the traders who operate in Darlington market are legitimate. People know that those traders are not fly-by-night merchants, here today and gone tomorrow. They are there permanently, because they have an investment in the town centre market. The same cannot be

said for car boot sale operators, or some of the unscrupulous private market operators. They really are here today and gone tomorrow, and when they disappear consumer rights disappear with them.

When things go wrong, consumers will start to bang on the Minister's door seeking compensation. At the moment, in the unlikely event of anything going wrong they can call on any of the stall holders in Darlington market and seek compensation face to face. That will no longer be true if the measure is passed and the more unscrupulous cowboy operators start doing business in towns such as Darlington.

The fourth set of potential losers should concern the Minister even more. He will know that many of the unscrupulous cowboy operators do not bother to declare their earnings to the Inland Revenue or to register for VAT. With the public sector debt so high and taxes rising, I should have thought that the Minister would be concerned to ensure that the maximum sums flow into the Treasury's coffers. Yet the Bill gives the potential for precisely the reverse to happen. That should be a source of concern to the hon. Gentleman.

The fifth set of losers are the general public. The Minister knows that when the markets are opened to unscrupulous traders—especially some of the car boot sale operators whom we all know about, because our constituents have lobbied us and the police have warned us about them—a market in stolen goods will be opened up. Will there be an increase in crime, in house and car burglaries, as a result of the Bill and will there be consequential additional demands for financial compensation from the Government?

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Is my hon. Friend aware that many prosecutions have taken place in the areas where the car boot markets operate? In Liverpool there has been an unending series of prosecutions, which confirms my hon. Friend's argument about the downward trend in the regulation of that aspect of markets.

Mr. Milburn: My hon. Friend is right, and it should worry us that there is no mention of that in the money resolution. Nor is there any mention of the subject raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central—the idea of a compensation package for local authorities. In Darlington, for example, the markets generate revenue surpluses of about £300,000 per annum. All that could disappear overnight when the undercutting and the sale of cheap goods that the Bill promises starts. The money resolution is inadequate because the Bill itself is inadequate.

11.8 pm

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) talked about the ways in which the House could make various office-holders and Ministers accountable, the potential waste of public money, and the need for scrutiny by the House. He mentioned various mechanisms, but another mechanism available to an aggrieved member of the public is to go to the Parliamentary Commissioner.

Hon. Members who were present for the earlier debate will have heard the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), who is Chairman of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, ask whether the Minister would exclude the Parliamentary Commissioner from the definition of "office-holder" under clause 57(2) and 57(3). In other words, the Parliamentary Commissioner thinks that the current definition would allow the role of the Parliamentary Commissioner to be privatised and given to independent contractors. The House will have noticed that in his wind-up speech the Minister failed to deal with the point. It may be that he was short of time or that he failed to remember that point. In the eight minutes still available —[Hon. Members: "Six minutes."]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We have roughly three and half minutes.

Mr. Fatchett: In the three and a half minutes available, will the Minister answer the specific point about the Parliamentary Commissioner?

11.10 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I will answer the point put by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) first. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade gave a clear statement of our intentions in respect of statutory office-holders and I do not intend to repeat what he said except to make clear—I think that he referred only to the Comptroller and Auditor General—that we shall ensure that office-holders, including the ombudsman, cannot be compelled to contract out by the making of an order as it will be for them and them alone to give authority to any contractor appointed to carry out their functions, and that they could refuse to do.

I can therefore assure the hon. Gentleman that there has never been any intention or desire on our part to compromise the independence of these constitutionally important office-holders. Our legal advice was that the position was perfectly secure in any event. If any of the office-holders did not wish to avail himself of the opportunity provided by the enabling power in the Bill to contract out certain of his functions, those functions would not be contracted out. I hope that those assurances will be helpful and that discussions may conclude the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned if the hon. Gentleman is still not satisfied.

On the points raised by the hon. Members for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) and for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), compensation does not arise in the case of markets where the privilege is owned by the local authorities because the European convention on human rights does not apply to public rights. Compensation is not intended because there is no justification for buying out undesirable monopoly rights owned by local authorities. I do not accept for one moment all the prophecies of doom and gloom that the hon. Members gave us this evening. They talked about cowboy operators. When I was a boy and used to go to Saturday morning cinema, the cowboys were the good guys. I suppose that it is not politically correct to refer to Indians in that respect today. I can assure the hon. Members that their fears are entirely illusory. I cannot believe for a minute that local authorities will have justifiable claims for compensation, even if such compensation were available. I have no doubt that we shall debate those matters at inordinate length in Committee. That is an encounter to which I greatly look forward. I hope that the hon. Member for Darlington will be there with me in the long watches of the night.

[Mr. Neil Hamilton]

I am not one of those who thinks that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is a prolix, pedantic old bore——

It being three quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 302, Noes 115.

Division No. 112] **[11.13 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*

Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benton, Joe
Boyes, Roland
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Liwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mudie, George
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and Mr. Eddie Loyden.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums required by a Minister of the Crown, an office-holder, the Forestry Commissioners or the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce for making payments under contracts entered into under or by virtue of the Act;

(b) any administrative expenses incurred by a Minister of the Crown or office holder in consequence of the provisions of the Act; and

(c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act; and

(2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable into the Consolidated Fund under any other Act.

Timeshare (Council Tax)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

11.25 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): Would that you and I, Madam Deputy Speaker, could be spirited away to some distant enchanted timeshare accommodation. If I pursued that line, I fear that you would rapidly rule me out of order.

I turn to the subject of the debate, which relates to timeshare and the council tax. The heart of the matter and the real issue at stake is a simple question—is timeshare ownership a continuing commercial activity and therefore rightly subject to business rates, or is it a non-commercial, non-business activity and therefore rightly subject to non-business taxation? Historically, the first non-business taxation was domestic rating, followed by the community charge and now by the council tax.

The true nature of timeshare ownership is the heart of the matter, and that is for the Government to answer. The answer to that question alone should determine whether timeshare owners should pay business or non-business taxation. If timeshare ownership is a commercial activity, it should be subject to commercial taxation. If timeshare ownership is not a commercial activity, it should be subject to "domestic" taxation—currently the council tax.

The immediate background to the debate is known to my hon. Friend. Before the introduction of the community charge in Scotland in 1989, and in England and Wales in 1990——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wonder if you could clarify a matter. I distinctly heard motion No. 3 being moved by the Government and folding on the Opposition's objection. Could you confirm whether that is the position?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Whip on duty for the Government said "Not moved" to each of the motions.

Mr. Hunter: I wrongly anticipated an intervention from the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). I now make the point that I do have an interest in the timeshare industry, which is unrelated to the subject of the debate. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was going to draw the House's attention to an oversight on my part. I do declare that interest and, of course, in applying for the debate to Madam Speaker, I also mentioned that I am involved in the timeshare industry. Having wrongly anticipated the point of order, I shall proceed.

I was making the point that the introduction of the community charge in Scotland in 1989 provided the first evidence that the Government had changed their mind, and henceforth intended to treat timeshare ownership as a commerical activity subject to business rates. Scottish timeshare interests took action and challenged the Government. The issue at stake was simple: had the Government properly given themselves all full, appropriate and necessary powers to make the change, or had they made a drafting cock-up? The latter was the case.

In August 1991, the Scottish Lands Valuation Appeal Court found against the Government and ruled that, under existing legislation, timeshare ownership in Scotland should carry a community charge, not a business rates liability. That decision was retrospectively effected to the date of the introduction of the community charge, and remained in force until the abolition of the community charge in April last year.

During the community charge era in England and Wales —April 1990 to March 1993—the Government set about treating timeshare ownership in England and Wales in exactly the same way as they had demonstrated that they wished timeshare ownership in Scotland to be treated. The Government thus performed a U-turn in their treatment of timeshare ownership in England and Wales, as they had sought to do in Scotland. They deemed timeshare ownership a commercial activity and accordingly subject to business rates.

Following the success of timeshare interests in the Scottish Lands Valuation Court in August 1990, timeshare interests in England and Wales prepared to seek a similar ruling to restore the previous taxation regime in England and Wales. Very favourable counsel's opinion was obtained, but, as I understand the situation, no final decision has yet been made whether to proceed against the Government.

In April 1993, under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, timeshare ownership was well and truly encompassed within the business rates regime. The legality of that transition and the post-April 1993 ruling is not disputed. What is disputed, however, is the principle and correctness of the assessment and treatment of timeshare.

Through their taxation policy, the Government demonstrate their belief that timeshare ownership is different from other forms of home ownership. Timeshare ownership alone among second home ownership is categorised per se as a commercial activity for taxation purposes. No other form of second home ownership is automatically so categorised.

That view stems from a fundamental misunderstanding by the Government of the true nature of timeshare ownership. I believe that the wrong advice that my hon. Friend the Minister continues to be given about timeshare ownership has its origins in two paragraphs of a flawed departmental practice note entitled "The boundary between the community charge and non-domestic rates: definition of domestic property: practice note No. 4, May 1990."

The most relevant paragraph—paragraph 5.2—reads:

"The Valuation Office takes the view, however, that the timeshare company will be subject to business rates, provided that the accommodation is available for letting commercially for 140 days or more in a year (as is likely to be the case in most if not all instances)."

The disturbing reality is that the author of that paragraph, the purveyor of advice to Ministers, simply did not understand the subject matter with which he was dealing. He did not know what he was writing about. The direction of taxation that he advocated was wrong. He was thinking in terms of taxable income when no income existed.

I will explain to my hon. Friend the Minister as slowly and carefully as I can, lest he hears only what his officials tell him. In timeshare operations, neither the leasehold nor the freehold titles to timeshare dwellings are kept by the timeshare company. They are made across by the developer to a trustee, who then holds the title for the benefit of the timesharer. It is hard to conceive how a more fundamental mistake could have been made by my hon. Friend's Department.

The commercial element and dimension of timeshare comes to an end when the timeshare is purchased. The timeshare owner—he or she whom the Government view for taxation purposes as a commercial activist—is not remotely or by any conceivable criterion of judgment involved in on-going commercial activity. There is therefore no justification for treating him or her in that way. The Government have got it wrong—they should listen to what their friends are telling them.

In May 1990, the Government acted on advice that was fundamentally flawed. Inevitably, key aspects of related and subsequent policy on timeshare have reflected and perpetuated that monumental error. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood)—then the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—wrote in his "Dear Member of Parliament" letter on 31 March 1993:

"Timeshare units in England have been assessed for business rates under the Community Charge and will continue on the same basis with the Council Tax. People will not therefore face big changes in their bills for their properties . . . Some people think it would be advantageous to switch timeshare properties to a Council Tax levy, although this would entail more sizeable changes both up and down depending on the nature and location of the property. For any individual timesharer their portion of the difference would usually be very small. On balance we feel it is better not to change the basis of taxation for these properties, which do have similarities to hotels and self-catering holiday accommodation in terms of holiday use, although ownership is different."

My right hon. Friend thus expressed the Government's opinion that timeshare ownership henceforth was to be regarded as a commercial enterprise, and would therefore be subject to business rates. He further expressed the Government's opinion that the imposition of business rates did not, or would not, disadvantage timeshare owners.

My right hon. Friend spoke in good faith. We were right to accept his judgment, pending evidence to persuade us otherwise. We were justified in giving him the benefit of our doubts—at least for the time being. I regret that we now know that he was mistaken. The judgment of those of us who warned him that he was miscalculating has been proved to be right. He wrote:

"For any individual timesharer their portion of the difference"—

between council tax and business rates—

"would usually be very small."

Few statements could be further from the truth.

Lochanhilly in Speyside has the smallest difference that my researchers unearthed. Even there, the increase is 94 per cent.—from £9·40 to £18·64 per week. Few people would regard that as "a very small" increase. Delfaber in Speyside has witnessed a 152 per cent. increase from community charge to business rate—from £9·60 to £24·20 per week.

At Forest Hills in Stirling, the increase was from £13·80 to £36·64 per week, which was 164 per cent. Loch Rannoch in Perthshire witnessed an increase of 332 per cent.—from £5·06 to £21·86. The increase at Kilconquhar, Fife was £10·92 to £39·16 per week, which is a staggering 358 per cent. Pride of place in the catalogue goes to Kenmore in Perthshire, where the weekly increase is a towering 703 per cent.—a jump from £5·06 a week under the community charge to £40·64 under the business rate.

Mr. Eric Sheehy wrote to me from Solihull a few days ago:

"I have just paid my management fee invoice for the three weeks I have at Craigendarroch, Royal Deeside. There is an item 'Dwelling tax: £40·50' for each week, a total of £130·50. On an annual basis the tax is £2,262 which compares with the £701·83 band H property tax I pay to Solihull."

I calculate that Mr. Sheehy pays £13·83 per week in council tax to Solihull, compared with £40·50 per week in business rates for his timeshare ownership.

It is easier to find the evidence in Scotland, where the transition from community charge to business rates has been made, but it can also be found in England. I learned yesterday of a timeshare site in Kent, where, even with the benefit of transitional relief, the annual business rate for an average unit is £743. Without transition relief, it would be £1,760. The annual council tax on property of the same market value is only £450. The difference between business rates and council tax is 165 per cent. per week with transitional relief, and 391 per cent. without relief.

I have focused attention on one small sector of national economic activity—the purchase of timeshare. I do not regard tonight's debate as an exercise in confrontation. I suspect that most United Kingdom timeshare owners have a greater affinity with the political philosophy of the Conservative party than with that of other political parties. Therefore, I whisper to my hon. Friend the Minister that I believe that the Government have got it wrong, and should reconsider.

11.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I recognise that my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) has built up considerable expertise over the years in making clear the concerns of the timeshare industry. I have careful regard for what he has to say, because my hon. Friend has regular and detailed contact with all the important figures in the timeshare industry. As his comments this evening have shown, he has made a careful study of the subject and has sought to put all the facts before the House.

However, having listened carefully to everything said by my hon. Friend tonight and in the meetings that we have had with him, my ministerial colleagues and I still remain firmly of the view that timeshare accommodation is essentially a commercial activity. It is a business activity, and should clearly be regarded as non-domestic for local tax purposes.

My hon. Friend questioned whether timeshare should be considered as a business or non-business activity. That is the wrong test. The test is whether it should be considered a domestic or a non-domestic activity. My hon. Friend also fairly acknowledged that the Government's approach is entirely consistent in the way in which they tax timeshare ownership. As my hon. Friend said, alone among second home ownership, time ownership is categorised, per se, as a commercial activity for taxation purposes.

Officials in my Department and the Scottish Office met the timeshare industry three times between 1991 and 1993. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who was then a Minister in the Department of the Environment, met the industry on three further occasions, including one meeting when my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke was present. It may help to finalise the matter if I explain in some detail why we have taken, and continue firmly to hold, our view.

It is fair to say that, under general rates, the specific treatment of timeshare accommodation was not important—there was only the element of domestic rate relief at stake. It was with the advent of separate local taxation

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

systems for domestic and non-domestic property that the boundary between the regimes, particularly the treatment of holiday accommodation, became more significant. The test of whether a property was domestic or non-domestic became important.

In settling a number of broadly similar boundary issues, the status of timeshare accommodation was approached from basic principles. We decided to treat such property as non-domestic because its use was more like that of self-catering and other short-stay accommodation—which is rateable and is treated as non-domestic—than the use of second homes. A variety of different people use timeshare property throughout the year for short periods, and can swap their access to it for "time" elsewhere.

Despite consulting widely in 1988 before the decision was made, we did not receive any representations from the timeshare industry. It was not until 1991 that the newly established Timeshare Council began to lobby that timeshare properties should be considered as domestic. As I said, officials met the council a number of times to talk about their argument for a change in Government policy.

Throughout that period, Ministers have been of the view first taken in Scotland in the 1985 revaluation, that such property was clearly non-domestic. We remained of that view during consultation with the industry in late 1992 and early 1993, leading to the making of the orders in England and Wales and in Scotland to define the property as non-domestic. Those orders have been before the House.

I shall explain later the significance of an appeal case that led to the temporary difference in the Scottish treatment to which my hon. Friend referred. As I explained earlier, in the period running up to and just after making the orders, Ministers had a number of meetings with the timeshare industry, including one with my hon. Friend. I therefore hope that the House will be in no doubt that Ministers have considered this issue very carefully on a number of occasions, and have considered all the arguments that might be and have been put to us.

Nothing said then or tonight has persuaded me that it is wrong to consider timeshare units as non-domestic. We are concerned not with what a property looks like but with how it is used. Timeshares are used like holiday cottages, but occupied all year round by different people. Some of those people are not the owners, because it is common practice for owners to swap their access to a timeshare property with others. Moreover, the use of timeshare units as permanent residences is prohibited by the terms of their occupation, so they are not like other domestic property, and they are clearly not holiday homes.

Because timeshare properties are likely to be occupied all year round, they place on local authorities demands for services that differ from those of second homes. We therefore have no plans whatever to revoke the orders made to define timeshare units as non-domestic property. That is how we view the question of principle, which follows the facts in a straigthtforward way.

I am well aware that many timeshare owners regard the size of the rates bills as the most important consideration. Notwithstanding the arguments about principle, may I turn to the analysis that we have done of the claimed differences in bills under rates and the community charge or council tax? The position in England and Wales is different from that in Scotland, so it may be helpful if I deal with the countries separately.

Since the introduction of the community charge, and subsequently the council tax in England and Wales, timeshares have been treated as non-domestic. Timeshare complexes have been entered in rating lists and, although the assessments have been challenged, the courts have not ruled against our view that such property should be treated as non-domestic.

Last year, I understand, the Timeshare Council compiled evidence which it claimed showed that timeshare owners would be considerably better off if their property in England and Wales became liable to the council tax. It said that, on average, the difference was a factor of five or six times.

Reforms of local taxation always have redistributive effects. It is inevitable that a Government who want to change a tax do so because they think that burdens are not falling in the right places at appropriate levels. When moving from rates to a community charge, or from a community charge to a council tax, changes in the disposition of that tax would inevitably occur.

However, such a Government reach conclusions about who should pay and the amount of their bills on grounds of principle, not simply according to the size of bills. In England and Wales, timeshare accommodation has been taxed as non-domestic property throughout the period since 1990, and the introduction of the council tax has not led to increased bills. So this was a question of the gain that might have been achieved for timeshare owners.

I acknowledge the Timeshare Council sample was representative and the council's assumptions about the relative rateable values and council tax bandings were correct; but in practice, we believe that a number of factors would reduce the difference shown by the council between the rates and council tax bills.

First, the Timeshare Council automatically assumed that a 50 per cent. council tax discount would apply, thus doubling the difference between rates and the council tax. We would want to consider whether such a difference was appropriate, given that such property would be almost continuously occupied throughout the year.

Secondly, the Timeshare Council disregarded the effects of business rate transitional relief, which most English and Welsh timeshare complexes currently enjoy, and of last year's Budget measures incorporated in the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1993, which held the timeshare complexes bills constant in real terms. All that was therefore approximately equivalent to a further doubling of the difference between the burden of the taxes.

Thirdly, the Timeshare Council did not take into account the fact that most, if not all, timeshare complexes would be composite hereditaments with a continuing rates liability, even if the units of accommodation were domestic. There would be rates payable on the extensive and often well-appointed communal facilities, which would have to be met by timeshare owners.

Taken together, those factors reduce quite substantially the difference claimed by the timeshare industry. Instead of the eight or ninefold difference that the council claimed for its examples, even allowing for the 50 per cent. council tax discount, we consider the factor to be no more than about three. The actual figure would vary in each case, and from place to place, as facilities and transitional relief differ.

It is important to remember that each timeshare owner faces only a week or fortnight's share of the annual bill, so the actual cost to any particular timeshare owner is not particularly large.

In Scotland, while timeshare units were originally treated as non-domestic following the 1985 revaluation, as we have already acknowledged in the debate, a court case found that the law north of the border should have been interpreted in such a way that they were domestic.

Until the introduction of the council tax, timeshare properties in Scotland were subject to the standard community charge. Notwithstanding the court's interpretation of the meaning of the law, the Government remained of the view that such property should in principle be non-domestic.

Although we did not consider it necessary to legislate to reverse the court's decision at the time, we took the early opportunity, with the introduction of the council tax, to remove the ambiguity and restore consistency of treatment throughout Great Britain. The treatment of timeshare properties has been exactly the same in Scotland as it is in England and Wales since the introduction of the council tax.

While there may be arguments which suggest that the bill that timeshare owners face would be lower if their property were subject to the council tax, the margin of the reduction would be smaller than is claimed. Notwithstanding that, we remain of the view that, as a matter of principle, timeshare units are more properly treated as non-domestic and thus subject to rates.

I know that this matter has caused my hon. Friend concern. This evening, he gave a number of examples where he feels that people have been treated harshly. Without looking at the exact facts—for example, in some of the instances he gave in Scotland—it is difficult to calculate how much of the increase that people may be asked to pay relates to communal facilities. Those communal facilities are often well appointed, including swimming pools and other recreational facilities, and clearly must be treated as business and non-domestic usage.

I acknowledge that my hon. Friend will not necessarily be satisfied with my response, and I have no doubt that the timeshare industry will consider my comments disappointing. However, he will no doubt acknowledge that successive Ministers have considered this issue very carefully several times. Having given it the deepest thought, we have come to the clear conclusion that, on the basis of any common-sense and objective approach, timeshare properties are commercial properties in which business activities are conducted and should be treated, for local tax purposes, as non-domestic.

I hope that this valuable debate has enabled us to clarify the matter once and for all.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Wednesday 9 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

INCOME TAX

THE VICE-CHAMBERLAIN OF HER MAJESTY'S HOUSEHOLD reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address, as follows:

I have received your address praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Austria) Order 1993, the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Indonesia) Order 1993, the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Uzbekistan) Order 1993, and the Double Taxation Relief (Air Transport) (Saudi Arabia) Order 1993 be made in the form of drafts laid before your House.

I will willingly comply with your request.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Small Businesses

1. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met leaders of the engineering industry to discuss assistance for investment for small businesses.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): There are frequent contacts between the Government and the engineering industry. The best incentives for increased investment are low inflation, low interest rates and a growing economy, all of which are in place.

Mr. Henderson: Will the Minister confirm that in his talks with the engineering industry its representatives have told him of the industry's deep commitment to an investment-led recovery, which would not only help companies that want to retool British industry but bring stable growth and help the companies that want to compete in export markets to invest? In that connection, will he also confirm that the industry sees deregulation of health and safety as at best an irrelevance and that what it wants are capital allowances to help companies throughout the industry and, specifically, investment grants to help companies in the small business sector to invest in new technology?

Mr. McLoughlin: When we talk to industry we are continually told of the requirement to bring some deregulation to some of the forms and regulations with which it has to comply. I wholly agree with what the hon. Gentleman says about investment; in his region there has been more than £3 billion worth of inward investment, which was attracted by a Conservative Government. It would never have been attracted by a Labour Government committed to the social contract.

Mr. Ward: On the subject of investment in small businesses, does my hon. Friend agree that it is important not only that the investment be used productively, but that debts can be collected promptly? Will my hon. Friend do all in his power to ensure that all Government Departments pay their bills promptly, especially to small businesses?

Mr. McLoughlin: I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. Indeed, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the Budget some time ago that the Government were consulting on the whole question of small business debts. Moreover, in the previous Budget a commitment was given that all Government contractors and subcontractors would be paid within an acceptable timescale.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Minister realise that 90 per cent. of small engineering companies employ fewer than 20 people and have special difficulty in meeting the exacting new standards on zero defects and quality control? Why have the Government decided to scrap in April their cash help to small engineering companies to meet those quality control standards?

Mr. McLoughlin: The simple fact is that what industry and small businesses want are fewer regulations. They understand that quality is important for attracting their customers—and that is exactly what they are doing.

Renewable Energy

2. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the principal sources of renewable energy supplies in the United Kingdom in 1993.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): In 1993 approximately 1,400 MW of large-scale hydro-generating capacity were operational. A further 270 MW were available from other renewable energy sources, mainly under the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Evans: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he really convinced that enough is being done to encourage a variety of renewable energy products? Is the non-fossil fuel obligation really encouraging diversity in the renewable energy industry?

Mr. Eggar: I know that that is a matter of widespread concern. The whole House shares a commitment to increasing the proportion of our electricity generated from renewable sources. None the less, concern has been expressed about, among other things, the proportion of wind farms that may be established under the non-fossil fuel obligation. I shall consider that issue and I welcome the inquiry that the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs is making on the subject.

Mr. Clapham: Is the Minister aware of the study conducted before Christmas by the Association for the Conservation of Energy which showed that burning gas in the home was about 60 per cent. efficient, while burning electricity generated by gas in the home was only 40 per cent. efficient? Does the Minister agree that that is a waste and that there is a need to reconsider the energy sector and prepare a new framework for energy before it is too late?

Mr. Eggar: The Government's energy policy was clearly laid out in the White Paper following the coal review. It is important to increase the efficient use of energy and it is also important that we meet out Rio targets through, for example, increasing the proportion of electricity generated from renewable sources. The hon. Gentleman will be the first to recognise that electricity generated from gas is much more environmentally friendly than electricity generated by coal.

Gas

3. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received since he announced his conclusions on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into the supply of gas.

Mr. Eggar: There has been a widespread welcome for the decision of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to abolish the monopoly and introduce competition to supply all parts of the gas market from 1996.

Mr. Bellingham: Has my hon. Friend noticed that over the past few years the real price of gas has fallen? Has he also noticed that Eastern Electricity has announced that it will reduce its prices to customers? Does he agree that that is extremely good news for all people who are concerned about VAT on household fuel and that that would not have happened had it not been for privatisation?

Mr. Eggar: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. In fact, gas prices have fallen in real terms since privatisation by 22 per cent. Even after the full implementation of the VAT decision, we shall see a real-terms decrease in bills for gas domestic consumers of about 7 per cent.—a considerable achievement. I welcome the decision by the electricity companies to increase competitiveness. Indeed, in my constituency, I shall be opening the headquarters of Eastern Electricity for the supply of gas to customers throughout its area. Competition is good for all consumers.

Mr. Salmond: Does the Minister accept that the reorganisation of British Gas in Scotland will cost more than 1,000 jobs? Does he accept that, in addition to the loss of jobs through the setting up of five new business units, if those units are not headquartered in Scotland, there will be a loss of management control? Why is it that in the British Gas company, as in the House, Scotland supplies the bulk of the energy, but has none of the power?

Mr. Eggar: Why is it that the hon. Gentleman always looks backwards? Why does not he campaign for competitors to British Gas to come in and open up their headquarters in Scotland and in the north-east?

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Does the Minister realise that millions of senior citizens and other low-income consumers deeply resent the standing charges on gas, on electricity and on telecoms? Does he appreciate their concerns and will he consider doing something about it?

Mr. Eggar: Why has not the hon. Gentleman got to his feet to welcome the recent reduction in prices announced by BT and the subsequent price reductions by Mercury? Why has he not welcomed my announcement about the reductions in British Gas prices? Why has he not welcomed the fact that the decision of my right hon. Friend to increase competition in the gas market may lead to competitors looking carefully at the level of standing charges?

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the Minister accept that Liberal Democrats very much welcome the Government's conversion to opening up the gas market to greater competition, which we called for at the time of the privatisation of gas. *[Laughter.]* Indeed we did. Is he aware of the statement by the Director General of Ofgas to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry in the past week that, as the differential in distributing gas does not vary by more than 2 per cent. anywhere in the United Kingdom, the introduction of competition should lead to further downward pressure on gas prices? Is he satisfied that under those circumstances, a relaxation of the price formula of British Gas is necessary?

Mr. Eggar: I am very satisfied with the decision made by the Director-General, as the hon. Gentleman would expect. The hon. Gentleman's selective quoting of the position that the Liberal Democrats may have taken at one time or another is becoming a laughing matter.

Post Office

4. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met the chairman of the Post Office to discuss his review of its future.

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I met the Post Office chairman on 18 January and discussed a number of issues relating to the Post Office review.

Mr. Hain: Will the President of the Board of Trade confirm the statement in a letter from the general manager of North Thames and East Anglia Post Office Counters that the Post Office

"has agreed targets with the DTI"

for hundreds of local post office closures and conversions? Does not that reveal grubby collusion between the Government and the Post Office to run down the post office network and to privatise by the back door?

Mr. Heseltine: The only grubby collusion is the technique that the hon. Gentleman uses to make in this House allegations that have no foundation. He will know that the vast majority of organisations in Post Office Counters are private sector organisations over which the Government have no control.

Mr. Hain: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have a letter here——

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order later.

Mr. Alexander: Was my right hon. Friend able to tell the chairman of the Post Office that privatisation would not be wholly welcomed among Conservative Members, particularly those whose constituencies contain rural areas? Was he further able to discuss with the chairman the increased commercial freedom that he seeks to enable him to operate the Post Office as a normal business and to keep the dead hand of the Treasury away from its operations?

Mr. Heseltine: I hear what my hon. Friend says. It is extremely difficult to see how one can give commercial freedom to the Post Office to invest public money unless

that money is subject to public expenditure rules. The dilemma that the Post Office faces is that overseas Governments are privatising their post offices, enabling them to compete with ours. The judgment that the House must make is how we can enable the Post Office to use its resources to fight as a major British industrial organisation —which it is—in a competitive world that is growing tougher all the time.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does not the President appreciate that the Post Office is a success story and that everything that the Government are doing is putting that success story at risk? Is he aware that the delay that he has caused over the review is causing confusion to management; that the Treasury demand for an even bigger share of the profits is robbing management of the money for investment; and that, as a result, the Dutch public post office is now picking up business in Britain? When will the Government start backing British business instead of creating openings for foreign business?

Mr. Heseltine: If that is an example of the new thinking of the Labour party, I can understand why the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has announced his resignation from the House. Of course the Post Office is a success story. The issue is how we enable it to be more successful. How do we enable it to face the fact that the Dutch are privatising their post office to enable it to compete here?

Mr. French: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the care and thoroughness with which he is conducting his review of the Post Office? He is quite right to resist quick solutions. It is more important that the eventual answer should be the right one. In reaching his decision, however, will he bear fully in mind the formidable international competition that the Post Office faces?

Mr. Heseltine: I am well aware of the growing international competition—and, indeed, the competition from a range of other service providers in this country—which has been eating into the Post Office's market in recent years. We are certainly concerned to ensure the health of the rural post office network and have been looking, and will continue to look, at a number of ways in which we can open up the increasing market for rural post offices. I was delighted that we were recently able to take the decision to enable them to sell fishing licences.

Nuclear Review

5. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will make a further announcement on the nuclear review.

Mr. Eggar: The Government will announce the terms of reference for the review and how it will be conducted as soon as possible.

Mr. Hughes: That is a helpful answer.

Given that the Prime Minister has recently gone on record stating his commitment to growth in the nuclear industry, how can a review of the nuclear industry carried out by the Government be anything other than a charade and a sham? Even if he cannot announce when we will have the review or what its terms of reference will be—all promised for last year—will the Minister at least tell us whether the Government will examine whether the industry is economically viable and environmentally acceptable and deal with the question of waste as well as the functioning of the industry? May we have some idea whether it will be a proper review, or will we have to go to the courts to get an independent adjudication, as Greenpeace and Lancashire county council did over THORP?

Mr. Eggar: I am always willing to accept praise from whatever source. I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's concern. I hope that it will not be too long before we can make an announcement including the terms of the review and the way in which it will be conducted. The way in which the hon. Gentleman enumerated the various different factors itself illustrates that it is most important to spend time getting the terms of reference absolutely right and to try to satisfy as many of the numerous interested parties as possible.

Mr. Whittingdale: Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that work has started in the past week on a visitor centre at Bradwell power station in my constituency? Does he agree that such centres have a valuable role in spreading the message that nuclear power is one of the safest, most economic and most environmentally friendly forms of generation available?

Mr. Eggar: I do agree—*[Laughter.]* It is necessary for the full facts about the benefits of nuclear power to be made available to the public. It is unfortunate that Labour Members simply laugh at the idea that members of the public should be fully briefed on all the facts in an objective way.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Could Ministers help me with a little research on these matters? Could they ask their civil servants to research reports that there was an outbreak of leukaemia in West Cumbria during the second world war —40 years before the Sellafield plant opened?

Mr. Eggar: I am very interested to hear that from the hon. Gentleman. Of course, I shall find out whether there are any records of that and, if so, the implications of them.

Textiles

6. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the effect of GATT on the British textiles industry.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): The GATT agreement will lead to the phasing out of the multi-fibre arrangement over 10 years, which will be largely balanced by improved GATT rules to deal with unfair trading practices, better intellectual property rights and lower tariffs in many export markets.

Mr. Riddick: Have there been any developments since my Adjournment debate two weeks ago on the continuing punitive levels of duty being levied on British textiles by some countries, especially India, Pakistan and Indonesia, which makes it almost impossible for our companies to export to those countries? Could I ask the Minister and, indeed, the European Commission to continue to apply pressure to those countries to reduce their tariffs? At the same time, I welcome the GATT deal, which is very good news for most British exporters.

Mr. Needham: Since the Adjournment debate on 27 January, we have continued our efforts to ensure that

maximum pressure is brought to bear on Indonesia, India and Pakistan by the Commission. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry went to Athens to exert that pressure only last weekend. There was a preliminary meeting between the Commission and the Indonesians on 1 February and another meeting is being arranged with India and Pakistan on 4 February. As I said to my hon. Friend, the deadline for the GATT proposals to be agreed is 15 February and I have nothing further to report at this stage, except that we are continuing to exert maximum pressure on those countries.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Minister realise that in six days' time there must be some definite negotiations because British jobs are at stake? Does he accept that a group of textile employers said at a meeting I attended that they regarded the GATT deal that the Government had entered into as selling the textile industry down the river? In Bradford, 11,000 direct jobs in the textile industry are at stake and real pressure, including the threat of retaliatory action, must be exerted against the 100 per cent. tariffs for British textiles that are exported. The Government negotiated entry by those other countries into the United Kingdom market, which is extremely unfair and disadvantages textile workers here.

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman, as so often happens with Labour Members, welcomes the GATT agreement in the general and then attacks it in the particular. Indeed, they have a policy: if I contradict myself, so what? The Government, through the Commission, fully understand the concerns expressed by the woollen industry. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) in the Adjournment debate, we will continue to put all the pressure we can on the Commission and the countries involved. Certainly, if we do not achieve our objectives, there is action that we can take under the multi-fibre arrangement, which still has some 10 years to run, either from 1 January 1995 or 1 January 1996, to apply pressure to those countries to come round to a more sensible arrangement.

Mr. Waller: May I emphasise to my hon. Friend yet again that there is genuine concern in the House and throughout the textile industry about the enormous tariffs of 80 or 100 per cent., referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley, which are applied by Indonesia, Pakistan and India? Before the GATT agreement is ratified in Marrakesh in mid-April, will he ensure that no stone is left unturned in emphasising to our European Union negotiators that the jobs that will be lost in this country if we must fight this lack of free trade will never be regained?

Mr. Needham: I give, as I have already given, an undertaking that the Government will do everything that they can to ensure that we continue negotiating up to the last minute of the last hour. I should say to my hon. Friend that in Indonesia the tariff limits on wool cloth, woollens and other textiles are 40 per cent. We are talking about getting duties down to a maximum of 35 per cent. The real problems occur in India, with 85 per cent. tariffs, and Pakistan, with 125 per cent. As I have said, we will do everything that we can to reach a satisfactory conclusion for our industry.

Mr. Bell: In addition to the high levels of import duties in those countries, does not the additional question of child labour have to be faced? Will the Minister look again at the exchanges between the Leader of Opposition and the Prime Minister on 16 December, when the GATT agreement was announced to the House? Is not it a fact that child labour is turning out textiles in many countries and is not it also the case that there are no health or safety provisions for other workers in those countries? Should not we build new platforms, after the Marrakesh final act in April, which prohibit forced labour, which give protection to workers and which are against discrimination?

Mr. Needham: If there are breaches of United Nations conventions on issues such as child labour, the Government and other European, OECD and G7 countries will make sure that they are taken into consideration in our trading arrangements.

However, I think that the hon. Gentleman, once again, is trying to get it both ways. The whole point of GATT and free trade is to open up world trade and particularly to allow goods and services from the developing world to come into the developed world without the high barriers which existed in the past. GATT sets out to do that and the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends have welcomed it, although I am never quite sure how real that welcome is.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Council of Ministers yesterday announced the abolition of 6,000 quotas and, in particular, that quotas applying to the Baltic states would be abolished in the new year? However, none of those quotas included the textile industry. Will my hon. Friend urge his colleagues on the Council of Ministers to move to the next step of textile quotas?

Mr. Needham: I agree with what my hon. Friend said about quotas, although I must express considerable disappointment about the way in which the toy quota was finally settled. Quotas on textiles come within the phasing-out arrangements of the multi-fibre arrangement. That is one of the weapons in our armoury to ensure that what is happening in Indonesia, Pakistan and India comes out more favourably for the British woollen industry.

Coal Industry

7. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss the privatisation of the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: Both the President and I meet the chairman regularly to discuss the privatisation of the coal industry and other matters.

Mr. Steinberg: Is the Minister aware that the National Rivers Authority has instructed British Coal to continue pumping mined water from the closed pits in the Durham coalfield? Is he further aware that if pumping were to cease it could be calamitous for the River Wear in particular, where the pollution would be horrendous? Will the Minister give myself, my constituents and all the people who live in the Durham area a commitment that he will instruct British Coal before privatisation to continue to pump? Will he also instruct the body that takes over after privatisation to keep pumping until it is 100 per cent. certain that pollution will not occur?

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the widespread concern about this matter in the north-east and the hon. Gentleman

and others brought a delegation to see me. I assure him that, while the matter is the responsibility of the NRA as the regulatory body, the responsibilities that currently rest with British Coal will be transferred to the coal authority following the enactment of the Coal Industry Bill. I am sure that the coal authority and the NRA will co-operate, in the same way as co-operation exists at present between British Coal and the NRA.

Mr. Churchill: While congratulating Malcolm Edwards and R. J. Budge on their recent purchase of certain redundant pits from British Coal, and while sending my best wishes to the miners in the pits involved, may I ask my hon. Friend to say when the hard-pressed electricity consumer may expect to see passed on the 30 per cent. reduction in the cost of the generator's principal source of energy? What are the Government doing to ensure that those vast reductions in fuel costs are passed on to the consumer?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the interest of the private sector in British Coal pits. Opposition Members do not seem to realise that no fewer than eight pits are in negotiation or are controlled by the private sector. Clipstone, Betws, Trentham, Coventry, Rossington, Markham Main, Calverton and Wearmouth are all under discussion. Why do not the Opposition welcome the success of the private sector in its negotiations with British Coal? As for my hon. Friend's specific question, that is a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply, who is in discussion with both the generators and the electricity supply companies.

Mr. Beith: Is the Minister aware of the huge anger and sense of betrayal of more than 1,000 miners who work at Ellington in my constituency at the fact that, only weeks after it announced a plan to keep the colliery in operation with a reduced work force, British Coal has announced its closure? When he meets the chairman of British Coal, will he do everything in his power to ensure that, at a time when there is genuine private interest in taking over that colliery, the pit is kept in a condition in which it can be taken over by someone else and the machinery essential for that is kept in the pit?

Mr. Eggar: I am aware, of course, of the understandably strong feelings in south-east Northumberland about the proposals announced by British Coal. The chairman of British Coal has made it clear that if a decision were made to close Ellington—we cannot prejudge that because there is a modified colliery review procedure—the pit would be kept on a care and maintenance basis until the main privatisation took place. He has given me an undertaking that the equipment at Ellington and the other pits that were the subject of consideration last week under the general review procedure will not be removed from the pits unless it is essential to do so for safety reasons or because the reserves of a pit for closure are reallocated to adjacent mines. That is a major step forward.

Mr. Batiste: Has my hon. Friend had an opportunity to pass on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment the real concerns expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House during the Coal Industry Bill Second Reading debate? We expressed concern that the guidelines in mineral planning guidance 3, and the consultation process that takes place under them, should provide for a much tougher regime to prevent unsuitable applications for opencast mining in green-field sites from proceeding.

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the strong feeling on the matter. It is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Consultations are being held on MPG3. I personally brought to the attention of the Department my hon. Friend's speech in the Second Reading debate on the Coal Industry Bill.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that there is a suggestion among the British Association of Colliery Management people—*[Interruption.]* I will say it again. Is the Minister aware that there are people in BACM—the senior management of British Coal—who are saying that by March they could be down to six or eight pits only? Will he confirm that that is correct? Will he acknowledge that, in the past 18 months, the man who is sitting at his side —the President of the Board of Trade, who aspires to be the next leader of the Tory party—had the gall to talk about saving pits? He conned Parliament. He conned these tinpot Tories who talked a good fight but were no good in the ring. What is more, he conned the British people. At the same time, the Government are allowing subsidy for nuclear power and the French interconnector link. They ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Mr. Eggar: I think that the Liberal Democrats sitting behind the hon. Gentleman wound him up too much. It does the coal mining community and the country no good to use the scaremongering tactics which are such a feature of the hon. Gentleman's approach. Why does not he welcome the fact that Clipstone, Betws, Trentham, Coventry, Rossington, Markham Main, Calverton and Wearmouth, and perhaps other mines, are pursued for privatisation by private sector companies that want to make a success where British Coal has failed?

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend accept that many people recognise that privatisation is the only hope for a competitive cost structure in the coal industry and that only a competitive cost structure can guarantee the long-term future of employment in that industry?

Mr. Eggar: I completely agree with my hon. Friend —privatised industry has a great future.

Mr. O'Neill: On the question of a competitive cost structure, will the Minister tell the House why Manton colliery, which produces coal at prices lower than the world spot market price, is going to be closed? Does not that show that the Government have no concern for the coal industry and that the promised subsidies last year, which have saved no jobs whatsoever, were a complete sham and a distortion of the truth?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman has been shadow energy spokesman for almost two years. Surely he should know that such issues are the responsibility of British Coal and not the Government.

Mr. David Evans: Does my hon. Friend agree that the privatisation of the coal industry is the best thing for the miners and for the production of coal? From 1974 to 1979 the lot opposite closed 10 times more pits than we have closed in 14 years.

Mr. Eggar: I wish that I could put my points across with such elegance.

Aerospace Industry

8. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how he proposes to assist the aerospace industry in the north-west.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The aerospace industry in the north-west benefits from a positive business environment, Government support for military and civil exports, specific Department of Trade and Industry programmes to help the industry and substantial orders from the Ministry of Defence as a customer.

Mr. Lewis: I put a similar question and the Minister gave a similar answer a month ago. What happened? In that month, British Aerospace at Lostock has shed another 300 jobs. Since the Conservative party came to power in 1979, about 5,000 jobs have been lost at that plant. When will the Minister really do something instead of coming here and talking bull?

Mr. Sainsbury: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's recognition of the consistency of my answers. I suppose that if I changed them, I would be accused of making a U-turn. Naturally, we all regret the job losses, but I think that the hon. Gentleman is aware that the change in the requirements for defence equipment underlies those losses and I am sure that we all welcome the reasons for that change. The problems that that change is causing the aerospace industry are widespread. They are worldwide and do not affect merely this country.

If I can give the hon. Gentleman two examples, between 1989 and 1993, the United States aerospace industry is reckoned to have lost one third of all its jobs; and the German industry, Deutsche Aerospace, recently announced 16,000 job losses. We regret the job losses at Lostock, but it is inevitable that changes in defence requirements will lead to changes in the requirements for staff.

Mr. Hawkins: My right hon. Friend will be aware that many of my constituents work for British Aerospace at Warton. Does he agree that, during the past decade, the aerospace industry has made a consistent and positive contribution to the United Kingdom balance of payments —£2·3 billion last year. In contrast to the negative comments by Opposition Members, the British aerospace industry is a continuing success and will go to even greater strengths once the European fighter aircraft 2000 is built by many of my constituents.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the industry's considerable achievements, especially in exports. The industry is uniquely helped by the Government and has received more than £1·5 billion of Government support since 1979.

Mr. Eastham: Now that the Minister has expressed regret at the massive loss of jobs in the aerospace industry, what positive measures is his Department taking to give some positive encouragement to the aircraft industry for the development of the C130 large aircraft?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman will be aware from the reply that I just gave that the Government have given consistent and very substantial support to that industry through a number of programmes. The Royal Air Force's choice of aircraft is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. However, I can give an assurance that my Department is keeping a close eye on the alternatives and on their importance for the British aerospace industry.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that the sale of Rover to BMW will allow British Aerospace to concentrate on its core activities—in particular, its aerospace activities in the north-west? Does he agree also that it is still important that Government launch aid is available for long-term civilian projects in the aviation industry?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am glad that my hon. Friend draws attention to the advantages to the British aerospace industry of BAe's recent sale of Rover to BMW. That matter was rather overlooked by the carping critics of the Opposition. BAe emphasised the advantage when, in its letter to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, it drew attention to the fact that this arrangement enabled it to progress plans for the turbo-prop and regional jet businesses based at Prestwick and Manchester.

Mr. Fatchett: During the past six weeks, more than 1,000 jobs have been lost in the aerospace industry in the north-west of England. The people affected will be leaving British Aerospace with a small redundancy payment after many years of service. What sort of leadership is British Aerospace giving to the industry when its chairman, John Cahill—a tax exile for nine months of the year—is to receive a golden handshake of £10 million? Would not it be better for British Aerospace to improve its business practices? Does not the Minister agree that such behaviour is totally unacceptable and totally wrong for Britain's aerospace industry?

Mr. Sainsbury: I suppose that it would be too much to expect the hon. Gentleman to recognise the benefits to British Aerospace's aircraft interests that have been brought about by the sale which I mentioned, but perhaps even he will recognise that the figures to which he has referred—figures that he, like me, will have seen in the press—arise from the very significant increase in the value of BAe's shares. That increase reflects the market— *[Interruption.]* That is a typical reaction from the Labour party. A company is successful—it increases its profits and its value—and the Labour party complains. Labour Members want to see failure, not success.

Small Business

9. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement as to the progress of his deregulation unit in reducing the number of rules and regulations affecting small businesses.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): We announced about 450 deregulation measures on 19 January. Many of these will substantially benefit small businesses—for example, the abolition of the statutory audit, which will remove a useless cost from tens of thousands of small companies; and the rise in the value added tax threshold, which will free up to 75,000 small businesses from the tentacles of VAT. In future, we shall judge regulatory proposals first by the results of a small business litmus test.

Mr. Steen: In view of the tremendous commitment by the President yesterday and by the Minister responsible for deregulation, which is supported by both sides of the House, will the Minister instruct the deregulation unit to alter the individual divisional objectives that apply to the working practices of the 11,389 officials in his Department? Will he provide an incentive-related pay scheme so that the more rules and regulations his officials get rid of, the more they will be paid?

Mr. Hamilton: I hope that if we were to introduce such a scheme, it would apply to Ministers, too. All officials in the Department of Trade and Industry are fully committed to deregulation, as we well understand that that goes to the very heart of the competitiveness of British industry. It is the wealth that industry produces which pays the wages of all of us.

Mr. Loyden: Is the Minister aware that most people will see this latest gimmick of the Government as a very thinly disguised means of reducing the protection of workers in industry in order to maximise profit? Is not that the sole intention of the legislation?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman, who, as a union wrecker and a keen supporter of the dock labour scheme, had an important part to play in the destruction of the port of Liverpool, knows quite well the consequences of absurd regulations for the jobs of British workers. I am happy to say that, as a result of our getting rid of the dock labour scheme, British ports are expanding again. The port of Liverpool is doing more trade today than it did in its heyday in the 1950s.

Mrs. Browning: Is my hon. Friend aware that the announcement made this week to modify rules on portable electrical appliances will be warmly welcomed, particularly by hoteliers in my constituency? They say that the burden on their businesses caused by regulations, especially those relating to testing electrical appliances, has been onerous and has affected their profitability.

Mr. Hamilton: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. We are keenly aware of the advantages that will accrue to smaller businesses and, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) said, particularly to tourist businesses in the west country, if we continue to take an imaginative approach to deregulation.

Trade Descriptions Act 1968

10. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to extend the scope of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 to embrace services as well as goods.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Trade Descriptions Act has always applied to services as well as to goods.

Mrs. Roche: Will the Minister take this opportunity to explain why the Government have done nothing to protect consumers from rogue cowboy firms such as those that install double glazing, carry out car repairs or service household appliances?

Mr. McLoughlin: The simple fact is that the hon. Lady's question referred to the Trade Descriptions Act and she asked whether it would embrace services as well as goods. I have explained that it does. Under section 14 of that Act, there were 171 prosecutions in 1991-92 and 238 in 1992-93. On conviction in a magistrates court, a person is liable to a fine of up to £5,000 or, in a Crown court, an unlimited fine or two years' imprisonment.

Regulations

11. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the procedures established by his Department to determine whether a particular regulation is a burden to business; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: If Parliament is to take rational decisions, hon. Members must be informed in advance of debates of the costs that proposed legislation would impose on business. In future, a compliance cost assessment will be published with all such regulations put before Parliament. The procedures for preparing CCAs are set out in a guide which I have placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Burden: Is the Minister aware that, although existing statute allows Ministers to replace health and safety regulations if they are out of date, the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, which received a Second Reading last night, gives Ministers the power to repeal health and safety legislation without replacing it? On the day when it has been reported that accidents and ill-health at work will cost employers between £4 billion and £6 billion, will the Minister tell the House of one health and safety regulation or law which Ministers would not have the power to repeal if the Bill becomes law?

Mr. Hamilton: All that we seek to do by that provision in the deregulation Bill is to repeal legislation that is wholly redundant; we already have that power under legislation passed since 1974. The Health and Safety Commission has requested that change because it recognises that its cause is not assisted by all sorts of nonsense cluttering up the statute book. The Agricultural (Ladders) Regulations 1957, for instance, which regulates the number of nails that must be put in wooden ladders, and all sorts of unnecessary restrictions have been replaced by new British standards and more modern legislation.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is it not less than satisfactory that the only safeguard against ministerial misjudgment in the exercise of delegated powers of deregulation is the consideration of a 90-minute debate on statutory instruments that are unamendable by the House? My hon. Friend may argue that there is consultation before the orders are drafted. In the case of the proposal to abolish charter market franchises, the representations were 10:1 against, but the Government are still going ahead with it. What confidence, therefore, can people have in consultation?

Mr. Hamilton: It comes as no surprise that the majority of those who responded to that consultation exercise possessed the monopoly privileges which we propose to abolish. Of course they were against taking away from themselves an undesirable privilege which they now possess, but I am satisfied, as a result of consultation, that the British public generally will benefit from the removal of antique, mediaeval restrictions which have no place in the modern age.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the Minister regard as an antique, mediaeval regulation the protection of consumers,

particularly in relation to small lorry firms which, in future, will be able to park lorries under six tonnes wherever they wish and, once they receive licences, will no longer be monitored by the Department of Transport? Will he ensure that he consults the Department about the safety of our constituents before he goes ahead and abolishes rules that protect them?

Mr. Hamilton: I make it absolutely clear that we neither need nor desire to reduce public protection in health and safety or in other areas. In the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, as the hon. Lady will know if she has read it, there is a requirement that necessary protection should not be removed if the order-making power that we seek will be used. I do not know the details of the case that the hon. Lady mentioned, but if she would like to write to me about it, I should be happy to look into it.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware of reports that the European Commission is intent on banning through regulation the use of the United Kingdom standard 240-volt plug? Is he further aware that the intention is to replace it with the inferior European two-pin model? How does he anticipate that that would affect the United Kingdom electrical market? What can be done about that?

Mr. Hamilton: I am happy to say to my hon. Friend that no such proposal is before the Commission. If it were, I am sure that we would pay the greatest possible regard to the criticisms that he has made.

Libya and Iraq (Sanctions)

12. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has of the cost to British trade of the implementation of sanctions by the United Nations against *(a)* Libya and *(b)* Iraq.

Mr. Needham: It is impossible to say what the cost has been to British trade of the implementation of United Nations sanctions against Libya and Iraq.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask a question that offends conventional wisdom? In view of the quite appalling and horrendous nutrition-related infant mortality that some of us have seen in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, with rows and rows of babies expiring; the ambiguities of policy, those grey areas highlighted not least by Sir Robin Butler in front of the Scott inquiry this morning; and the profound doubts as to whether the Libyan state was the prime mover in the Lockerbie crime—God knows that was awful, because it was the police in my area who had to clear it up—could not the Government at least consider whether this sanctions policy is justified and whether they have to go the whole way with Washington? After all, Iraq and Libya were traditionally British markets, not American markets. Let us not be American led.

Mr. Needham: I know the hon. Gentleman's depth of feeling on this subject, but it is not going along with Washington—it is going along with the sanctions that were approved and imposed through the United Nations. I ask the hon. Gentleman to consider the consequences were Britain to be the only one out of 187 countries to opt out of the sanctions arrangements that were agreed and accepted through the United Nations Security Council. I cannot imagine that that would find more favour with Opposition Members than with Conservative Members. The fact is that the problems in Iraq are the problems of its regime. The blame can hardly be placed at the door of the Governments who are imposing the sanctions. United Nations sanctions have been specifically designed, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, to try to ensure that medical assistance and help get through to the people who need it. Let us be clear that the problems of the people who are suffering in Libya and Iraq come from the fact that they are governed by barbarians.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the nature of the reply, may I ask for a Thursday Adjournment debate in your gift?

Manufacturing Industry

13. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what study he plans to conduct of the competitiveness of British manufacturing with particular reference to *(a)* exchange rate competitiveness, *(b)* investment and *(c)* labour productivity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I have already announced that the Government will be publishing a White Paper on competitiveness in response to the forthcoming report of the Trade and Industry Select Committee.

Mr. Mitchell: Before the President of the Board of Trade rushes to print, perhaps I can help him. Is not it correct that, in a market economy, the chief determinant of manufacturing success is price competitiveness and that that, in turn, is largely determined by exchange rate competitiveness? Cannot that be demonstrated by looking at the increase in manufactured exports since White Wednesday, which is four times greater to those non-EEC markets against which our devaluation was greatest than it is to EEC markets? That being so, is not it crazy to allow the Bank of England to sabotage an historic opportunity to recover the manufacturing base of this country by encouraging the pound back up against the deutschmark?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will have his own views on what constitutes competitiveness; but he may well wish to apply the test provided by today's CBI survey, which reveals that all regions report strong growth in both business and export optimism. That is excellent news for British industry, the economy and the country, and disastrous news for Labour.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Do not our recent labour market reforms mean that Britain's international competitiveness is now better than ever?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has made his point briefly, and extremely well. Today's economic indicators are as favourable as any that I can remember.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Does not the right hon. Gentleman recognise that, although we are competitive at present and the dollar-pound exchange rate is good for British industry, over recent months—since White Wednesday—the pound has been in danger of appreciating against the deutschmark? Not only is that bad for our position in Europe but we have come up against German manufacturers which are reducing prices like mad in other markets throughout the world. While we await a report that

will be of great interest to all hon. Members, is it not vital to maintain exchange competitiveness with the deutsch mark in Europe and elsewhere?

Mr. Heseltine: I accept at once that it is necessary to remain competitive amid all the current factors. The Labour party should bear in mind the effect that the imposition of the social charter would have on British industry.

Mr. Butcher: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the terms of trade and the internal position of British industry have never been better than they are now? We have a real chance to flatten the international competition both inside and outside Europe. Will my right hon. Friend use this opportunity to scotch the myth that ours is a low-wage, sweatshop economy? It is our total payroll costs that are lower; we are not a low-wage economy. We are beginning to achieve high productivity, which will enable us to afford high wages.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have a remarkable set of economic statistics behind us and our productivity has risen very sharply. That is another reason for us to cling on to our advantages, rather than frittering them away in the manner threatened by so many of Labour's policies.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the President of the Board of Trade really believe that we can compete with other nations when we invest less than they do? Is he aware that last week's figures show investment in manufacturing industry to be 12 per cent. down on the 1979 figure? They also show that under the Conservatives, manufacturing investment, as a percentage of gross domestic product, has in no year matched any year's investment under Labour. If the right hon. Gentleman really wants to give us good news, will he tell us in what year the Government will return manufacturing investment to where it was before they ran it down?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will, of course, be preoccupied with the results obtained from investment. He doubtless includes in his figures our investment in a range of nationalised industries that then lost money. The real test lies in the fact that British exports are at an all-time high, in a real market with real products and profits earned by real people—as opposed to phoney policies from a phoney party.

Defence Industries (Redundancies)

14. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what initiatives his Department is taking to help redundant workers in defence-related industries return to work.

Mr. Sainsbury: In addition to the substantial help available to redundant workers from the Department of Employment, areas that are adversely affected by defence changes have benefited from the European Community Konver initiative, which was worth some £15·5 million to the United Kingdom. As a result, a regional technology centre in my hon. Friend's constituency will receive £300,000 and Essex training and enterprise council will receive £125,000.

Mr. Burns: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he appreciate the sense of pleasure and relief that was felt when the Essex bid was found to have been successful, before Christmas? Does he recognise the pleasure and surprise that Chelmsford will feel today on learning that the amount provided to assist the training of redundant defence workers will be £125,000, rather than the £54,000 that was expected?

I hope that my right hon. Friend will forgive me, and will not feel that I am pushing it too much, if I ask whether companies in Chelmsford, or elsewhere in the industry, might qualify for any other assistance.

Mr. Sainsbury: I apologise to my hon. Friend for the fact that he and his constituents were misinformed about the scale of the assistance for Essex TEC. That was due to a minor administrative slip-up—"a bank error in your favour", as they say.

As my hon. Friend will know, the Commission's Green Paper on Community initiatives states an intention to continue with Konver as a multi-annual programme. Now that we have succeeded, as a result of British efforts, in making sure that Konver is available outside areas covered by objectives 2 and 5(b), we must wait to see the outcome of the considerations of the suggestions in the Green Paper and whether there is a successor scheme that would help companies and employees in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Denham: I welcome the successful Hampshire bid for the Konver programme, but will the Minister explain why the unanimous feeling in the Hampshire area among local authorities, business people and trade unions is that local councils and Europe care about jobs for defence workers, but they cannot point to any tangible initiative by the British Government to provide for them?

Mr. Sainsbury: I remind the hon. Gentleman that there is a wide range of schemes to help workers who, unfortunately, have lost their jobs in an area. We have, however, given specific help by changing tack seminars and changing tack manuals, and through a range of DTI schemes for companies in the defence sector, to help them adapt their output so that they can adapt to the changing demand for defence equipment. It would be unrealistic not to recognise that we do not want to reverse the reasons for that change of demand.

Speaker's Statement

3.31 pm

Madam Speaker: I have a short statement to make about the procedure to be followed later this evening on motion No. 4, relating to the Government's assessment of the medium-term economic and budgetary position.

This motion is the first to be made under section 5 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, which requires the assessment to be reported to the House for its approval. In this respect, tonight's proceedings will be analogous to the procedure on an affirmative resolution for the approval of a statutory instrument, when, as stated on page 341 of "Erskine May", no amendments to the motion are possible since the Act provides only for approval.

I do not propose, therefore, to select any amendments this evening, but the House will of course be free to vote against the main question and to raise in debate many of the arguments advanced in the amendments on the Order Paper.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you help me with an inconsistency that I perceived in the answers today. A junior Minister decided that it was a matter for him to answer a question about Mr. Cahill and his £10 million payout for the Rover deal, yet, when we asked him yesterday about that, the Prime Minister said that it was not a matter for him. Can you enlighten me?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Lady is wise enough and has been in the House long enough to know that she must pursue that matter by other means.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Given the unsatisfactory replies by the President of the Board of Trade to my question about the Post Office —he did not even appear to know anything about it—may I apply for a Thursday Adjournment debate?

Madam Speaker: That is precisely the way to proceed on these matters.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It concerns the transfer of oral questions accepted yesterday and asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and me. The questions were directed to the House of Commons Commission. I note from today's Order Paper that those questions, which concern the provision of child care facilities in the Palace of Westminster, have been transferred to the Chairman of the Administration Committee. Could that be reviewed?

I am aware that the Chairman of the Administration Committee is responsible for the questionnaire currently being circulated and analysed, but overall responsibility for this important matter rests with the Commission, so I hope that the matter can be reconsidered in order that the House can debate it in the Chamber.

Madam Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. The rule for questions is that they should be addressed to the hon. Member with primary responsibility for answering them. I am having inquiries made into the matter raised with me by the hon. Lady and shall be in touch with her as soon as I can.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My question relates to your original statement, although it in no way seeks to question it. While it would be totally improper for any amendments to be selected, do I take it that it is still possible for some amendments to be tabled, as they provide a valuable means for people to express their opinions?

Madam Speaker: Yes, of course, it is perfectly reasonable for hon. Members to table amendments, which can provide an opportunity for expression and can be referred to during the debate.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Would you, Madam Speaker, agree that the Government and the Cabinet have collective responsibility at all times? My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) asked a question about the Prime Minister's statement yesterday. The tinpot Minister of State answered the question for which the Prime Minister said he was not responsible. Last week, the Prime Minister called on all his Ministers and others to sing from the same hymn sheet—but they sound like a rabble.

Madam Speaker: I hardly think that is a point of order for me. It seems to be an extension of Question Time. I am sure that all hon. Members who are interested can find other methods of pursuing that subject.

Public Inquiries (Improved Procedures)

3.37 pm

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision as to transcripts, oral evidence and other submissions to public inquiries, and for connected purposes.

Presenting this Bill today is for me rather like a maiden speech, as it is the first time that I have introduced a ten-minute Bill.

My Bill makes two specific proposals that are modest and, on balance, will save taxpayers' money. I hope that it will have the unanimous support of the House of Commons, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I shall begin by describing the Bill's background. It stems largely from my recent experience of a public inquiry into the development of the A27 in the Worthing district. Alas, nothing in the Bill, even if it proceeds with the greatest speed, will have any effect on that inquiry. My experience of that inquiry showed me that it was worth while introducing a Bill to help those who are engaged in public inquiries in future. While we pass much legislation, and Government Departments introduce many procedures for our constituents, we do not always have first-hand experience of all aspects of that legislation.

Public inquiries into road schemes could be improved in two ways. The proposal in Worthing will not be affected by the Bill. I believe that Worthing should have a bypass, but the Government propose to put the road through the built-up part of the town. Our position is unique, in that there are two possible routes for the road.

The normal procedure is for the Government to propose a route, which is the only one to be worked up in great detail. The overall effect of that is to bias proceedings heavily against objectors and in favour of the Department of Transport's scheme, which should give the House considerable cause for concern. It is important that schemes should be considered and alternatives fully examined.

The other general matter of concern is that, although we introduced the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, which did something to help those affected by road schemes, I am increasingly of the belief that the way in which some of my constituents are treated can only be described as a form of highway robbery. The Government have interpreted the Act in a restrictive way. They pay compensation under discretionary powers only to those within, in general terms, 100 m of the central line of the roads, which may be six lanes wide. That seems to leave a large number of people who live outside the limit, but who are seriously affected.

The Government have consistently taken the view that the crucial factor is whether the enjoyment of property is affected by the proposed road. Many people are unable to sell their property for a number of years, regardless of how difficult their personal circumstances may be. The way in which the matter is handled is a considerable disadvantage to constituents who take their case to a public inquiry.

There is much to be said for the French system, whereby substantially more than the market value of the house is offered, which avoids the delays and unfairness that would otherwise result.

The Bill essentially addresses two problems. The first is that, when a public inquiry begins, one is expected to present a so-called proof of evidence in writing. That is an onerous undertaking, although I am amazed at the expertise in matters such as road programmes that emerges among constituents during such inquiries. None the less, one may have to write 80 or 100 pages of detailed analysis to present the so-called proof of evidence.

That is all very well, but the absurdity is that one is then required to read out that proof of evidence at the public inquiry, which can only be described as a field day for lawyers. *[Interruption.]* They are perfectly able to read the proof of evidence, but, as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is suggesting, they earn a considerable amount in legal fees for simply sitting and listening to evidence being read.

In addition, a considerable number of officials from the Department of Transport attend inquiries. They could also read the proof of evidence, but instead sit and listen for day after day doing nothing.

The result is that the inquiry that I mentioned has continued for three months, and is likely to continue until Easter or beyond. Much of the time has been taken up by the absurdity of people having to read out their proof of evidence. My proposal, therefore, is that the reading out of evidence should not be necessary, or that it should be allowed only if the inspector believes that it is appropriate.

The second problem arises when constituents do not feel able to present an elaborate written proof of evidence, and instead give their evidence orally. The absurdity is that the decision about whether such evidence should be transcribed is at the discretion of the inspector.

I do not wish to comment on the case that I mentioned, but it appears that a transcript is not being provided, on grounds of cost. The scheme is likely to cost about £120 million, yet finance is not available for transcripts, which might achieve a result that is better, fairer and less biased in favour of the Department. We must correct that. My Bill, perhaps with a de minimis provision, would ensure that transcripts are provided.

The other absurdity that arises is that no transcript is provided of cross-examination—the interesting exchanges that are vital if one disputes matters at a later stage. As an objector's notes can be disputed, he is unable to present his case in a fair way, with all exchanges being recorded. That matter should be put right. It is absurd that constituents can attend an inquiry every day for three or perhaps five months, listening to the cross-examination, only to have their notes disputed.

For those reasons, I believe that the case is overwhelming. On balance, it would mean a substantial saving of public funds, and the saving of time and trouble under the first part of the Bill would more than compensate for the cost of providing a transcript.

It has been suggested that proceedings could be tape-recorded. A recording is not necessarily provided but, as the House knows, a tape-recording is not an adequate substitute for a written record. If one wishes to dispute a particular exchange, one cannot whip back and forth through a tape-recording which might run for some hours, but one can pick out and cite a passage from a manuscript immediately. Therefore, there is no reasonable argument for proceedings to be recorded.

I very much hope that the House will be kind enough to allow me to introduce the Bill. I also hope that, unlike some other ten-minute Bills, it might find its way on to the statute book.

Question put and agreed to.

[Sir Terence Higgins]

Bill ordered to be brought in by Sir Terence Higgins, Mr. Bob Dunn, Mr. Alan Williams, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. Iain Mills, Mr. Nigel Waterson and Mr. Gary Waller.

PUBLIC INQUIRIES (IMPROVED PROCEDURES)

Sir Terence Higgins accordingly presented a Bill to make provision as to transcripts, oral evidence and other submissions to public inquiries, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 March, and to be printed. [Bill 46.]

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. There are occasions when one regrets that the ten-minute Bill procedure does not have a fast track to fruition, and this is one of them. In the presence of the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, may I suggest that some thought should be given to finding a way to dispatch ten-minute Bills through the House? I listened carefully to the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins), who has struck a chord with many of us in saying that the way in which public inquiries are carried out is a scandal. Those of us who went through the Orkney scandal believe that the procedure is outrageous.

Madam Speaker: That is a matter of opinion rather than a point of order for the Chair.

Orders of the Day

Sunday Trading Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 8 December]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

3.46 pm

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am concerned about the selection of amendments. Having heard what was said during the debates on the Maastricht treaty, I know that you cannot explain why you have selected some amendments and neglected to select others.

I have tabled an amendment which would exclude Wales from the Bill's provisions. It has no crossover with any of the other amendments that are to be considered, and I should like an assurance that there will be an opportunity to raise that point on Report, as I have been denied that opportunity now. It is an important point, not only for me but for most hon. Members with Welsh constituencies. Therefore, if I may, I ask for an assurance that the matter can be raised on Report in the House.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): I noted the strength of the hon. Gentleman's feeling from the speed with which he tabled the amendment. Nevertheless, he knows full well that I can give no assurance about the Report stage; I can say only that Madam Speaker will read *Hansard* and will be aware of the hon. Gentleman's plea.

Ordered,

That the order in which the remaining proceedings in Committee of the whole House on the Sunday Trading Bill are to be taken shall be Clause 2, Schedule 4, new Clauses and new Schedules.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 4

RIGHTS OF SHOP WORKERS AS RESPECTS SUNDAY WORKING

Ms Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I beg to move amendment No. 63, in page 15, line 46, after 'customers', insert

'and includes any work in connection with the delivery of goods for retail sale at the shop which necessarily involves attendance at or adjacent to the shop for the purpose of those deliveries'.

Many hon. Members, especially Opposition Members, wish as few workers as possible to have to go to work on a Sunday. However, under the Bill, many workers may be obliged to work on a Sunday, and the conditions that apply to them are at the heart of the debate, and are of considerable concern to my hon. Friends and to myself.

Employees are covered by many provisions in the schedule. It contains definitions both of shopworkers and of shop work, and it was our original intention to explore the definition of the term "shopworker". However, we have been advised that it is more appropriate to try to amend the definition of "shop work", and that is what the amendment is designed to do.

The amendment is not only probing but is of substance, too. I hope that, as a probing amendment, it will draw from the Minister a clear and expanded definition of what is meant by shop work and therefore how those who

undertake that work can be described. It is also an amendment of substance, because it would bring within the ambit of the schedule and the Bill workers involved in deliveries to shops that open on a Sunday.

We are most anxious to understand precisely who is covered by the provisions of the Bill. There are many workers whom a lay person might not regard as shopworkers as such. They are not necessarily serving at counters, providing goods or taking cash or cheque payments; they may be workers replenishing the shelves, or working in the yard around the shop bringing goods in from delivery vehicles. They may be the people who go out and collect those trolleys that always seem to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

We may presume that all such workers are covered by the definition on the face of the Bill, but in our debates on the specific employment protection measures, it will be essential to know which workers are specifically covered by the provisions.

Shop work is defined on the face of the Bill as

"work in or about a shop in England or Wales on a day on which the shop is open for the serving of customers".

That appears to include workers in the yard at the back of the shop, doing the ancillary tasks. But we wish to know definitely whether it covers, for example, workers who may be housed in offices at the back of the part of the retail premises where goods are being sold, operating the computers dealing with the cash tills and the flow of goods out of the store.

Does the definition of shop work as

"in or about a shop"

cover such workers whom a lay person might not imagine were involved in retail work of any kind? Does it cover the manager? Are we clear whether it will cover all managers associated with work in or about a shop that is open on a Sunday? Because we want to know the answers to those questions, we are testing the Minister by including in the amendment a definition of shop work that would include all those whom I have described—I have not yet heard a clear explanation whether they are covered or not—and also people delivering goods to the store.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Is it not important to establish whether the definition covers people who serve staff meals and refreshments? They may not serve the public, but many superstores such as Sainsbury's have staff cafeterias, and it is essential that the people who work in them be covered by the protection we seek.

Ms Ruddock: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. He has mentioned yet another area where clarification is needed. I see that the Minister is beaming, which must mean that he will be able to say that those people are covered. We shall be delighted if he does. It is important to get such information on the record. I encourage all my hon. Friends to intervene as often as possible, so that we can have as clear and comprehensible a list as possible of workers defined as doing shop work "in or about a shop".

I shall now comment on those workers who make deliveries. It may be a somewhat controversial subject, and those who make deliveries may hold differing views on whether they wish to be included in the Sunday Trading Bill. Many of those people who will be required to work on Sunday and to make deliveries to stores which are trading on Sundays may already have to work on Sunday.

I acknowledge that some delivery workers already work on Sundays because they supply stores that open early on Monday morning. We also know that many workers who currently make deliveries, especially of fresh fruit, vegetables and milk, and who work illegally under the present arrangements which stores have instituted, will be required to work legally if the Bill becomes law. We wish to test the Minister to clarify whether such people are already included in the Bill's provisions. If not, our amendment would include those who make deliveries.

Delivery men and women are an important group of people who already often work unsociable hours. Many deliveries are made in the early hours of the morning in preparation for a day's trading, and they have a work pattern which is not conducive to the best sort of family life. As for other workers who will be required to work if the Bill becomes law, we believe there ought to be an opportunity for delivery workers to opt out of Sunday working.

We seek to make Sunday working a voluntary activity, and people should be able to choose whether to go to work or not on a Sunday when they are performing an activity where choice is of the essence. Of course we do not expect there to be a choice over the provision of emergency services or essential services which require people to drive vehicles on Sunday—that is clearly understood. However, we are discussing retail opening. It should be voluntary and would be a new provision in our society on Sundays, and therefore would affect a group of workers who could have to work in new conditions.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I welcome the attempt that my hon. Friend is making to present as broad a range as possible of the groups of workers who should be protected. Does she agree that there is no possible protection in the Bill for workers who are currently being pressured, including one group of maintenance engineering workers I know of, who have been told that, probably, they would have to work on a Sunday as all the shops would be open? Those jobs are unrelated to retailing, yet, because of the whole ethos of Sunday opening, there is pressure on those workers to work on Sundays as well, which is of major concern to many of us.

Ms Ruddock: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is clear that the consequences of Sunday opening and of legalised Sunday trading are wide-ranging. We have debated those matters in Committee, and that debate will clearly continue. I firmly believe that, when the House opted for limited Sunday opening and partial deregulation, it was not giving the Government a free-for-all approach to Sunday trading and to the commercialisation of Sundays.

There is a sense throughout the House, especially among Opposition Members, that many workers could be adversely affected. It is our intention to extend the protection provided in the Bill to as wide a group of workers as possible.

4 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I support the amendment tabled by those on the Labour Front Bench, which extends the employment protection contained in schedule 4 to lorry drivers and distributive workers employed to deliver goods to shops opening on a Sunday. I welcome the amendment, because it will offer protection to some people working in ancillary retail services who will be substantially affected

[Mr. Ray Powell]

if Sunday trading became law: workers who will no longer be guaranteed respite from work at weekends; workers who are often separated from their families during the week and who will no longer be guaranteed free time with them at weekends; workers who will be required to work longer hours at low rates of pay. I support the amendment in recognition of the fact that employees in ancillary retail services should and must be given comprehensive protection on Sundays.

I want to draw to the attention of the House two inadequacies in the amendment—inadequacies that also permeate the Bill itself. The first is that the amendment applies only to a limited section of those employed in the distributive industry. It would offer no protection to those working in warehouses and regional distributive centres who, equally, will be required to work throughout the weekend if Sunday trading becomes prevalent.

Nor does the amendment offer protection to other employees working in ancillary services who will be affected directly by the introduction of full Sunday trading —for instance, those employed in food preparation. I am sure that we are all aware of the case of workers at Middlebrook Mushrooms who were dismissed for refusing to work longer hours at weekends in order to prevent further instances of discrimination and the harassment of workers into working unsociable hours.

The House has a responsibility to introduce comprehensive employment protection. That cannot be achieved through employment protection provisions such as those contained in schedule 4. It can be achieved only by restricting the level of trading on Sundays.

Equally, no protection is offered under schedule 4 to local government workers such as inspectors, traffic wardens and the police, all of whom will be required to have a larger presence in the community on Sunday if the Bill is passed. My hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) mentioned that in an intervention. It is important that all employees who are affected should be protected.

The second inadequacy to which I wish to draw attention is the fact that neither the amendment nor the Bill deals with the increased pressure that will be exerted on workers such as lorry drivers to work on Saturdays as well as Sundays. Information received from the United Road Transport Union shows that the experience of limited de facto Sunday trading is that, in order to serve shopping needs on Sundays, lorry drivers and warehouse workers have had to work on Saturdays, often every Saturday.

That pressure will increase if Sunday trading becomes widespread. Already, most lorry drivers work 60 hours a week, and are away from home from Monday or even Sunday to Friday. The only chance those workers get to see and spend time with their partners and their children is at weekends. Is it right, in a modern society, that workers should be deprived of the right to go to football matches with their children?

Already society is suffering the worst effects of the break-up of extended family networks in which parents, grandparents and children met and interacted regularly, and in which there was usually someone around who cared enough to keep the youngsters out of trouble. Nowadays, children are all too often left to fend for themselves long before they are ready to face the world alone.

While we cannot blame all the break-ups in society on Sunday trading, the preservation of a common day of recreation forms the central plank in a strong family-orientated community. Therefore, today and on Report, the House must vote to keep Sunday a special day for as many people as possible.

Yesterday, I received a letter from the general secretary of the United Road Transport Union. It is necessary to record parts of that letter. I quote:

"It is not generally appreciated that the deregulation of Sunday trading will have a significant impact not only upon shop workers but, also, upon those engaged in the road transport and distribution industry".

It is right for the general secretary to send letters to Members of Parliament who are involved and interested in this Bill to ensure that his workers are protected. The letter continues:

"The advent of 'just in time' regimes, coupled with deregulation, will affect everyone in the supply chain; those delivering to regional distribution centres will find themselves working on Saturday afternoons and on through the night, whilst those delivering directly to retail outlets will be required to work on Sunday. Those changes, designed to bring benefits to retailers and shoppers, will be achieved at the expense of professional drivers, and at a huge cost to the social lives of them and their families . . . Substantial changes in working practices, leading to even greater pressure to breach existing regulations on drivers' hours, as there is no immediate prospect of a significant increase in the number of available qualified and experienced drivers to meet increased demand.

A detrimental effect upon road safety caused by those pressures and by the absence of opportunity for rest and relaxation.

A serious deterioration in family relationships as drivers become increasingly unable to fit in with the free time of the rest of the family . . . A substantial cost to society in dealing with the effect upon family relationships, higher rates of divorce and juvenile offending as the influence of the breadwinner is removed from the family home for longer and longer periods.

Complete deprivation of any real choice about whether or not to work in accordance with the new demands as they become incorporated into the core of commercial activity. Concerns for the social welfare of the family and the well-being of children will, of necessity, be replaced by concerns for the security of employment and continuance of income."

David Higginbottom, the general secretary of that union, is concerned about his members. He also expressed concern about a number of other people who will not be safeguarded by this amendment. The Government do not intend to safeguard some employees.

In other letters that I have received, workers have complained bitterly—Members of Parliament have also complained bitterly about this—that no hint was given or effort made to inform hon. Members that a deregulation Bill would extend weekday shopping to 24 hours a day Monday to Saturday. Why on earth do we want a Sunday Trading Bill to extend shopping on a Sunday when we will have shopping 24 hours a day six days a week?

What employment protection will be extended to workers when we take away the Shops Act 1950, which at least limits the number of hours that shopworkers are expected to work? The ancillary workers whom I mentioned—in all probability, my hon. Friends will mention them later—do not have employment protection. No amendment has been tabled that would give them protection. What protection will they be given by this Bill? I cannot see that happening.

In addition, my hon. Friends have already received complaints, and I tell Government Members in Scotland that their constituents will have no protection. We should be looking at that matter when we talk about the protection

of workers. I will not take up any more of the Committee's time, because a number of my hon. Friends would like to express similar opinions.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I support the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and amendment No. 63. The amendment should be seen in the context of later amendments, which deal with the protection of workers who will be required to work on Sunday.

Many hon. Members, such as the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) and myself, would say that one cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. This is a bad piece of legislation which cannot possibly be enforced in law. It will lead to the exploitation of employees who will be pressurised in the labour market.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It is a bad Bill.

Mr. Alton: However many of the amendments are passed today—I will vote for those before the Committee because they attempt genuinely to make a bad situation better—the fact is, as the hon. Lady says, it is still a bad Bill.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, rather than trying to deal in a highly complex and convoluted way with the narrow group of retail workers who work on Sunday, we should be looking to much simpler legislation which provides full-time rights for part-time workers? Should not that legislation be available on the hour that a person takes up employment, no matter how many hours they work or how long they have served in a shop? Would not that help to solve most of the problems in this area?

Mr. Alton: I agree with the hon. Lady, but she will recall that, only yesterday, the House discussed further deregulation for the rest of the week. We are going against the rights of workers. We rejected the inclusion of the social chapter when we debated the Maastricht treaty, and the rights of workers have been eroded week in, week out, during this Parliament.

I support what the hon. Lady says, although some of the amendments ought undoubtedly to commend themselves to the Committee. For example, some seek to protect applicants at interviews for retail work from discrimination because they choose not to work on Sundays. Other amendments shift the burden of proof from the employee on to the employer in cases of unfair dismissal on Sunday-related grounds.

One reduces the notice period for opting out from Sunday work from three months to one month, and another ensures that employees are informed of their Sunday employment rights. An amendment improves the remedies available to shopworkers who are seeking redress for the violation of their Sunday rights.

Perhaps most importantly, there is an amendment to introduce statutory double-time payments for all shopworkers on Sundays, thereby extending the best existing practice relating to pay within larger stores to workers throughout the retail industry and fairly compensating employees for time sacrificed with their families and friends, as the hon. Member for Ogmore described.

All the matters which we will debate—including amendment No. 63, which extends employee protection to people in distribution who work on Sunday—are worthy, and ought to be commended to the Committee. We should not fool ourselves into believing that the measures will protect people, because everything is based on a wish and a prayer.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) talked about the voluntary principle, which shows a trust and belief in those who will be responsible for taking on employees in the future. Past practice does not give us any grounds for that touching belief expressed by the hon. Lady. The Shops Act 1950, after all, is what we are seeking to replace, and employee protection is at its heart. That principle has been tested in the British courts and the European courts, yet its provisions at the moment are paper-thin.

Legal aid is not available for industrial tribunal applications, and costs are not awarded except in wholly exceptional cases. Applicants without legal representation have been successful in only some 10 per cent. of cases when the employer has been represented. That is the present situation, so should we be making a bad situation even worse? Undoubtedly, the Bill will do that.

The remedies which are awarded are totally inadequate. Reinstatement—the primary remedy available—is awarded in only 1 per cent. of cases which proceed to a hearing. The compensation is derisory. The median compensation awarded in 1990 and 1991 was just £1,773.

Applications to industrial tribunals are subject to delay, and no interim relief is available. In June 1992, it was reported that, in a majority of regional jurisdictions, fewer than half of all applicants received a hearing within 26 weeks of their application being registered. Throughout the process of the hearing, the burden of proof of discrimination for refusing to work on Sundays lies with the employee. That is difficult to satisfy.

Even if later amendments are accepted, it will still be difficult to enforce the law.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): The burden of proof does not lie on the appellant —the employee; it lies on the employer. We shall come to that later. The later amendment is unnecessary. What the hon. Gentleman has said—I know that he has read it elsewhere—is wrong.

4.15 pm

Mr. Alton: It is not simply that I have read it elsewhere: it is the practice on the ground. If the Minister looks at the case law that is available, he will see that any employee faced with the full weight of an employer is in a vulnerable position. We must bear it in mind that most of the retail industry is not unionised. Of the 2·2 million workers in the retail industry, probably 1·8 million are not in a union and have no real protection.

As the figures that I gave demonstrate, when workers receive a tribunal hearing following all the delays, they are not properly represented and, even if the courts find in their favour, they are not properly compensated. We shall see what the problems of employment protection will be. The Bill is a charter for exploitation.

Britain is taking a retrograde step. Not only will we leave employees more vulnerable, but we shall destroy the one opportunity that many employees in the retail sector have to spend time with their family in their home and community. It would not be right to rehearse all those arguments again. They were heard on Second Reading and

[Mr. Alton]

in other sittings in Committee. The Bill damages employees who like to have time with their families, and places them in a vulnerable position.

The amendment and those which follow try to make a bad situation better. I shall recommend that my right hon. and hon. Friends support them, but we do so in the recognition that, even if we passed every one, workers would still be vulnerable. Conservative Members will tramp through the Lobby to vote each amendment down like a row of skittles. I suspect that we shall be left with an unamended Bill at the end of the Committee stage. Then it will be left to Opposition Members to determine what to do on Report.

The intransigence of the Government, having——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: Of course I will.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman will not like the point that I am going to make. If the shopworkers had not changed their mind, the Bill would not be before us in the state it is.

Mr. Alton: I regret that as much as the hon. Lady. I wrote to the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers expressing my regret that some of their members had changed their view. But in fairness to the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise)——

The Chairman: Order. We are going wide of the amendment. I urge the hon. Gentleman to come back to it.

Mr. Alton: I was about to provide some employee protection for the hon. Member for Preston, who is the president of USDAW. She has taken an entirely consistent position on the Bill throughout, so what the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) says is not entirely correct.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Oh, yes it is, about the executive of the union.

Mr. Alton: I agree with what she says about the executive of the union, but it is not true of some of its representatives in the House.

The amendment is narrow. The debate that we shall have in the next few hours will rove around the employment protection issues in their many guises. I hope that the amendment will commend itself to the Committee.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) said, the amendment would include the delivery of goods to a shop in the definition of shop work covered by the schedule. That definition is already wide, as she acknowledged. She asked just how wide it was. All I can say is that all the roles to which she referred as performed in or about a shop would be covered.

The definition would include cleaners, storemen, shelf-fillers and trolley supervisors. The hon. Lady particularly asked about trolley supervisors. The definition would also include clerical workers at the back or above the shop or doing work related to the shop. Staff of the shop and staff cafeterias and managers on or about the premises would also be covered.

As well as the staff who serve customers, all those people will be covered, and I believe that van drivers based at the store, who deliver goods to customers, would also be included. In fact, all those whose work is connected with and for a shop that decides to open on a Sunday will be covered.

I hope that my remarks will help the hon. Member for Deptford and her hon. Friends with the probing part of the amendment.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: Perhaps I spoke too soon.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The Minister referred to deliveries to a shop. We all know of the large superstore chains, which have large lorries carrying their brand name on the side. I am concerned about smaller shops which are perhaps contracted out as part of a chain of deliveries. If I understood the Minister correctly, those drivers who have to work on Sunday, delivering to six shops that are owned and managed by different people, will not be covered.

Mr. Lloyd: I may have inadvertently misled the hon. Lady, or I did not make myself clear. When I referred to van drivers, I meant those drivers based at shops who deliver to their customers, and not drivers delivering goods to shops for onward sale. If she meant the latter, they are not covered, but I shall come to that in a moment.

I think that there were other potential interventions.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): It has been put to the Minister, Mr. Morris, that we are determining the conditions of employment not only for people who work in the retail trades but for many others, not least local authority workers, cleansing workers, bank employees, bus drivers and other people who work in public transport. The Minister really must address himself to what has been a theme in Opposition Members' speeches—that the issue is much wider than the Government have so far addressed.

Mr. Lloyd: I was going to come to that later, but I shall deal with it now.

The schedule covers those people who work in and about a shop; it does not cover people employed by other agencies or authorities. Some part of their work on a Sunday may have to do with a shop opening. For example, if a policeman is on duty, a tiny part of his work—perhaps an infinitesimal part—might have something to do with a shop being open, but by and large a policeman is on duty for the whole range of public order reasons.

It would therefore be absurd if the police were covered, and the same is true for health inspectors, local authority workers and traffic wardens. It is not reasonable that they should be covered, or for hon. Members to imply that, in 99 cases out of 100—or more probably 999 out of a 1,000—their work will have anything to do with the Sunday opening allowed by the Bill.

For example, if health workers and cleaners are involved, it is most likely to be in catering establishments and fast food outlets, which can already open on Sundays quite lawfully. The right hon. Gentleman's suggestion is not worthy of greater scrutiny as these people will be on duty not because a particular shop decides to open but

because of a wide range of responsibilities, only a tiny proportion of which have anything to do with Sunday opening.

Mr. Alfred Morris: How can the Minister possibly doubt that many people who are not employed in retail trades will now, for the first time ever, have to work on a Sunday? He says that the number will be tiny, but we are talking here about principles as well as numbers. These principles are very important to all Opposition Members.

Mr. Lloyd: Retailing is the only activity that, in large measure, may not be legitimately engaged in on a Sunday. The people who work in factories that make goods for the shops may work on Sunday. Many of them have an evening shift. When I worked in the food industry, we always had a Sunday evening shift. There will be no change in that situation. The hon. Gentleman exaggerates very heavily.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: What about attendants in car parks that would not be open but for the passage of this Bill?

Mr. Lloyd: Many car parks are open on a Sunday. If a local authority were to decide to charge for Sunday use of its car parks, it would have to recruit people. In fact, local authorities do recruit people for this purpose, irrespective of Sunday trading. I see here the intervention of no novel principle.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I should like to come back to the question of delivery workers. It seems to me that there is fundamental illogicality in what the Minister has said so far, and I hope that he will remedy it.

He has said that a person employed by a shop to deliver goods to its customers will be covered. The hon. Gentleman must know that that is now a very rare service. The number of drivers so employed will be tiny—the Minister is keen on the word "tiny"—whereas the number of people delivering to shops may be very large indeed. It is quite clear that the latter would not have to be employed if the shops were not open. Can the Minister explain his reasoning? I hope that, in the rest of his speech, he will do better.

Mr. Lloyd: I had not reached the question of drivers who deliver to shops. The hon. Lady is quite right in saying that the number of delivery drivers employed by shops is very small. I have mentioned these people for the purpose of establishing even a minute piece of common ground between the hon. Member for Deptford and myself about the major part of the hon. Lady's amendment.

It would not be reasonable to extend the provision to drivers working for another company who deliver goods to a store but who do not, by any stretch of the imagination, work at or around the store. As the hon. Lady said, we should have the anomally that a driver making Monday's deliveries on a Sunday to a shop that opened on a Sunday would be included, whereas a driver making Monday's deliveries on Sunday to a shop that did not open on Sunday would not be covered.

The employers of the delivery driver would never know where they were. Even if the amendment were taken away and revised to remove some of the confusion, there would remain the fact that the relationship between employer and employee would depend not on their negotiations or decisions but on whether one or other of a string of customer stores decided to open on Sunday. The position could vary from week to week, without the knowledge of the employer or even of the employee.

The hon. Lady mentioned the delivery of fresh goods. These are delivered not just to the supermarkets and grocery shops that will be affected by this legislation but also to restaurants and catering outlets that are currently allowed to open on Sunday.

I wonder whether the hon. Lady intends the protection under this Bill to apply if a delivery driver's journey includes one shop that chooses to open. Which will govern the relationship of the driver to his employer—the one shop opening under this Bill, the others that remain shut, or the ones that have always been allowed to open and are not affected by the legislation?

Ms Eagle: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that he has just begun to touch on some of the anomalies that we are coming across because we are attempting in this complex web of legislation to give a very narrow group of workers protection, when many other people work on Sunday, and, in my view, should be guaranteed similar protection? Would it not be better to withdraw the entire Bill and return to the House with a Bill that gives thorough and complete protection to all workers, whether they work part-time or full-time, during the week or on Sundays.

4.30 pm

Mr. Lloyd: Withdrawing the Bill would cause enormous disappointment not merely to the majority in the House who voted for this solution to the Sunday trading problem but to the retail trade and the many, many people who work on Sundays and would like their position to be completely regularised, with the protections contained in the Bill.

The hon. Lady talks of anomalies. I, too, am discussing anomalies, which inevitably arise when protections are provided. All I can say is, were we to accept this amendment, those anomalies would be greatly increased, in the ways that I have described and in others.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): May I take the Minister back to the problem of deliveries? He has conceded that a driver who delivers from a shop—most of us agree that the problem would arise in the context of small supermarkets rather than large superstores—would be covered by the definition under schedule 4. But what happens if the same driver is also engaged in collecting goods from a warehouse or elsewhere, as could easily happen in such a shop? Would not that open up the difficulty which the Government are trying to avoid?

Mr. Lloyd: I am in no difficulty whatever. It would be for the courts to determine where the borderline lay. But if the driver worked in and around a shop that opened on Sundays and was partly delivering to customers and partly collecting goods from a cash-and-carry or central warehouse, I believe that he would be covered by the protections provided in schedule 4. Ultimately, if the matter came before a court, it would be for the court to decide. I can only give my best judgment.

Of course there are anomalies. It is anomalous to protect one group of workers in this way, but the hon. Gentleman knows why we are doing it. Sunday work has always been treated differently and, compared with the Shops Act 1950,

[Mr. Lloyd]

we are fundamentally changing the rules on Sunday working. The only way to get rid of those anomalies is to protect every other worker.

If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that train drivers, doctors, nurses and policemen should all have similar protection, that might rule out the theoretical anomalies, but such huge practical difficulties would arise that the hon. Gentleman would wish that he had never embarked on that course.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Minister acknowledge the deep alarm that is felt on this side of the House when a smiling Minister speaks at the Dispatch Box, with the authority of the Government, about a schedule headed "Rights of . . . workers"? In so far as the schedule provides a minuscule protection, will he confirm that the Government are offering that protection with the sole objective of getting the legislation through? Is it not absolutely abhorrent to the Government's fundamental instincts, which are to provide no protection for workers whatever?

Mr. Lloyd: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman on both points. First, the protection is not minuscule: it is wide, radical and sweeping. We shall return to that matter later. Secondly, as the Minister guiding the Bill, my objective is to find workable arrangements for the combination of Sunday trading and employee protection that satisfy a majority in the House. In that way, the problems with which the trade, Sunday workers, and those who wish to shop on Sundays are fed up can be sorted out in a clear and enforceable way.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): On the point about testing these issues in court, will the Minister explain where a van driver working in the retail trade is supposed to find the money to test the issue in court?

Mr. Lloyd: I dare say that the unions would be interested in the general issues of principle. If it is a question of testing it from his own interest in a tribunal, he does not need money for that. I was going to come to that later.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) talked about how long it took to get to a tribunal, how difficult it was to be represented and how the employee seldom won. He should know that two thirds of cases are decided before they get to a formal tribunal hearing, because the employer and employee have settled; they would settle when the employee realised that perhaps he had breached the rules.

We do not know the details of every case that has been settled, but the fact that two thirds are settled beforehand suggests to me that the law works well. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the statistics for 1991—I do not have them to hand at the moment—he will find that, of those who did go to a tribunal, there was a greater success rate among those employees who had attended without formal representation, either with a friend or on their own accord, than those who had secured professional and full representation, which suggests to me that tribunals work well informally, look behind the case that is brought and are not particularly impressed by professional representation.

Mr. Hoon: Just to set the record straight, in relation to cases that are settled from industrial tribunals, they do not particularly assist the Minister, because it is highly unlikely that a settlement would involve the continuation of that person's employment. Almost every settlement involves the payment of compensation. Therefore, in effect the Minister is saying that it does not matter that the person does not wish to work on a Sunday, that the settlement will resolve that matter and that the employer would pay a modest amount by way of compensation—the settlement figures are very modest. In those circumstances, the company would in effect avoid the problem of employing somebody who chose not to work on a Sunday.

Mr. Lloyd: I venture into a subject for which I do not have ministerial responsibility, so my familiarity with the figures and the detailed background is not great. The hon. Gentleman may correct me if I am wrong, as may the officials in the box, but I believe that, in the majority of unfair dismissals, the employee does not want to go back to that place. Only a minority of employers are uninterested in whether they lose a case or settle out of court. The fact that the rules are there and can be enforced has a salutary effect. One should not judge the effectiveness of the rights or the tribunal by cases that are settled by it. One should judge the effect that it has further down the line and on the behaviour of employers. I think that that will be true in this case.

By the way that it is worded, the amendment would have a wider effect than the hon. Member for Deptford appeared to have intended, but not wider than many of her hon. Friends would have liked. The phrase

"any work in connection with the delivery of goods"

could stretch, as the right hon. Gentleman wanted, to traffic wardens and police overseeing the parking regulations near the shop. One must then ask whether it would affect them if five minutes of their 10-hour shift were related to parking that had something to do with the shop. The amendments should be more clear on whether that is so. It would be ridiculous if it were. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is getting up to tell me that he had no intention of suggesting anything quite so absurd.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The Minister does not accept that any group of workers outside the retail trade will, for the first time, have to work on Sundays as a consequence of legalising the Sunday opening of shops. If he can be convinced that there will be other groups of workers who for the first time will have to work on Sunday, will he then accept that they should have the same protection that we are seeking as retail shop workers?

Mr. Lloyd: I think that the right hon. Gentleman is in error. If some workers are not currently working on Sundays, such work is not part of their jobs, and will not be in their contracts. If their employer wants them to work on Sundays, he cannot make them do so; he cannot break or change their contracts unilaterally. He may open negotiations, but it will then be up to both sides to agree.

This is no different from a hundred and one other changes that an employer may wish to make—introducing evening working, for instance. That is where the protection lies.

Ms Eagle: Is the Minister aware of the increasing prevalence of contracts that do not specify when work will be required—"zero hours" contracts, for instance? Many employees in the non-retail sector may be forced to work on Sundays, with no requirement for a change in their

contracts. Such contracts, which do not establish the hours that should be worked or when they should be worked, are virtually a sham.

Mr. Lloyd: I am aware that some people have no written contracts, and that some written contracts are completely inadequate to describe the nature of the job involved. If it came to a dispute, and if that dispute went to court—which would be the last place along the line—it would be for the court to determine what was properly understood between employer and employee.

It would constitute a change of contract if there had originally been no question of Sunday working, and the employer was now asking for a whole set of different arrangements—even if there was nothing in writing, or the contract required the employee to "attend the place of employment at the usual time".

The hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) has entered a vexed area. The Bill cannot make up for the inadequacy of contracts elsewhere; the problem that we are discussing, however, relates not to the vagueness of some contracts, but to contracts that clearly require an employee to work on Sundays if Sunday working is necessary. Employees may enter into such a contract believing that they will never be asked to honour the agreement.

I believe that the provisions in schedule 4 are very wide, in that they cover all workers associated with the work of a shop on or around that shop's premises. They do not extend to delivery drivers, and I do not believe that they should. I hope that the Committee will agree.

Ms Ruddock: Replying to the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), the Minister made it clear that he did not consider car park attendants to be associated with the company providing the retail premises. Some car parks, however, are organised by the retail premises. I assume—the Minister nods helpfully—that their attendants are covered by the Bill in its present form.

My hon. Friends and I fear that many workers would have to undertake new tasks if the Bill became law. My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) is absolutely right: what we need, and what the Government have constantly and pitifully refused to give us, is proper protection for all workers, so that they can exercise real choice and real control over the way in which employers institute and enforce contracts.

The Minister has made a great deal of the point about anomalies. All he has done, however, is encourage us to reconsider our amendment, engage in consultation and bring it back on Report. It is clear to us that some workers' contracts, and the requirement for Sunday working, will be fundamentally rearranged as a consequence of the Bill—which would not happen in any other circumstances.

That applies particularly to an instance that the Minister has not considered: the case of workers employed by a company—Sainsbury is a good example—which has its own delivery vehicles and drivers, and delivers its own goods from its own warehouses to its own stores. Deliveries of fresh goods resulting from the introduction of Sunday opening would be a specific result of the Bill's enactment: in every other respect, those workers are working for the same employer, while performing tasks that could arise only if the Bill became law.

We shall want to press our case further; but, on this occasion, I shall not press it to a Division. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

4.45 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): I beg to move amendment No. 64, in schedule 4, page 16, line 23, after 'to', insert

'section *(Discrimination against prospective employees who object to Sunday working)* and'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take new clause 4—

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES WHO OBJECT TO SUNDAY WORKING

'(1) Subject to subsection (2) below, it is unlawful for a person ("the discriminator") in relation to employment by him at a shop to discriminate against any person seeking employment as a shop worker ("the applicant")—

(a) in the arrangements he makes for the purpose of determining who should be offered that employment, or

(b) in the terms in which he offers the applicant that employment, or

(c) by refusing or deliberately omitting to offer the applicant that employment,

on the ground (or, if more than one, the principal ground) that the applicant objects to working on Sunday.

(2) Subsection (1) above does not apply to employment as a shop worker only on a Sunday ("Sunday-only work").

(3) A complaint by the applicant that the discriminator has committed an act of discrimination against the applicant which is unlawful by virtue of subsection (1) above may be presented to an industrial tribunal.

(4) An industrial tribunal shall not consider a complaint under subsection (3) above unless it is presented to the tribunal before the end of the period of three months beginning when the act complained of was done.

(5) Where an industrial tribunal finds that a complaint presented to it under subsection (3) above is well founded the tribunal shall make such of the following as it considers just and equitable—

(a) an order declaring the rights of the complainant and the respondent in relation to the act to which the complaint relates, and

(b) an order requiring the respondent to pay to the complainant compensation not exceeding the limit for the time being imposed by section 75 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

(6) Where an advertisement is published which indicates or might reasonably be understood as indicating that the employment to which the advertisement relates is open only to a person who is willing to accept a requirement to do shop work on Sunday and the employment in question is not Sunday-only work, a person who is unwilling to accept that requirement and who seeks and is refused employment to which the advertisement relates, shall be presumed to have been refused employment for that reason.

(7) A person shall be taken to be refused employment if he seeks employment as a shop worker (other than Sunday-only work) with a person and the prospective employer—

(i) refuses or deliberately omits to entertain and process his application or enquiry;

(ii) causes him to withdraw or cease to pursue his application or enquiry;

(iii) refuses or deliberately omits to offer him employment;

(iv) makes him an offer of such employment, the terms of which are such as no reasonable employer who wishes to fill the post would offer and which is not accepted; or

(v) makes him an offer of such employment but withdraws it or causes him to not accept it.

(8) Where a person is offered employment on terms which include a requirement to do shop work on Sunday, such an offer shall be accompanied by a written notice of the person's rights to opt out of shop work on Sunday, under paragraph 4 of Schedule 4 below and subsection (9) below.

(9) Where a person is offered employment on terms which include a requirement to do shop work on Sunday, that person

may give to the prospective employer at any time prior to accepting employment with that person written notice that he objects to doing shop work on Sunday and if the offer is subsequently withdrawn by the prospective employer it shall be presumed to be by reason of the person's refusal to do shop work on Sunday.

(10) When a person who has given notice under subsection (8) above commences employment, the provisions of Schedule 4 below shall apply to his employment as if he were a protected shop worker.

(11) In section 136 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (appeals from industrial tribunals to Employment Appeal Tribunal) in subsection (1) after paragraph (g) there shall be inserted the words—

"(h) the Sunday Trading Act 1994.".'.

Amendment No. 41, Title, line 2, after 'workers', insert 'and applicants for employment as shop workers'.

Mr. Hutton: The amendments and new clause are designed to ensure the effective operation of the employment protection measures already contained in schedule 4. These simple and modest proposals draw heavily on existing provisions in other areas of employment law—especially those relating to sex and race discrimination, and discrimination on the ground of trade union membership. I remind the House that the legislation on trade union-related discrimination was introduced by the present Government.

Schedule 4 protects existing as well as future employees from unfair treatment based solely on their unwillingness to work on Sundays. Sunday is a special day, in both the social and the religious and ethical senses; it is right that shopworkers should enjoy special employment protection in recognition of that simple fact.

Paragraph 10 of the schedule already recognises and endorses the principle that employees should not suffer discrimination on the basis of an unwillingness to work on Sundays. We simply wish to extend that essential principle to prospective employees—job applicants. As drafted, schedule 4 will still allow employers to discriminate against employees who do not wish to work on Sundays: it implicitly tolerates the possibility that those seeking work in a shop will be discriminated against if they tell their prospective employer that they do not want to work on Sundays.

The Minister of State, Home Office has already implied that the Government consider our proposals unnecessary. Underlying his argument is the Government's view—expressed by the Secretary of State on Second Reading—that new employees can always say that they do not want to work on Sundays. But what is to stop an employer from penalising those who express such unwillingness, recruiting only those who say that they will work on Sundays? There is a fundamental contradiction in schedule 4.

It would be singularly dishonest of Ministers to advise applicants to mislead employers, and, having gained employment, to take advantage of the opportunity to opt out of Sunday working. They might be understood to be telling applicants, "Do not tell your prospective employers the truth; say that you are prepared to work on Sundays, wait to gain employment and then exercise the opt-out right conferred by the schedule." An industrial tribunal might well decide that an employer was justified in dismissing an employee on the ground that he or she was not honest when interviewed for the job. That principle of candour is enshrined in existing employment law. As the Minister of State, Department of Employment is no doubt aware, in numerous cases tribunals have told applicants that, because they lied to their employers, they cannot benefit from unfair dismissal provisions.

It is no argument against our proposals to say that they are unnecessary, because future employers will have the opportunity to opt out. That misses the fundamental point behind the amendment, which is that the schedule extends no employment protection measures to job applicants.

Paragraph 20 of the White Paper, published in July 1993, on the subject of discrimination against job applicants, offers us some early insight into the Government's thinking on recruitment. The Government argue in that White Paper that the Shopping Hours Reform Council proposal—that there should be protection against discrimination in recruitment—is "unworkable". There is no reason why that should be so. Whether it is unworkable will depend on the quality of the amendments proposed to the schedule.

There is nothing unworkable in principle about a provision designed to give protection to job applicants. We already give them protection in a number of other areas. I have already quoted the legislation governing race and sex discrimination. Indeed, this very Government introduced the principle that people should not be discriminated against on the basis of their trade union membership when they apply for jobs. There is thus nothing unworkable about a principle of non-discrimination in job interviews and applications.

Another of the Government's arguments in the White Paper against any such proposals was that employers would be open to claims of discrimination by anyone who failed to be given a job and then said that was because he did not want to work on a Sunday. That too misses the point of the amendments, which the Government of course had not seen at the time. Nevertheless, their whole argument is flawed, overlooking as it does the fact that these are issues of proof and evidence that need to be argued before an industrial tribunal. We know, for instance, that the Government's legislation on union membership has not provoked hundreds of thousands of people to bring frivolous or vexatious litigation to industrial tribunals.

Still, we were conscious of this possibility, and we drafted the amendments accordingly to make it a matter of proof before an industrial tribunal that the reason why a job applicant was not employed was chiefly his refusal to work on Sundays.

We start from the proposition that, underlying the principle of this schedule, is the simple idea that people should be free to choose whether to work on Sundays. If they choose not to, they should be immune from any form of victimisation. Indeed, paragraph 10 of schedule 4 endorses that principle, and the schedule itself is a reflection of it.

The schedule, however, does not go far enough. How is the freedom to choose whether to work on Sundays guaranteed—sanctified? I ask that because of the omission of any provision in the Bill to protect job seekers. Effectively, there will be one law for existing and future employees and no protection for people who might want to enter the labour market as shop workers.

I have established that the amendments are not unworkable and that they will not lead to abuse. To claim the contrary is a spurious argument designed to lay a false trail.

My hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott)—unfortunately not in his place—has drawn attention to the sardonic nature of the schedule. After 15 years of a Conservative Government whose members have systematically taken as one of their fundamental objectives the dismantling of decent employment protection laws, they now propose to recreate some of those very employment rights. The hollowness of their approach can be seen when it comes to these amendments. I therefore urge Conservative Members not to let their prejudices get in the way of common sense and fair play in respect of job protection rights for job seekers.

Given the need to recognise the special ethical considerations of Sunday working, we should pay particular attention to the situation of job seekers. It is just not acceptable to regulate for future and existing employees but to omit from the framework of law the position of job seekers.

It is worth noting that there is little logic behind the Government's objections to the amendments. I have already said that the principle underlying the schedule is that Sunday working is genuinely optional and cannot be enforced, so why will not that protection extend to job applications? What is the fundamental objection to such an extension? It certainly cannot be logical. It can only be ideological: that it is not right for the Government to intervene in this way. But I reiterate that the absence of any provision for job seekers is to be regretted.

The amendments closely follow the wording of other areas of employment law dealing with job discrimination, and are therefore not new in any sense—the idea behind them is well established. There is nothing unworkable, unsound or unsatisfactory about them. They are drafted so as to allow employers to recruit employees for Sunday-only working. We are aware that we do not want to encourage unnecessary applications to industrial tribunals. Their workload is already heavy and they are already under pressure. We do not want to add to it by creating bogus cases. We have thus recognised that if an employer wants to recruit people solely to work on Sundays, he should be free to do so—the amendments would not prohibit him from doing that.

We do say, however, that if the employer imposes a condition of Sunday working when the work itself is not exclusively related to Sunday, that constitutes an unfair industrial practice that can generate a claim before an industrial tribunal.

If the Government respond to these amendments by saying that they will result in unnecessary claims before tribunals—bogus claims motivated by a desire merely to get compensation—we say that that argument is incorrect and cannot be substantiated. Of course, such arguments can always be deployed; we simply do not accept that they are sustainable in this case.

It is clear, I hope, from the amendments that compensation under new clause 4—if it becomes part of the Bill—will be in line with existing employment protection ceilings. There may be argument about whether those are adequate, but it should be borne in mind that, under these proposals, the tribunal will have discretion as to the remedies that it awards in a successful case. We do not prescribe a manadatory award of compensation for every case brought under this part of the schedule. We merely say that the tribunal can make an order declaring the rights of the parties, if it thinks fit, or can in addition make an award of compensation, subject to the ceiling set out in section 75 of the Employment Protection Act 1975.

If the Government argue that the amendments will impose unnecessary costs on employers, we will argue that that cannot be sustained. As I have said, we borrow the concept of compensation from unfair dismissal legislation in Government proposals. We have applied that concept to job seekers who are discriminated against solely because they decline to work on Sundays.

We are also conscious of the fact that there is always a problem with the burden of proof before industrial tribunals. The Government's White Paper clearly stated their concern that there will be frivolous applications—that people will allege that they were not offered employment because they would not work on Sundays, and that that will generate new and troublesome litigation. We are conscious of that problem and have tried to deal with it in the amendments.

New clause 4 involves the burden of proof as it relates to job advertisements. The new clause will assist the applicant who alleges that he or she is being discriminated against on the basis of Sunday working. It is always difficult to assess the burden of proof in discrimination cases. It would be misleading for Ministers to say that the law on discrimination itself is an invitation for people to bring claims to industrial tribunals. We are aware of the problems surrounding the burden of proof and have tried to deal with them fairly in the amendments.

5 pm

A careful perusal of the amendments and new clause 4 should lead all hon. Members to the same conclusion—that they are necessary to fill a gap in schedule 4. If it is acceptable to protect existing and future employees, why is it not acceptable to protect job seekers or job applicants? In principle, there should be no distinction between the protection afforded those three groups. If the two groups—future and existing employees—are to be protected, the third group—job seekers—should also have access to that protection.

The amendments are sensible and well considered. They are designed, rightly, to improve the job prospects of people in the labour market for retail work. They are designed to recognise the special ethical and social considerations that properly apply to Sunday working. Opposition Members do not regard it as acceptable that people seeking work in shops should be discriminated against if they do not choose to work on Sunday. That is an illogical, unacceptable and immoral proposal, which the House should not be prepared to accept.

I hope that common sense and fairness will prevail in the debate. I hope that Conservative Members, particularly Ministers, will tell their supporters that the amendments make sense, fill a gap in the schedule and should be supported. I hope that Ministers will give the amendments sensible and reasoned consideration. I hope that they will not fall back on the empty arguments and windy rhetoric of the White Paper, which tried to argue that debate on employment protection in schedule 4 was unworthy. Job applicants are clearly deserving of employment protection. We recognise that principle in other sectors, and there is no logical reason why it should not apply to job applicants.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends, as well as Conservative Members, to show fairness and support the amendments.

Mr. Alton: I strongly support the case of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton), who advanced a logical and compelling argument. I hope that the Minister will save us time by saying that he accepts the logic of the argument—I can see that the Minister is shaking his head. In doing so, he gives the game away. If the Government are not prepared to extend something as reasonable as the provision to prospective job hunters, what is the legislation about? It must involve the same subject as yesterday's debate—total deregulation of the market and the removal of the last vestige of protection from employees. It should be seen in that context.

A report by Kevin Brown appeared in the *Financial Times* on 7 December 1993. It stated:

"A former employee of a London menswear chain claimed yesterday that he had been forced to accept a contract requiring him to work on Sundays against his will.

The claim follows earlier allegations that leading retailers such as J. Sainsbury have put pressure on employees to work on Sundays."

The report continued:

"Mr. Matthew Phillips, a former supervisor for the Mister Byrite chain, said he had been given an hour to sign a contract making Sunday a normal working day.

The revised contract stipulates that Sunday is the first day of the working week, and that employees will be paid at the company's normal rates.

Mr. Phillips, who left the company voluntarily in April, said he signed the contract because he was told he would be made redundant if he refused.

The details of Mr. Phillips' contract were confirmed by Mister Byrite, which says that 350 other employees accepted the changes without complaints."

Presumably, those employees were fearful of losing their jobs if they did not accept the changes.

The report continued:

"Mr. Mick O'Connor, general manager, said the contracts were issued to put all employees on similar terms when it became 'obvious' that the group would have to trade on Sundays to protect its market share.

Mr. O'Connor denied that employees had been forced to sign the contract. He said, however, that Mr. Phillips was told that he should reconsider his future in retailing if he refused to sign."

That case is borne out by a letter that I received this week from a Mr. Turner of Harbledown road, Sanderstead in Surrey. He wrote:

"My son, who is aged 17 and still at school, has a part-time job at Allders department store in Croydon. They have asked him on several occasions to work on a Sunday, but he has refused. However, they are now preparing for Sunday trading and have asked him to sign a new contract under which he agrees to work on Sunday if asked".

He has been told that

"if he refuses they have the right to dismiss him."

We know what the law is supposed to do, and we know that various voluntary arrangements are supposed to apply to existing employees. If they do not stand for existing employees, what chance have prospective applicants—the group that the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness is trying to protect? The incorporation of the new clause is vital if Sunday working is to remain a voluntary activity. There is no point in granting protection from discrimination to employees once they are in work, as the Government have already done, if similiar protection is not also granted to prospective employees. The new clause would grant that necessary protection.

The Government have made concessions on employment protection for future retail employees that mean that people starting new jobs in the retail sector will have the right not to work on Sundays if they choose not to do so. Those concessions will be rendered worthless unless the new clause wins the support of the Committee today.

Hon. Members have made it perfectly clear that, whether or not they favour widespread Sunday trading, they want any work done on Sundays to be undertaken by willing volunteers who have freely chosen to give up a common day off with their families and friends. Without the sort of protection that the hon. Gentleman is trying to extend, it will be impossible to meet that objective.

Hon. Members are surely agreed that freedom to choose a common day off should be enduring. The Committee accepts the principle of providing some protection to the 2·2 million retail workers currently employed in the retail sector. We must not forget that the retail sector has an extremely high turnover of staff. Each and every year between 20 and 40 per cent. of retail employees change jobs. Given that fact, there is no point in protecting future employees from discrimination once they have started work if they can be discriminated against while they are applying for jobs. Any job applicant expressing a desire not to work on Sundays will be rejected out of hand, as the letter from which I have quoted shows.

With so many people on the dole at present, employers who open on Sundays will undoubtedly choose the most compliant and submissive applicants. Unless the new clause wins the support of the Committee, everyone who applies for a retail job in future, and who does not want to work on Sundays, will not stand a chance of obtaining work. Job applicants will be forced to renounce their right to a common day off with their families. They will be sorely tempted to lie about their intention not to work on Sundays, as the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness said.

Is that the sort of society that we want to create? Do we want people to tell a pack of lies in order to obtain a job because they know that that is the only way that they can gain access to the employment market? If they lie they will have a far better chance of obtaining a job, and once they have the job they can give notice of their intention not to work on Sundays and acquire the protected-employee status which the Government say will be available under the legislation. If it is logical to provide that protection once someone is employed, why is it not logical to do so in advance?

There is a serious danger that the Bill, as it stands, could become a charter for liars, so that people resort to dishonesty merely to secure a job. The new clause will do away with that danger and ensure that Sunday working remains voluntary—the principle that all hon. Members are supposed to accept.

Unless people who change their jobs or who apply for a job for the first time are given statutory protection against discrimination, within a few years only a tiny fraction of retail workers will still be able to enjoy a common day off with family and friends, without fear of discrimination or dismissal. The Government are aware of that. Many Conservative Members who supported the total deregulation option have a secret agenda, which they revealed in yesterday's debates and which they are determined to force through regardless of any paper-thin assurances that are incorporated in the Bill.

That is a dreadful prospect for Britain's shopworkers, families and communities. New clause 4 would prevent that dreadful prospect from becoming reality and I hope that it will commend itself to hon. Members on both sides of the Committee.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The amendment is important. I believe strongly that it particularly affects women who wish to return to work after having a family. On one matter, however, I take issue with the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton). I do not believe that people who decline on principle to work on Sundays would succumb to the temptation to lie. We would be catching, so to speak, decent people twice over because they would not lie to preserve their jobs. All those who value family life and the principle of Sunday should vote for the amendment and I shall most emphatically do so.

Ms Eagle: After spending many hours on the Bill in Committee, I feel somewhat relieved that we have finally reached the meat of the Bill. Some hon. Members who voted for partial deregulation were uncertain about what the final terms of the Bill would be and how we would vote on Third Reading. Until we finish debating schedule 4, which should have been considered at the beginning of the process, some of us will still not know how to vote on the Bill as a whole.

Amendment No. 64 is the first in a series of important amendments that will allow us to decide whether the provisions of schedule 4 offer adequate and meaningful protection for those who may be required to work on Sunday.

Hon. Members on both sides of the Committee have said that two considerations guide them in the matter. The first, on which the House has agreed, is that all Sunday working should remain voluntary. The amendments deal with that principle. The second, which we shall debate later, is that there should be a proper reward for Sunday working.

In considering the amendments, we should decide whether retail workers who may be required to work on Sunday have entirely voluntary contracts. I shall not be as uncharitable to Ministers as some of my hon. Friends about the worker protection provisions of schedule 4. I served on the Committee that considered the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill last year and fought a constant battle to avoid the stripping down of worker protection. I therefore find the worker protection provisions in schedule 4 a revelation. They show how much pressure the Sunday shopping lobby has put on the Government to provide reasonable protection and to enable shops to open on Sundays.

I do not object to shops opening on Sundays, but the crux of the decision is that Sunday working should be voluntary and that proper employment protection should be available to those who will be asked to work on Sunday.

One difficulty is that, after 15 years of union-bashing legislation, which has weakened employee rights and protection, we are attempting to add employment protection measures to employment legislation that offers workers weak protection. Another difficulty is that we are having to fit employment protection measures into a complex system of employment law, to which many of my hon. Friends have referred. Workers face difficulty in claiming their rights. That is the background to the amendments.

The Bill offers existing and future employees two statutory protection measures on voluntary working. Those measures pose some difficulties and I shall comment on how effective they are when we discuss schedule 4. New clause 4 deals with a new category of workers: job seekers and potential workers. It aims to provide them with the same protections as the Bill provides existing workers and those who will work on Sunday.

5.15 pm

As my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) said, the Bill offers no protection against discrimination for job seekers. That gaping hole must be plugged if the legislation is to have any credibility and to offer reasonable protection for retail workers.

I agreed with the comments of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who reminded us of the high turnover of staff in the retail sector, which makes useless the protection for existing workers. The protection offered by schedule 4 will apply only to a certain percentage of the retail work force. Until we plug the gap, people who leave retail jobs or start new ones will have no effective protection. That will be the position for a large percentage of workers in the retail sector.

We should not pretend that we have reasonable protection for workers and are offering retail workers a choice if they will not be employed because they are not prepared to work on Sundays. Although we have had concessions from the Government, they will not be worth much if the gap is not plugged. Turnover in the retail industry is an important factor.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness said, the way in which current anti-discrimination law works provides a reasonable model for ensuring that job seekers have the protection that we are seeking to extend to existing and future shop workers.

Another group of workers is covered neither by the amendments nor the Bill. I should be interested in the Minister's interpretation of the Bill because I may be wrong about that. The new protections and statutory rights against dismissal and detriment appear to protect existing and future shop workers who opt out, but contract workers, who might be described as freelance, casual workers and who might be on one of the new zero-hour contracts to which I referred earlier, and those workers whose service is interrupted for reasons other than maternity leave, will not be protected. I may be misunderstanding the Bill and I should be more than happy to be corrected on the matter, but many workers who may be described as self-employed are increasingly casual, freelance workers. As a result of deregulation in the labour market, they form an increasingly large percentage of that market and I am not certain that they are covered by the Bill. I should appreciate clarification of that matter.

If we are to make the Bill stick and if we are to be able to say that we have reached a genuinely good compromise, one that can be supported by shop workers and by Labour Members who are desperately worried about the pressure that might be brought to bear on a deregulated and often un-unionised work force——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Lady keeps referring to Labour Members, but she should know that appealing to her colleagues is not enough—she needs to attract some Conservative Members to her side.

Ms Eagle: It is for Conservative Members to decide what they think is right when they come to vote. I was saying that Labour Members are especially worried about appropriate and proper employment protection. One has only to consider the Government's record to realise that the Conservatives have not always covered themselves in

[Ms Eagle]

glory in this respect. The hon. Lady will doubtless make up her own mind, but I hope to see her with us in the Lobby tonight.

We shall make the Bill stick and I shall vote for it on Third Reading only if we can tell our constituents that the protections granted under schedule 4 are genuine, enforceable and easily usable by a work force who are often vulnerable, un-unionised and perhaps working in small companies where they are unsupported by colleagues. They may be unsure of their rights and unable to go to experts for help. We must be able to prove to ourselves and our constituents that the protections in schedule 4 are workable. I shall not vote for the Bill on Third Reading unless I am satisfied that that is the case.

One way of proving that the protections are workable would be to plug the hole that my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness has sought to plug with the excellent amendment. I hope, too, that we shall receive assurances on a range of other issues that I should not even dream of mentioning at this stage because I know that you would leap up and rule me out of order instantly, Mr. Morris.

I hope that the Minister will be able to give me some reassurance about contract workers and casualised workers and that the Committee will realise the crucial nature of the amendment and support it so that we can extend to job seekers and the hundreds of thousands of people who regularly change jobs in the retail sector the choice of whether to work on Sundays.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I shall be brief, but I wish to reiterate the concern of all hon. Members that people should not be forced to work on Sundays against their conscience.

I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). As he knows, I sympathise with him on some issues, but that is not the case today. He said that if someone went to a job interview and said that he did not want to work on a Sunday for reasons of conscience he would not be employed. That is absolute twaddle. He should know by now that one of the greatest problems in the retail trade is the fact that a certain amount of wastage is caused by employees helping themselves to some of the stock at the end of the day.

If someone told a retailer that he was a dedicated Christian and therefore did not want to work on a Sunday but promised to give value for money on the other days, I happen to believe that the retailer would appoint him because he would know that he was honest and a man of integrity. I should have thought—*[Laughter.]* I am surprised that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) does not believe that people want to employ men of integrity and honour. I should have thought that that was exactly——

Ms Jackson: Is the hon. Gentleman asking the Committee to accept the bizarre suggestion that integrity can be found only among those who practise the Christian religion? How can he say that in view of the many other religions practised in this country?

Mr. Marshall: I am surprised to hear the hon. Lady's comment because, as she knows, I have said many times that the precepts of the Torah are equally as good as those of the New Testament. If someone says he is a Christian and can be trusted, his word is worth something, but people of other religions can be trusted equally. It is wrong to assume that people with a particular religious faith about which they feel strongly do not on the whole tend to be honest and honourable employees whom anyone would be happy to employ.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman accused me of speaking twaddle. I have heard some strange things in the House over the years, but what he said leaves me virtually speechless—but not entirely speechless, he will be glad to learn. Is he seriously suggesting—if he is, it is an extraordinary slur—that only a certain group of shop owners are honest and likely to be trustworthy? I was talking about applying for a job. If a candidate for a job told an employer that he was not prepared to work on Sundays, does the hon. Gentleman think that he would get the job, bearing in mind the current state of the job market in which many people are chasing every position?

Mr. Marshall: I did not say that all shopworkers were dishonest. I said that one of the retail industry's problems was that some shopworkers were dishonest and that, as a result, a certain amount of produce disappeared through the back door at the end of the day without being paid for.

Ms Jackson: Surely the Bill has been introduced because of the basic dishonesty—to use the hon. Gentleman's phrase—of the people who manage the retail industry. It is the management of the large shops who break the law.

The Chairman: Order. The amendment is not about slippage.

Mr. Marshall: There may be a certain amount of shrinkage.

Let us consider the Sunday employment pattern in the retail industry. The vast majority of those who now work on Sundays do so voluntarily. Some shops have so many volunteers that they have to draw up a roster.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way because I know that he is having a rough ride. I do not ask him to give way merely to interpret the flow of his thoughts. He seems to be suggesting that employers will find it possible to staff their shops with volunteers on Sundays and will therefore be willing to employ someone who refuses to work on a Sunday. I know of a director of a shop that sells china and glassware in my constituency. He happens to be a committed Christian and, although he broadly supports the Keep Sunday Special stance, he said:

"We are wary of legal protection for shopworkers who choose not to work on Sundays since, if we are forced to open on Sundays through continuing to lose so much business, we will need to staff our shop with people with specialist knowledge and experience."

That shop, which sells specialised goods, cannot be alone. Many shops will need to call on their staff if they are forced to open on Sundays because of competition. Surely the hon. Gentleman is wrong to argue that someone who says at an interview that he or she refuses to work on Sundays will not be jeopardising his or her chances of employment.

Mr. Marshall: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that remarkably concise intervention. If one considers the shops that open on Sundays at the moment——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Cheats.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend wish to intervene? If so——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was defining those who open on Sundays as cheats.

Mr. Marshall: Perhaps the small shops that the hon. Lady supports, which have been opening for a long time, have been cheating and other shops have decided to emulate their behaviour.

We were talking about employee protection. We must recognise the fact that many people volunteer and many retailers currently have a queue of people waiting to work on Sundays, and are only too anxious to do so.

5.30 pm

Mr. Hutton: The whole point of law making is to allow for unforeseen circumstances. There may well be, as the hon. Gentleman says, a surplus of workers prepared to work on Sunday now. But can he confidently say that that will always be true? In the House we should be trying to make legislation that will stand the test of time. That is the reason for the new clause and the hon. Gentleman does not seem to have grasped it.

Mr. Marshall: One has to look at current trends and trends over recent years to decide whether there is likely to be a sudden reduction in the number of people who want to work on a Sunday. If that happened, because of a sudden change in the attitude to Sunday working and shopping——

Ms Eagle: Is the hon. Gentleman trying to argue that so long as there is a ready supply of people who want to work on Sundays they should not have any protection at work?

Mr. Marshall: I did not say that. I have given way many times and that is the last interruption that I, and others, will put up with. The flow of my speech is becoming even more disjointed than it was at the beginning.

We must accept the fact that there are many volunteers. When the people who run the retail trade make appointments they look for individuals of integrity. If someone said that he would not work on Sundays, most employers would say, "That guy"—or that lady—"is a person of integrity and that is the sort of person whom I want to employ."

Mrs. Wise: As my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) said, the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) had a rough ride. I now want to comment on what he said from a different point of view. If he thinks that in general employers would not discriminate against a job seeker because they would regard a person with scruples as an honest person of integrity and probity, why does he resist the amendment?

The hon. Gentleman cannot say that nobody would be discriminated against. He may say that it would not happen to the majority, but what about the minority? He may suggest that if only a few people are involved the problem does not matter—but we do not frame our other laws in that way. A very small minority of people are murdered, but we still have laws against murder, to protect people. We must press the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends for a better reason for resisting the amendment. We are not trying to forecast how often the amendment would take effect; we are simply saying that it should be there to be used when needed.

I shall stress briefly two other aspects of the argument. First, the high turnover in the retail trade means that over a relatively short period most of the people affected will be job seekers. There has always been an enormously rapid turnover in retailing, but that is now exacerbated by the increasing practice by some large employers of giving people only temporary contracts. Now there is a turnover of staff even when the staff are reluctant for that to happen. The fact that increasing numbers of people are being forced to seek jobs makes the amendment all the more important.

The other important aspect is the dilemma in which people will be placed without the protection in the new clause—a dilemma that it is impossible for applicants to resolve satisfactorily. As the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) said, there will be those who will not stoop to lying. I think that a substantial number of people will fall into that group, because they will resent being put into the position of having to lie, and will resist the pressure. Nevertheless, they will feel the pressure and people who have failed to get a job will wonder whether they did the really moral and ethical thing if their family suffers as a result. The job may have been desperately needed.

No applicant for work should be put in the position of either having to lie or being unreasonably refused a job. The Committee should take that matter extremely seriously. I agree with the hon. Member for Lancaster that, despite the risk of losing—or rather, not gaining—the job, many people will resist the pressure to lie. But what about those who do not, those who lie to the employer because they feel that in their circumstances the pressure is irresistible? Such a person may get the job, but will not feel happy about the way in which it had to be secured.

If, later, such a person seeks to opt out of Sunday working, he or she may be dismissed. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) explained, that person may have thrown away the possibility of protection, because a tribunal may deem that, by lying, the employee had behaved in a way that justified the employer's lack of confidence in him or her. That is an outrageous gap to leave in the law, so I hope that the Minister will not resist the amendment. I consider it to be crucial if there is to be anything like fair play for people who work, or seek work, in retailing.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The Opposition are entitled to a wry smile when the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) berates us for failing to beguile other Conservative Members into voting for the new clause.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Boateng: If I may first finish what I was saying, I shall happily give way.

We are entitled to a wry smile when the hon. Lady makes that allegation against us, because we are entitled to look to her to use her handbag effectively to ensure that other Conservative Members go through the Lobby with her in support of the new clause. She could begin with her handbag on the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall)—a man who needs handbagging if any man ever did.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was objecting to the way in which the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) put her argument. If I may say so again, if the shopworkers had not ratted on us at the previous vote we should not have been in this position—and they were on the Opposition side.

Mr. Boateng: We can be forgiven for pulling the hon. Lady's leg a little, because tonight we shall find ourselves in the unusual position of being in the Lobby together. For a moment—the briefest of moments—that makes one rethink one's position, but having done so one continues to be determined to support the amendment, because it goes to the heart of the Bill.

The response of the hon. Member for Hendon, South, the champion of the deregulators, was interesting. He believes that there should be no regulation whatever of the retail or any other trade and last night he went through the Lobby with enthusiasm to vote for deregulating trading on every other day of the week. When the amendment smokes such people out, the real agenda of all too many proponents of the Bill becomes clear. It is to enable those who control the retail trade to be able to pick and choose who they employ.

It has been amazing to watch the Minister throughout the debate and to read what he and his officials have had to say over many months in relation to the proposals of my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness. It is intriguing that the Government, so wedded to the market, can be so blind to its reality. The reality of the labour market is that people are desperate for work. As my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) pointed out, the reality of the labour market in the retail sector especially is that job applicants are many and there is a constant turnover of staff. At any one time, there is a great pool of applicants looking for work in that sector. Unless we pass the amendment and give those people some protection at least, everything else that we do will count for nothing.

In any event, employment protection in the Bill is fraught with difficulties and hazards. Anyone seeking to bring any case before an industrial tribunal for whatever reason suffers a number of hurdles which they must overcome—not least the hurdles of representation, of having to pay for the tribunal in the absence of legal aid and of the burden of proof stacked against the applicant. To deny a whole sector of people who are applying for jobs and who are desperate for protection is a shame and undermines the whole basis of what our deliberations should be concerned with—enshrining and protecting the voluntary element.

What prevents an employer from asking the following question among a number of others on an application form:

"Have you a conscientious objection to working on Sunday?"

Under the present Bill, as unamended, there is nothing to stop an employer asking that. If a person answers that question in the affirmative, do those who support the Bill as unamended believe that that person would be employed? It beggars belief.

In response to the explanation by the hon. Member for Hendon, South of his opposition to the amendment, one has to say "get real". Out there, the reality is that there is no way in a million years that one would get the job if one answered affirmatively. The purpose of the amendment is to ensure that those persons who discriminate against an applicant because that applicant has answered in the affirmative are brought to book. We must ensure that there is a genuine remedy if the people who have determined their right—it should be a right not to work on Sunday —are discriminated against. If they are discriminated against, those responsible for the discrimination must be made to pay.

If we cannot accept the amendment, all the fine words, pious utterances, hopes and aspirations that we shall hear from Conservative Members will count for nothing.

5.45 pm

Mr. Bayley: The Bill was given a Second Reading on the clear understanding that no shopworker would face discrimination if he or she refused to work on a Sunday. That anti-discrimination commitment was not what the Government wanted. They wanted protection for existing shop workers, but no protection for future shop workers. The Government's consultation document in July said:

"The Keep Sunday Special Campaign, the Shopping Hours Reform Council and the Retailers for Shops Act Reform have each made their own separate proposals about the new employment rights which they believe should accompany reform of Sunday trading. All have proposed that both existing and future workers in the retail sector should be protected against victimisation for refusing to work on Sundays. The Government does not believe this is the right approach."

That was the Government's view last summer. They hoped that shopworkers' rights to decline to work on Sundays would wither on the vine as a result of the turnover of jobs. For tactical reasons, the Government sought to make a commitment to people who already worked in shops, but hoped that that commitment would soon disappear.

Of course, I acknowledge that the Government have been forced, because of the views expressed in the House and because of the desire expressed by their own Back Benchers, to provide more protection. However, the Government did not want to extend protection to future employees. They did not have their heart in it, but they felt obliged to provide it to enable the passage of partial deregulation through the House.

The point raised by the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) is crucial. If we do not protect job applicants from discrimination if they do not want to work on Sunday, the protection of shopworkers who have a conscientious objection to working on a Sunday will not be worth the paper on which it is printed. Any person with a conscientious objection to working on Sunday will simply not be employed.

The extension of protection which the Government have offered and which they have used to convince hon. Members—largely Conservative Members—to give the Bill a Second Reading and a fair wind through Parliament will not provide the protection expected. More protection needs to be given—to job applicants, which the amendment seeks to do.

The case put forward by the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) was incredible. He asserted that if an employee told an employer that he or she was not prepared to work on Sunday in the full knowledge that making that statement would put him or her at some disadvantage, he would be employed regardless because the consideration of whether the employer would have flexibility to employ him on a Sunday would pale into insignificance beside the fact that the individual had answered the question honestly. One could apply the same argument to an employer asking

whether somebody had the technical qualifications, or GCSEs or A-levels or the degree for the job. If an employee said that he would like a job as a doctor but did not have the qualifications, would the employer employ him or her on the strength of their honesty? Of course not. That applies to other jobs too. If a shop employer sought somebody who was numerate to count the money in the till and required the employee to have a GCSE in mathematics and the employee said that he did not have that qualification, would the employer consider that it did not matter because, although that person was not the ideal employee, he was honest and he would give him the benefit of the doubt? Of course not.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South suggested that there would never be cases in which people would decline to work on Sunday and, as a result of declining, would be refused a job in retailing. I have received numerous letters from people in my constituency suggesting that that is quite simply not the case. I shall give one example. Rev. Ian Souter of Acomb Methodist church told me:

"I heard of two cases where people applying for jobs in retail outlets in the York area were asked at interview whether they were willing to work on Sundays and when both refused they did not get the job."

The normal expectation of people who honestly tell an employer that they have other things that they would like to do on Sunday will be that they will not get the job.

Conservative Members have said that an amendment that would give protection to potential employees is unworkable. But the people who will have to make it work are the shop owners and the shop owners do not think that it is unworkable. The Government's consultation document states that Keep Sunday Special, the Shopping Hours Reform Council, which represents big multiple chain stores such as Woolworth, Tesco, Sainsbury, B and Q and Comet, and Retailers for Shops Act Reform, which represents the clothes shops, Marks and Spencer and so on, all argued for protection for existing and future employees. Paragraph 20 of the consultation document says:

"The Shopping Hours Reform Council have suggested that people who choose not to do retail work on Sundays should not be discriminated against in recruitment."

Even the people who want deregulation—the Shopping Hours Reform Council—say that they can work such provision. As they are the people who would have to work it, there is no reason whatever why the Government cannot give them the opportunity of making it work. It will not be an obligation on them: if they feel that it is workable, they will make it work. I hope that the Government will give the shop owners the opportunity to let that happen.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The amendment and the new clause would prevent a retailer who is seeking to fill a job that involves some Sunday work from ruling out an otherwise qualified applicant simply on the ground that that applicant objected to working on Sunday.

I strongly sympathise with a number of the amendments on the amendment paper and I can see that there is something to be said for most of the amendments that we shall be discussing today—even where I disagree with them. I hope that the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton), who spoke with great clarity and had obviously put a considerable amount of thought into the proposal, will not take it amiss if I say that the present amendment and new clause fall into neither category.

The hon. Members who have spoken and I have a very different perception of the problem that the proposals seek to tackle. We differ both over whether it is a problem and over what might reasonably be done about it. It seems to me unreasonable and impracticable to oblige an employer to recruit someone knowing that he is not willing to do the job or part of the job. It is the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) who has to get real here: it is quite reasonable for an employer to recruit people who want to do the whole job.

The amendment and new clause would require the retailer to ignore the needs of his business, and that is not an obligation that the law should place on an employer. It would mean that an employer would have to choose between his duty to his business—if that involved Sunday working and he wished to employ people who would work on a Sunday—and trying to obey the letter of the law.

Not all retail shops will open on a Sunday and shops that do not will not be particularly interested in whether an applicant wants to work on a Sunday—indeed, they may have to disappoint a prospective shop worker by saying that there is no opportunity for Sunday work, in which case the applicant will either have to choose to do the job without Sunday work or go elsewhere. Moreover, some retailers will open on a Sunday but will not want their staff to work on Sunday: they may want to strike a different balance, or they may already have enough people who are willing to work on Sunday. Where an employer needs to staff his shop for a Sunday, however, it seems to me wholly unreasonable and wholly impracticable to ask him to pass over an applicant who will work on Sunday in order to take one who will not.

Mr. Hutton: The Minister has not understood the impact of the amendment, whose purpose is not to oblige an employer to take someone on but to prevent an employer from using an objection to Sunday working as a reason for not taking someone on. An opt-out from Sunday working is available in respect of existing and prospective employees, but if the Minister does not accept the amendment he will be driving a coach and horses through it because the employer will in effect be able to make Sunday working mandatory in respect of all new and further recruitment. Is not that the reality?

Mr. Lloyd: That is one reason why I am somewhat sceptical about the protections in the schedule—although I have never been unsympathetic to the idea. The opt-outs exist for honest workers who have been employed by a shopkeeper expecting not to work on Sunday—if there is no reason why they should be obliged to do so—and for those making a career in shop work whose circumstances at one point in their life make Sunday working perfectly acceptable to them but who subsequently need to change their working pattern because of home circumstances, circumstances of conscience, circumstances of obligation to other relations or the arrival of children. That is what the protections are intended to achieve. They are not intended to convey to retailers the message that they may open on a Sunday but that they may not open their eyes to the question whether the applicant in front of them is interested in working on Sunday or not.

What the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness asks for is absurd. I understand why he asks for it, however, because what is behind the amendment and his concern is that, if more shops open on Sunday than do at present, more retailers will want to ensure that they can staff their shops on Sunday, so there will be a tendency to look for

[Mr. Lloyd]

more recruits who will be willing to work on a Sunday. The hon. Gentleman and I do not know how far that tendency will go because none of us can tell how the retail trade will evolve. I am quite certain that all retailers will not want all their employees to be ready to work on Sunday. As I said, I think that some applicants will be disappointed that there will be no Sunday work.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's apprenhension, which is that the retail trade will become a little more like the catering trade, the police, the transport industry, journalism and television—all those other occupations where some Sunday work has to be carried on if those services are to be provided. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can honestly write such protections into the law because they would place quite unreasonable obligations on employers. Indeed, from the way in which he described the amendment in his intervention, I am not even sure whether he fully supports its meaning. I will not provoke the hon. Gentleman into intervening again. I suspect that we will not reach a joint view of the problem—if it is a problem—or of the solution to it.

The parallels that the hon. Gentleman and others draw with the law outlawing race and sex discrimination are quite spurious. Those laws prevent an employer from rejecting on irrelevant grounds of sex or ethnicity an applicant who can and would do a job perfectly well. The amendment would require an employer to take on an employee who manifestly could not or would not do an essential part of the job. That is why I must ask my hon. Friends to reject it.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 274, Noes 302.

Division No. 113] **[6.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kean, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*

Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Bracon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*

Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Temple-Morris, Peter	Waterson, Nigel
Thomason, Roy	Watts, John
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*	Wells, Bowen
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*	Whitney, Ray
Thornton, Sir Malcolm	Whittingdale, John
Thurnham, Peter	Widdecombe, Ann
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*	Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*	Wilkinson, John
Tracey, Richard	Willetts, David
Trend, Michael	Wilshire, David
Trotter, Neville	Wolfson, Mark
Twinn, Dr Ian	Wood, Timothy
Viggers, Peter	Yeo, Tim
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William	Young, Rt Hon Sir George
Walden, George	
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Waller, Gary	**Mr. Andrew MacKay and**
Ward, John	**Mr. Derek Conway.**

Question accordingly negatived.

6.15 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I beg to move amendment No. 43, in page 17, line 17, after 'etc.)' insert 'or

(aa) the reasons the relations ceased to be so governed was that the employee was dismissed and the dismissal was unfair within the meaning of Part V of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978'.

As published, the Bill does not expressly cover those who may be unlawfully dismissed before the date of enactment and subsequently reinstated or re-engaged. In the case of people who are unlawfully dismissed, such reinstatement does not happen very often. Nevertheless, the Bill as printed puts question marks over whether it would cover such people, through the rules of reinstatement and re-engagement. We have tabled the amendment to give the Minister an opportunity to tell us whether that is the case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I can understand why the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and his hon. Friends have tabled the amendment. If I follow what the hon. Gentleman said and what the amendment appears to do, the fear is that a ruthless employer could deprive employees of their right to protective status by dismissing them the day before, or shortly before, the schedule comes into effect, and re-employing them afterwards.

I doubt very much whether there is any prospect of that. However ruthless an employer is, he will know that his technically new employees will be able to opt out lawfully in three months. He will have gained very little, except to put himself at risk of having to pay compensation for the earlier unfair dismissals, should they be taken to a tribunal.

The employee has further protection in that, whatever was agreed verbally or in writing before the schedule, the employee will enjoy the protected right not to work on Sunday from day one. That reminds me of a case to which the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) referred a couple of debates back.

I do not believe that there is any need for the amendment, but I can imagine the hon. Gentleman asking why the Government do not simply accept it. My reply would be that, apart from the legislator's normal and sensible instinct not to overload Acts with unnecessary provisions, I believe that the amendment, as currently phrased, would extend the status of protected shopworker to anyone who had been unfairly dismissed from shop work for anything connected with Sunday working. That would be the case even if the dismissal had occurred years ago, and compensation had been paid to an individual who might have embarked on a different form of livelihood.

I do not think that there are any loopholes, but I will look at the matter again. If the hon. Member for Rother Valley or any of his hon. Friends want to come and discuss the point or any specific worry that I have not covered, I shall be happy to talk to them. Like them, I want the protections provided in schedule 4 to be real and effective, without any loopholes.

Mr. Barron: On that basis, I shall not press the amendment. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Lloyd: I beg to move amendment No. 67, in page 17, line 28, after 'states' insert

'that he wishes to work on Sunday or'.

This is a small change, but it is worth remarking upon. Amendment No. 67 is designed to remove the possibility of a doubt arising from the wording of the opting-in notice. It does not affect the rights and protections in the schedule, but it should help to avoid possible confusion in future and make it clear that the individual who opts into Sunday work wants to work.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Barron: I beg to move amendment No. 44, in page 17, line 35, after 'time' insert

'(whether or not he has previously given an opting-in notice).'.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 38, page 17, line 37, at end insert

'(2A) It shall be the duty of an employer to give any person to whom this paragraph applies written notice of his right to object to Sunday working before requiring him or seeking to require him to work on Sunday at any time after the commencement date.'.

No. 45, in page 17, line 37, at end insert—

'(2B) The statement of employment particulars given to any shop worker to whom this paragraph applies shall include a statement of the right under this Act to refuse to work on Sunday.'

No. 46, in page 17, line 39, at end insert

'and "statement of employment particulars" means the statement required by section 1 of the 1978 Act'.

No. 47, in page 17, line 39, at end insert—

'4A. It shall be a duty of an employer of any shop worker to keep displayed at all times in a place to which the shop worker has reasonable access a statement of the rights of shop workers under this Act to object to Sunday working and the means by which they may do so.'

No. 48, in page 18, line 27, at end insert

'and (c) no subsequent opting-out notice has been given'.

No. 49, in page 18, line 27, at end insert—

'5A. An employer who receives an opting-in notice from a shop worker shall, within five days of receipt of that notice or before asking him to do shop work on Sunday or on a particular Sunday, whichever is the earlier, give to that shop worker a statement of his right to object to Sunday working and how to exercise that right, and a summary, in plain language, of the provisions of this Schedule as they relate to protected shop workers and opted-out shop workers.'

Mr. Barron: Amendment No. 44 is a probing amendment. We should like to know exactly how far people can go in opting in or out of Sunday working. There seems to be little flexibility in the Bill. Someone who agreed to start working on a Sunday might change his mind at some later stage in his life, perhaps for religious or family reasons, and want to opt out of his obligation under the Bill.

The subsequent amendments in the group would give people the right to know their status and what they can and cannot do under the legislation. It is interesting that the two bodies that have argued over many months, if not years, about how Sunday trading should operate—that is, the Shopping Hours Reform Council and Keep Sunday Special—are like-minded in that they believe that those who are in Sunday employment should have the right to know exactly what it entails.

Some of the amendments in the group require that employees be given written notice of their right to object. One amendment would put that right in their contract of employment under the 1978 legislation. Another would require—alternatively or perhaps even concurrently—that employees' rights should be displayed in their workplace. Many people at work are ignorant of their rights if those rights are not put in front of them. It seems that employers on both sides of the argument do not disagree with the purpose of the amendments.

I should be interested to know what the Minister has to say and whether he believes that some form of right to know could be included in the Bill so that people who work on Sundays can exercise their right to opt out if they want to do so at some stage.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Amendments Nos. 44 and 48 make explicit what the schedule is designed to deliver—a shopworker will be free to opt out of Sunday working, even if he has previously stated his willingness to work on Sundays by signing an opting-in notice. That can happen over a period in a person's shops career according to changes in his home needs, circumstances, conscience or other matter.

I do not believe that the amendments are strictly necessary because the schedule already provides for what they would achieve. However, like the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), I am keen that there should be no shadow of doubt that the rights are complete and cannot be encumbered. For once, exceptionally, I believe that it would be desirable to make the Bill so explicit that it ensures that there is no doubt in anyone's mind from the start.

I cannot accept the wording of the amendments. The hon. Gentleman will understand that draftsmen have slightly different ways of doing these things. However, I want to reach the objective that the hon. Gentleman wants to reach and to put it on the face of the Bill that the opportunity exists, as the hon. Gentleman believes that it should, and as the schedule certainly delivers, to opt out after once opting in and then to opt in again and opt out. A person's rights are not taken away if they are used once. I want that to be clearly understood.

Amendments Nos. 38, 45, 46, 47, and 49 are designed to ensure that retail employees are aware of their new rights. I share that objective. The right to opt out is radical and comprehensive but unusual and it will not always be fully taken on board by workers, even after the Bill has been on the statute book for some time. I do not guarantee, as I did for amendments Nos. 44 and 48, to adopt the intention of the amendments. I should like to study them more fully. I have not had long to study them. I should like to consider how best, and at what point, employers should be required to inform their staff of their rights under the schedule.

I aim to introduce a new amendment or set of amendments on Report. I want to meet the gist of what the hon. Member for Rother Valley wants to do. As he said, there are various amendments in the group. I should like to look at them more closely. I hope that I have satisfied him that my aim is not dissimilar from his. I hope that that is sufficient to persuade the hon. Gentleman not to press the amendment to a vote.

Mr. Alton: I thank the Minister for his reply to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). I share the sentiments expressed by the Minister and by the hon. Gentleman and those expressed in the amendments. The basic right of workers to know their entitlements and their right to protection is an obvious one. The Minister has been reasonable in his response to the amendments. I hope that he will ask his officials to draft amendments that concur with the spirit of what is sought in the amendments—the basic right to know—and that he will come back on Report or in another place determined to do that. The amendments are a much-needed improvement to the Bill. I am grateful for the tone that the Minister has adopted in answering the debate.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I share hon. Members' welcome of the Minister's statement, but I wish to press him on the issue. It is not enough to have a provision in the schedule. We are all aware of the difficulties of reading the small print. The average worker would not be in a position to read it. The employer may do so. It is important that, whatever happens, the employees' rights should be displayed in a public place so that the worker may know his or her rights, just as those of us who employ staff have to display in a public place a certificate of insurance to assure workers of their rights.

Mr. Barron: I thank the Minister for his words about the amendments, which I take in the spirit that he said them. I am aware of the intricacies of drafting. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Barron: I beg to move amendment No. 9 in page 18, line 30, leave out 'three months' and insert 'one month'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 51, in page 18, line 38, leave out sub-paragraph (2).

Mr. Barron: I said earlier that there was common agreement between the two competing campaigns—Keep Sunday Special and the Shopping Hours Reform Council—on the purpose of the previous group of amendments. My hon. Friends and I take the problem of notification seriously. The Keep Sunday Special campaign and the Shopping Hours Reform Council agree with the amendments and I hope that we can also get some agreement between Government and Opposition.

I shall not go into detail about the reasons for the amendments, except to quote a notice that other hon. Members will have received from the Shopping Hours Reform Council which states:

> "We believe that three months is too long a period. It opens the door to the occasional rogue employer to threaten an occasional Sunday worker with having to work every Sunday for three months if they opt out."

Under the circumstances, it seems that that could happen and I have no doubt that some people will say that it will happen if the Bill is enacted in its present form.

[Mr. Barron]

One month's notice is not unreasonable. In my experience—before I came to the House—Sunday work is normally done by agreement. If it is reasonable and practicable in most cases to shorten the amount of notice from three months to one month, that would allow us to prevent employers from forcing people to work every Sunday for three months.

Therefore, I hope that the Minister will take the amendments seriously. I hope that both sides of the Committee will agree to accept the amendments, or something broadly similar, so that we can ensure that employers are not allowed that opportunity.

6.30 pm

Mr. Alton: As the Bill stands, shopworkers engaged to work on Sundays may give three months' written notice to their employers that they no longer wish to do so. At the end of that time, an employee who has given such notice would no longer be obliged to work on Sundays and would acquire protected employee status under the Bill.

As the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) said, we must ask ourselves why the Government set a three-month notification period. Their reason is unclear. At best, it is random, irrational and has no real justification. At worst, such a long period—far longer than is necessary to serve the stated purpose—would give too great an opportunity to employers to coerce employees to work on Sundays, or even to dismiss them for refusing to do so.

The amendment would reduce the statutory period of notice from three months to one month. A one-month period represents a better balance between the interests of shop owners and shopworkers and hon. Members on both sides of the Committee would be well advised to accept it.

From the shop owners' point of view, one month is more than enough time for them to reorder their staffing schedules. From the shopworkers' point of view, one month is a far more reasonable period to have to wait to stop working on Sundays. The inconvenience of a one-month period is minimal for employers, but the inconvenience to employees of a three-month period would be considerable.

There are many valid and important reasons why an employee may suddenly no longer want to work on Sundays. An employee's child, spouse or elderly relative may fall sick and need extra care at the weekends, or he or she may wish to join a sports team or social club which has its main event on a Sunday.

I am sure that hon. Members can think of many other legitimate reasons why employees may wish to stop working on Sundays as quickly as possible when their circumstances change. Putting that inconvenience to one side, a three-month wait may have more serious implications for an employee. Three months is a long time to have to resist the pressure and thinly veiled threats that will inevitably come from employers who will want all their staff to co-operate with their new Sunday opening patterns. A one-month period would mean that far fewer employees would cave in to that sort of improper pressure.

It is only right and fair that employees wishing to exercise their right not to have to work on Sundays should have to wait only as long as is necessary for their employer to rework the staffing schedule. One month is as long as is necessary. A one-month period of notice will protect the rights of employees without harming the interests of employers. The amendment is good and sensible for all concerned and it ought to commend itself to the Committee.

In conclusion, I shall give some evidence for the need for employee protection. A survey of the growth of Sunday trading in Scotland, called "Scotland's Sunday under Pressure", was carried out by R. P. Lang in March 1989. It found that employees in one in four shops had no choice about Sunday working.

We also have evidence from New Zealand, where Sunday trading was legalised in 1990. The New Zealand legislation contained—as does the Bill—several employment protection guarantees, including the provision that workers could not be forced to work on Sundays and that dismissal on such grounds could be the subject of an unfair dismissal action.

Professor Peter Brosnan, formerly reader in labour economics at the Victoria university of Wellington, has reviewed the outcome in a paper called "Liberalising Shop Trading Hours, the New Zealand Experience, 1990". He says:

"The protections in the Act do not amount to much. Sunday trading has not become a matter of choice for workers. When a worker applies for a job in the retail industry, they are asked whether they will be prepared to work on weekends. Workers know they will only be offered the job if they say they are prepared to work . . . There are subtle pressures on established workers to work on weekends, too. Employers make appeals to company loyalty; not being prepared to work on weekends is a sign of 'disloyalty' . . . There is also the strong feeling of letting down one's co-workers. If the others do not want to work on Sundays, it seems selfish to refuse and increase the number of Sundays that others are forced to work."

There are pressures in the workplace and there will be greater pressures as a result of the Bill becoming an Act. It is therefore incumbent on us to do all that we can to protect those people who do not wish to work on a Sunday.

The amendment is reasonable and I hope that the Minister—in the same spirit that he showed when dealing with the last group—will accept it or will be prepared, if necessary, to return with his revised version on Report or in another place.

Mrs. Wise: I want to reinforce the remarks that have already been made. I am curious to know why a three-month time scale has been chosen. As the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) said, it seems to be a random choice and it does not link with the timing of other things at work. For example, it is far longer than the notice that most people have to give if they want to leave a job. Most people have to give no more than one month's notice if they want to leave. Opting out of Sunday work is a much less dramatic change and it would be wrong to have that long period for no apparent reason.

Workers are in jeopardy. We have already heard about the first sacking—or what is believed to be the first—of a shopworker for refusing to work on Sundays. I entirely agree that three months allows too much time for pressure to be exerted on a worker.

The worker who has already been sacked is Mrs. Freda Love from the Gloucester area. It is instructive that her employer—unfortunately, the Co-op, which I deeply regret—has resolutely denied that she has been dismissed for refusing to work on Sundays. Her employer says that she has been dismissed for refusing to move to another store.

However, the proposed move would involve a journey of 20 miles for a lady who would have to use public transport, and we all know what that is like now.

I am reluctant to give employers more time in which to devise ways of increasing coercion. It seems to me that the period of three months has no validity whatsoever and that hon. Members should vote for the amendment if the Minister does not accept it. Like other hon. Members, I hope that he will.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Despite the remarkably unpacked Chamber, the amendments arouse particularly strong interest here, as elsewhere. I have listened carefully to the three speeches about them. It is plain to me that, despite the way in which this issue has been talked about elsewhere, it is a matter not of principle but of practicality. The principle is whether, in the special circumstances of Sunday shop work, the universal rule that a contract willingly entered into by both sides must be observed until both agree to change it. That issue was decided before publication of the Bill, which gives shopworkers the right to choose at any point in the future whether to opt in or to opt out.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) invited me to reveal the Government's thinking on the practical question of the length of notice, and the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) was curious about how the Government justified the period of three months. As I said during the discussion on earlier amendments, it was plain that there was a strong desire on both sides of the Committee and among the supporters of all the options —those who want shops largely to remain shut and those who want them to be entirely free to open—that shopworkers should have a continuing choice that they do not have in respect of weekday work. There is clearly a desire that, in the case of shopworkers, Sunday should be regarded as special and that normal contract rules should not apply.

The Government responded with schedule 4, which gives all shopworkers, present and future, the right to opt out of Sunday work at three months' notice without a detrimental effect on their weekday work. During the period of notice, no employer may pile on extra Sunday work unless the employee previously agreed to Sunday work and that is what he is resigning from. There is no way in which an employer can change previously agreed arrangements for Sunday working. Of course, an existing shopworker is able to opt out—that is not the technically correct expression—from day one.

Mr. Ray Powell: Am I to understand it that an employer can expect an employee to work every Sunday if that person opted in, or will the employee have a right to do only occasional Sunday work?

Mr. Lloyd: An existing shopworker will be entirely at liberty to continue to work on any Sundays that fall into the previous pattern, if he finds that acceptable. However, if he does not want to do any Sunday work at all, or if he wants to change the existing pattern, he may make the change straight away. A new employee agreeing to do some Sunday working opts in. The opting-in process involves his saying that he has no objection to Sunday work—following the debate on an earlier amendment, I intend to make the provision more positive—but that does not mean that he agrees to work on a particular Sunday or a particular series of Sundays. There must be a second agreement specifying the working Sundays or how the pattern will be established. That is what becomes enforceable until the employee decides to opt out. However, he must work as agreed for up to three months.

Mr. Boateng: Does the Minister envisage that it will be possible for an employer to insert a contract clause stating that an employee must work on Sunday at the discretion of management? If so, will there be any means of preventing the management from requiring the employee to work every Sunday?

Mr. Lloyd: That is an interesting point. If an agreement contained such a provision in the case of an opted-in worker, it might well be enforceable for at least the three months. The hon. Gentleman smiles as if to show that he has achieved an enormously effective breakthrough in argument. In the case of an existing shopworker, anything signed before the entry into force of these provisions would not be enforceable by the employer. However, the provision is much narrower than is implied by the hon. Gentleman's question and by his smile.

6.45 pm

Ms Eagle: I should like to raise a slightly different point. It concerns future employees, who, under this legislation, will have the right to give notice of their intention to opt out of Sunday work. My concern—I should appreciate guidance on whether my interpretation of the law is correct—is that, although, in theory, a worker could give his employer notice of his intention to opt out of Sunday work and would therefore be an opted-out worker, a relatively new employee, under current legislation, has no employment rights or protection against unfair dismissal unless he has worked for two years or five years, depending on whether he is full time or part time. What worries me is that it might be possible for an employer to dismiss a worker during the three-month period and claim that there were redundancies or fail to give a reason at all.

Mr. Lloyd: I understand the hon. Lady's point, on which some amendments will be discussed later tonight. The protections apply from day one. They are not like the other employment legislation, under which there must be a two-year qualifying period. Here, protection starts on the first day of employment. Of course, the notice period of three months applies. However, unfair dismissal arising from refusal to do Sunday work or from notice of intention to opt out is covered.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Many weekend jobs are done by casual workers, although some are permanent. Several of us are old enough to remember the bad old days when people could be dismissed at a moment's notice. Is the Minister satisfied that an employer could not find reasons other than unwillingness to work on Sundays for discharging a person? If an ordinary worker is required to give one month's notice, why is it necessary to introduce a period of three months for Sunday work? I find it strange that an employer can get away with one month's notice from an employee to terminate employment but the employee is required to give three months' notice to stop working on Sundays.

Mr. Lloyd: That is part of the argument through which I am moving logically. I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's second point when I come to it. On his first point, I am certain that protections exist for employees who have been dismissed or otherwise detrimentally affected in

[Mr. Lloyd]

their work because of their refusal to work on Sundays and the dismissal has been dressed up as being for some other reason. If such a case is taken to a tribunal, it can uncover whether that has happened. It is for the employee not to prove why he was proceeded against unfairly but only to show the tribunal that he was dismissed. It is then up to the employer to show the reasons for the dismissal and prove that those were appropriate to his decision to dismiss. That is how it works.

I realise that some cases are difficult for tribunals to determine and that some employees will not always want to go to a tribunal, but I am confident that the machinery is in place to resolve those matters in that way.

What has not been said in the debate so far, and has been largely omitted from the critical amendments that we have been discussing, is that the rights and protections in schedule 4 are radical, special and sweeping. The House should acknowledge that. The rights and protections provided by the schedule mean that shopworkers will have a continuing choice as to whether to make themselves available for Sunday work. It will be entirely up to them, so long as they give reasonable notice to their employers that, having been available, they no longer wish to be so. The matter of principle is therefore settled and is wholly in favour of employees.

This debate is about practicalities and the schedule sets three months' notice. I now come to the point in which the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) was interested. Amendment No. 9 suggests that one month's notice would be sufficient. The effect of amendment No. 51 would be to require no notice at all. I am not sure whether that was its intention, but that is what it would achieve, so amendment No. 51 would not be reasonable. It would clearly be impossible for an employer to operate if he had no advance knowledge of which of his staff would turn up when he opened his shop on a Sunday. I hope that the Committee will reject that amendment, as it is not a seriously arguable proposition.

I can see, however, the force of amendment No. 9 and the arguments used to promote it. They were buttressed in each of the speeches by Opposition Members by undertakings and quotations from major retailers in the Shopping Hours Reform Council who said that they would have no problem with one month's notice. I hope that my comments do not raise false expectations that I can accept amendment No. 9. I must make it clear that I cannot. But I accept the fact that many large shops with a lot of staff and a well-understood product range will be able to manage perfectly well with one month's notice. I suspect that some could manage with only a week's notice, but plenty of other shops, particularly small ones and those with specialised product ranges, are convinced that they could not.

If a shop has a staff of 30 or 40 people, it can manage if four or five of them give a month's notice that they will no longer come in on a Sunday in four or five weeks' time. But if a shop employs only one or two people who need considerable experience or training, it will sometimes be impossible to make adequate replacement arrangements in a month and induct new staff properly and fully into the business.

Opposition Members have waxed fairly eloquent on behalf of employees and, by extension, of large shops, but they have forgotten the small specialist shops, which also have a right to have their interests taken into account. Customers of hi-fi shops expect knowledgeable advice from shop staff, as do customers buying carpets from specialist carpet shops. By contrast, customers buying groceries at a supermarket seldom need to know the answers to questions of greater technical profundity than on which shelf the baked beans are stacked.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I have tried to follow the Minister's argument. How much easier is it for small shopkeepers to replace staff who give one month's notice? It sometimes means that they are finished. If they can cope with that, why does the Minister say that they will have extreme difficulty coping with one month's notice to replace somebody for casual Sunday work?

Mr. Lloyd: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on a good intervention. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill gave the answer when he described why people may want to change their arrangements for Sunday working. It must be remembered that, if they work during the week, their livelihood does not depend on Sunday working; some of their income depends on it, but they can manage perfectly well without it. The hon. Gentleman explained that they might want to join a sports club that operates on Sundays or change their pattern of activity. We all know that there are many reasons why Sunday working may become unattractive.

When employees leave employment altogether, they are making a big decision to vacate a job that provides their livelihood. If they cease to work on one or two Sundays in a month, having worked on Sundays for the past two or three years because it suited them as they were saving for a mortgage or for some other purpose, and they now join a rugby club or some other organisation that operates on a Sunday, that is a small decision for them. The inevitable and perfectly acceptable outcome of the changes which the schedule makes is that people will make such choices at different times in their lives because of different pressures. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill has given one of the major reasons why the notice period must be three months. It will be a right of which employees can take advantage when circumstances in their lives change.

Mr. Alton: I am dumbfounded by the Minister's argument. The point that I was making was that, for all the reasons that he has adumbrated, three months is too long. One month's notice is all that is needed to achieve all the objectives that he has described. How can the Minister deduce as a logical argument the concept of hanging on for a further two months after an employee has given notice to his employer that he wants to change his working practices?

Mr. Lloyd: There are problems for employers when employees give one month's notice, but it happens a little less often and a little less unexpectedly because an employee is making a large decision which is taken carefully. To opt in or out of Sunday working is a much smaller decision that could be taken much more frequently and possibly by many employees in a particular store at the same time. Small shops especially need the extra protection, as do specialist shops where a newcomer to the staff needs to be trained. It does not eliminate the problem for small shops, but it certainly reduces it.

Mrs. Wise: Does the Minister realise that what he has just said amounts to an admission that choice for shopworkers is all very well so long as they do not really want to exercise it?

Mr. Lloyd: No, I have not said that. As the hon. Lady knows, if employees want to exercise choice, they must give three months' notice. There is no question but that choice exists. At issue is the practical question of how much notice it is reasonable to give. I am sure that large shops and chains that say that one month is enough will want to be as good as their word and still seek only one month's notice from their employees. But the law must be a universal minimum with as many of those who are covered being able to manage under it. Good employers will always want to improve on that minimum. I hope that the leading employers of the SHRC who say that they can manage with less will do so. There is no compulsion for them to take three months, but if we are making a law that should suit everybody, three months is probably the most sensible and fair balance.

7 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson: The Minister was speaking about specialist shops that require specific training. If I remember correctly, he spoke of shops that sold carpets. In many of those specialist shops, as well as a basic wage there is also a commission on sales achieved. The Minister is suggesting that someone must give three months' notice. When an employee is leaving, it is human nature that it will be in the shop owner's best interest to revert to the staff who are remaining or to those who are being trained possible sales that will produce a sizeable amount of commission. The Minister is advocating that, for three months, a shopworker will see his or her income reduced. A month is manageable, three months is not.

Mr. Lloyd: Of course, it is perfectly manageable for the employee in that situation. Different shops, stores and relationships between the employer and employee may make different agreements between the employer and employee desirable or possible. We are talking about the minimum requirement of the law. The minimum requirement should have a universal validity and practicality. I do not think that one month will be sufficient for all retail outlets. As I have said, many will do better than that if better is to accept a shorter notice. That is wholly admirable. It is wholly admirable that the retail trade is thinking in terms of good practice guidelines. We are talking about the minimum. The minimum is three months, otherwise some retailers could find particular difficulties. I have already mentioned the types that could.

I do not think that three months is a great hardship on most employees, because if they had entered a job after the changes in the law, when it was clear that there would be Sunday working, they would have known full well that it was expected of them. If they were existing workers, they would have agreed to do such time anyway; they would have agreed with the specification of how much they were to work on Sunday.

When an employee wants to opt out, he or she often has good reasons for so doing. Those reasons are usually predictable. As was mentioned by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill, when those reasons are, for example, a sick relative or a crisis in the family, one month is far too long. What one needs is a reasonable employer, with a reasonable agreement. I would expect all employers, particularly those with valued employees who have given them good service, to show such flexibility, which they do now and would still have to do when the notice is only one month. For the reasons that I have given, it is clear that we are not asking for the period of notice always to be three months. The law should specify that that should be the minimum demanded. If an employer and employee can arrange something less, particularly in a time of crisis, I applaud them in so doing.

Mr. Barron: The Minister is quite right to say that existing workers will have already agreed to three months. That is because it is in the Bill. If one month were in the Bill, they would have agreed to that.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. They do not have to agree to three months. After the measure comes into force, there is no agreement. They may stop at any time they like. It is only three months if they formally enter into an arrangement with their employer.

Mr. Barron: The Minister started by saying in effect that a contract is usually drawn up willingly between an employer and employee, although he did not say it in exactly that way. He has spent the past five minutes reminding the Committee how the contract of employment is usually loaded against the employee, as is the Bill. I am not talking about rugby clubs in particular. I said that somebody might change to the Christian religion and suddenly want to get out of having to commit himself to continuing to work on Sunday for three months. Given that the lobbyists, who have been lobbying to change the present legislation over many years, would agree to one month, I see no justification for leaving the schedule as it stands. On that basis, the Opposition do not agree with the Minister.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 280, Noes 298.

Division No. 114] **[7.06 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence

Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheff'd, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jim Dowd.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel

Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Riffkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Ms Ruddock: I beg to move amendment No. 50, in page 18, line 31, at end insert—

'Limitation on working hours on Sunday

6A. No shop worker shall be employed on Sunday for more than eight hours and any provision in any shop worker's contract of employment or in any agreement which requires, or may have the effect of requiring, that worker to be so employed for more than eight hours is unenforceable to the extent that it so requires or may so require.'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 60, in page 19, line 29, at end insert—

'Minimum Hourly Rate of Pay

Whether employed full or part-time including Sunday only employees, the minimum hourly rate payable to such employees for Sunday shop work before any enhancement is calculated, shall be calculated by reference to the prevailing income support benefit rate or its nearest approximate successorrate applicable to those in receipt of such benefit aged 25 years and over multiplied by three and divided by thirty-seven.'.

No. 65, in page 19, line 29, at end insert—

'Right to double-time payment

9A.—(1) A shop worker working on a Sunday shall be remunerated at twice the hourly rate applicable on a weekday to that job.

(2) It shall be the duty of the employer of a shop worker working on a Sunday to give him a written statement of the hourly rate applicable for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above and of how that rate has been determined.

(3) A complaint by a shop worker that he has not been remunerated as required by sub-paragraph (1) above, that he has not been given any statement required by sub-paragraph (2) above or that he is aggrieved by anything in or by any omission from such a statement may be presented to an industrial tribunal.

(4) An individual tribunal shall not considera complaint under sub-paragraph (3) above unless it is presentd to the tribunal before the end of the period of three months beginning when the act complained of was done.

(5) Where an industrial tribunal finds that a complaint presented to it under sub-paragraph (3) above is well founded the tribunal shall make such of the following as itconsiders just and equitable—

(a) an order declaring the rights of the complainant and the respondent in relation to the act to which the complaint relates, and

(b) an order requiring the respondent to pay to the complainant compensation not exceeding the limit for the time being imposed by section 75 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978..

[The First Deputy Chairman]

No. 56, in page 21, line 47, at end insert—

'14A The extent of any failure by an employer to remunerate a shop worker as required under paragraph 9A above shall be regarded as a deduction made by the employer from the wages of that shop worker and the relevant provisions of Part I of the Wages Act 1986 shall accordingly apply in respect of that failure.'.

No. 66, in page 22, line 10, at end insert—

'17A. In section 136 of the 1978 Act (appeals from industrial tribunals to the Employment Appeal Tribunal) in subsection (1) after paragraph (g), there shall be inserted the words—

"(h) the Sunday Trading Act 1994."'.

Ms Ruddock: I think that there has been some confusion in people's minds about the Bill. The option voted for by a majority of the House was six-hour trading. Many people have equated that with the idea of six-hour working, perhaps believing that those who go to work in shops on a Sunday will, if the Bill becomes law, be required to work for only six hours. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In the larger shops, with an eight-hour trading period, it is likely that shopworkers will be in the stores serving customers for the six-hour period; but, as became clear in the Standing Committee, there would also be a need for what is termed "shopping up" at the end of the day. That could take up an extra half hour. In addition, shelves and tills will have to be prepared before the shops open to the public. Hence we can assume that the shopworkers in the larger stores, dealt with under the registration scheme in the Bill, may be working at least seven hours, and possibly longer.

When it comes to the smaller shops, hon. Members may not have observed that there is no limit on the number of hours that they can open once the Bill becomes law. The representatives of the small shops' pressure groups have not sought to amend the Bill to impose a limit on the number of hours that they can open. It is my view that we shall have to attend to that on Report, especially in the light of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill which, as my hon. Friends have already pointed out, will open the door to 24-hour trading from Monday to Saturday. There will therefore be an obvious need to put some limit on opening hours for the smaller shops on Sundays.

This, however, is not an option in the schedule that we are considering. Our option is to amend the Bill so that there is a restriction on the number of hours that shopworkers in any sort of retail outlet can work. We have chosen a limit of eight hours, which seems to us a reasonable time for people to work. They should certainly not work longer than that. If the limit were lower, that would disadvantage workers, in that other provisions of employment protection—mean and miserable though they are under this Government—start with the basic unit of the eight-hour day. That is why we chose eight hours.

We believe that, if hon. Members have any intention of maintaining the special nature of Sunday, they cannot possibly endorse the view that shopworkers should be at work for more than eight hours. I suggest that it will be ideological dogma on the part of the Government if the Minister cannot accept this modest, reasonable amendment.

Amendments Nos. 65, 56 and 66 are all concerned with double-time payments. We believe it right to link double-time payments with the limit on hours that I have already discussed, for the purposes of debate. We shall, however, decide whether to press these amendments to a vote after hearing what the Minister has to say. With your indulgence, Mr. Lofthouse, we will press for a separate Division on the amendment dealing with double-time payments—amendment No. 65.

The First Deputy Chairman *indicated assent.*

Ms Ruddock: I assume from your nod that my request will be granted, for which I am grateful.

It is extremely important that those who go to work on a Sunday receive double-time payments. According to the spring 1992 labour force survey, about 2·3 million employees usually work on Sundays—a very large number of people, whose lives are greatly affected by their need to work on Sundays. They are, however, only 11 per cent. of all employees; 89 per cent. of employees do not work on Sundays. So for the vast majority of working people Sunday remains a special day, set apart for social, recreational and leisure purposes.

Many of the public who support extended Sunday opening regard shopping as a leisure and recreational pursuit—a family-based option that they want on a Sunday. I am not one of those people—I can manage to do my shopping between Monday and Saturday—but I am aware of changing public attitudes, and, as responsible representatives, we must take account of them. Not only do the majority of workers not work on a Sunday: they would not choose to work on a Sunday, either. For that very reason the public are more than sympathetic to the idea that those who give up their leisure pursuits on a Sunday in order to go to work should be rewarded.

Most people regard Sunday as a special day, which is why it seems to them, as it does to my hon. Friends and me, that it is only just that those who forgo their vital opportunities to share social pursuits with friends and family on a Sunday should get double-time payments.

Some Conservative Members have argued that Sunday is a special day, and claim that they have voted only for partial deregulation, congratulating themselves on the employment protections in the Bill. Surely they must acknowledge that all that underlines the thesis that Sunday is a special day, and that those who go to work on it should have some recompense for the fact that they are at work.

For a long time, Sunday has been recognised in many industries as a day of unsocial hours. When I spoke of the millions of employees who work on Sundays, I was not thinking of those who have been working illegally; I was thinking of people who legally work on Sundays. Through their trade unions, they have negotiated wages and conditions that reflect these unsocial hours. I remind the Committee that double-time payments are still extensively paid in many sectors of the economy. I understand that about 3 million local authority workers receive double-time payments, as do 500,000 NHS workers and more than 250,000 civil servants—I could add to that list.

So there are clear precedents; double-time payments for unsocial hours, which certainly cover Sunday working, have been the norm in the past. A number of major retail employers have also paid double time. Some of them have been making those payments to workers who work perfectly legally in Scotland. Many of them have also been paying double-time wages to employees who are exempt under current law. But a considerable number—hundreds

of thousands—are working illegally on a Sunday, for whom double-time or other premium payments have been made by their employers.

7.30 pm

It would not be stretching the imagination too far to believe that many of those employers have cynically coerced their workers into Sunday working illegally on the basis of premium pay. They have given that inducement, and one can well understand why their employees have been willing to work on a Sunday and receive double the hourly rate of a weekday. Doubtless some employers have acted on the basis of cynical coercion. I suspect that other employers genuinely believe in rewarding workers appropriately.

The performance of some companies is important to the debate and the way in which Ministers respond to it. Double-time payments have been made to Sunday workers by Allied Maples, Owen Owen, Victoria Wine, Presto and Lo-cost, Littlewoods, the retail co-operative societies, William Low, Safeway, and Tesco. Some of those companies, notably Safeway and Tesco, have made it clear in advance of the debate that they intend to pay the same double-time payments regardless of the debate's outcome. They are to be commended. But from the list that I have given, it will be clear that those companies are in the minority, and we want the provision to cover all companies.

I understand from the shopworkers' union, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, that other companies were once prepared to agree such arrangements but, over the years—recently, in some cases—they have reduced the premiums that they have made available to Sunday workers.

Some companies that employ Sunday-only staff have given a worse rate of pay to those staff than to employees who work on other days of the week and voluntarily work on Sundays in addition to their normal working week. Asda, B&Q, Budgens, Gateway, Woolworth and Sainsbury all have forms of premium pay that fall short of double-time payments. That is most regrettable, as there can be little doubt that those companies are all profitable and able to reward their workers accordingly.

We are most worried, not about the voluntary agreements already entered into, which may or may not be kept once the Bill becomes law, but about the way in which some companies have reversed their policies. In doing so, they may have begun a trend that others will follow.

If Parliament does not intervene and legislate, the sort of action that has occurred at the Morrison supermarket group based in the north of England and the midlands may happen on a wider scale. Again, my information comes from USDAW.

That group employs 16,000 people, about half of whom are vulnerable, part-time and casual workers. Until recently, the company refused on principle to trade illegally on Sundays. It ensured that its workers who could legally work on Sundays received double-time payments. I am sorry to say that, in recent months, that company, like others, has begun to break the law regularly and openly, and to trade illegally on Sundays.

I have been told that, in the past few weeks, the company has given notice that it intends to roster Sundays as a normal working day for all new recruits so that Sunday working will no longer be voluntary. It also intends to abandon its commitment to double-time payments and pay only time-and-a-fifth. It is expected to abandon that commitment as it foresees Sunday becoming just another working day.

Those policies go against the spirit of the Bill, and against the many assurances that Ministers have given us. They are clear evidence that at least one company, in anticipating the legalisation of Sunday trading, has not been prepared to continue treating its workers properly or to recognise the voluntary principle. It is turning its back on agreements on wages and other conditions.

Although the Minister has not jumped to his feet as I thought he would, I am sure that he will say later that, if and when the Bill becomes law, the company will be breaking the law in respect of some of the practices that I have described. The Minister will no doubt say that the company cannot avoid the voluntary principle, and will have to allow its workers to opt out if they choose to do so. He will say that, if the company puts pressure on its workers to work on a Sunday against their will, they will, under the legislation, be able to seek redress.

I agree with the Minister on all those points, but if workers are to have real choice and can decide whether or not to work on a Sunday, the company must seek to gather a significant pool of volunteers. How can a company do that if it is only prepared to make plain-time payments on Sunday, not premium payments?

Ms Eagle: Does my hon. Friend agree that the distinction between statutory premium payments and voluntary premium payments is important, not only because it ensures that the market does not drive down wage rates to unacceptable levels, but because of the new structure of employment law? That structure ensures that, if someone is sacked for asserting a statutory right, he or she has the right to go to a tribunal to seek compensation.

That compensation would be significantly higher than would be expected if someone went to a tribunal for any other reason. Statutory premium payments would increase workers' protection against unfair and arbitrary treatment.

Ms Ruddock: I thank my hon. Friend for her most valuable and clear contribution. Everything she has said is a clear endorsement of the amendment.

The history of the one company that I have described shows the slippery slope down which others might follow. If the Government want the Bill to reach the statute book, they should follow the example of those employers who have said that premium payments and double-time payments are acceptable and necessary to gain a pool of volunteers, and only just and fair to those who give up their time to work on a Sunday to benefit the rest of us.

In saying in advance that they will resist the amendment, the Government fail to recognise the way in which payments and the voluntary principle are interlinked. One Sunday, I paid a private visit to the workers in one of the supermarket stores in my constituency to discuss why they were working. The majority answer was that they were working for the money. Their answer is an indictment of the society in which we live, the recession, and the fact that people are so desperate for money that they are willing to work on a Sunday.

The workers in that Tesco store were receiving on Sunday twice the wage that they would receive on any other day of the week. For some employees, that wage is the only one they take home; for others, it represents a critical supplement to the family budget. Those people

[Ms Ruddock]

work on Sundays because they need the money, not because they choose to spend time serving behind the checkout counters in our supermarkets.

The Minister may say that many people work on a Sunday, that they do so freely and that it has historically been so, but they work in industries and professions where it is necessary, a duty to society and part of the public service to work on Sundays. Those who work in the caring or emergency services have always accepted that they should be prepared to work, in a sense, a seven-day week. That is not true of retailing. Shops do not need to open on Sundays.

The House has voted for shops to open on Sundays, although it may not endorse that decision at a later stage. If shops are to open on Sundays, their workers should receive as of right twice the weekly rate of pay for working on any other day.

Mr. Ray Powell: I support amendment No. 65 on double-time payments for shopworkers. After leaving Pentre grammar school, my first job, at the age of 16, was behind the counter of the Co-operative Society shop in Treherbert. It was just after the war. There was a sugar supply depot underneath the shop and we were asked to work on Sunday to load the shop's vans with extra sugar supplies. Even then, and I am going back a few years, we were paid double time for working on Sunday.

We are now to decide whether shopworkers should be paid double time for Sunday work, so what has changed? My wages at the Co-operative Society were not high enough, and at the age of 17 I went to work on the railways as a fireman. At that time, almost 50 years ago, British Rail paid its firemen, drivers, porters and guards double time for working on Sunday, yet tonight we are debating whether double time should be paid. The responsibility for that lies with the Government because they presented the Bill on deregulation. At first, they wanted total deregulation, but to appease their friends and others, they decided to support partial deregulation whereby all shops could open and the big shops could open for only six hours on a Sunday. A lot of my hon. Friends fell into the trap, but 90 of the Government's supporters voted for the Keep Sunday Special option.

The debate on keeping Sunday special was about employment protection and double time pay for shopworkers, which is what Keep Sunday Special has advocated since 1986. We have not changed our minds —we are determined that workers should have minimum double time pay if they are expected to work.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Does not the argument go further than that? Is not my hon. Friend, robustly as always, giving the Minister the chance to enhance his promotion prospects by going "back to basics"?

Mr. Powell: Quite. I do not know where it will lead if we start to debate "back to basics", but surely that policy should mean allowing double pay and maintaining tranquillity on Sundays, as enjoyed by my generation and that of my father and grandfather, and should not lead to the pollution of the environment. Sunday shopping will increase pollution. Last Friday, we had a tremendous debate in the Chamber about the amount of environmental pollution that will be created by Sunday opening. Traffic and energy consumption in shops will increase by seven-days-a-week opening.

7.45 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) will have a marvellous time shopping from Monday to Saturday, with shops open 24 hours a day, six days a week—144 hours a week in total. I am sure, therefore, that she will not want to shop on Sunday. Even my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), who boasts that he always shops on Sunday, will not want to do so now that shops are open 144 hours a week. My hon. Friend the Member for Deptford referred to unsocial hours. We worked unsocial hours on the railway. We went to work at 2am or 3am, but we were paid well compared with other people for working unsocial hours. Have the Government considered extra pay for shopworkers who must work unsocial hours and must man shops for 24 hours a day?

Mr. Grocott: Is not it worthy of note that the Government are clearly treating the important amendments with contempt because, on the Government Benches, there is a Whip, who looks rather sleepy and is obliged to be here, a Minister, who is obliged to be here—both of them are paid additional salaries for being here—and a Parliamentary Private Secretary, who hopes to earn an additional salary in the future for his loyal attendance today? That shows the Government's contempt for the issues that we are debating.

Mr. Powell: I am glad that my hon. Friend made that intervention. The lack of Conservative Members is very noticeable. Indeed, during the previous debate, the Minister referred to the empty Benches and, within a matter of minutes, they started to fill, mostly on the Opposition side. The attendance of Conservative Members is deplorable. My hon. Friend is right to raise that matter. The previous amendment, which proposed protection for workers, was voted down by 298 to 280—a majority of 18. That is one vote more than their majority in the Keep Sunday Special vote on 6 December.

I do not know whether the Minister is pleased with the result tonight and with the fact that he has a sufficient majority to vote down every reasoned amendment that the Opposition have tabled. My hon. Friends were deluded into voting for the Government's proposal by promises about employment protection. Those promises were made only four days before the vital vote, but during the two years that I fought for my private Member's Bill on Sunday trading, the Government constantly told me that they would not give concessions on employment protection and would not consider double time for Sunday work. It was not Government policy. During that period, they abolished the wages councils, the only protection on which shopworkers could depend. They now pretend that they will ensure employment protection for shopworkers.

Ms Eagle: Does my hon. Friend agree that, if the Government continually vote against amendments that seek employment protection, those of us who voted for partial deregulation on a wait-and-see basis—we said that we would wait and see what employment protection would amount to when the Bill left Committee—will have no option but to vote against the Bill on Third Reading?

Mr. Powell: I am very glad that my hon. Friend raised that important point. On Report we shall highlight the fact that the Government clearly promised employment protection and, in so doing, denied us the right to amend the Bill by turning down all our amendments. We tabled 23 amendments and four new clauses and I should not be surprised if, at the end of tonight's debate, we find that we have been defeated on them all. We should bear that in mind on Report and Third Reading. I am confident that unless the Minister promises to support double-time payments now he will find that some Conservative Members will join us in voting against the Bill. What would happen then?

If the Bill were defeated, we should be left with the Shops Act 1950. We should not be afraid of that. It would give my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise), who is the president of the Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers, the satisfaction of knowing that her members would be protected to a certain extent. Shopworkers have some protection under the Act but the Bill would take it away.

I am not aware of all the information distributed by USDAW—perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Preston or my party's Front-Bench spokesmen have it. For some unknown reason, my sources of information from USDAW have dried up since USDAW changed its mind about supporting Keep Sunday Special and decided to support the Shopping Hours Reform Council. I do not know why I no longer receive information. I do not seek a confrontation with USDAW and I accept its decision.

I was talking about the promises that the Tories made when the Bill was first debated. When I read the Second Reading debate, I believed that the Government would be reasonable and offer three options but, in fact, there were four. I cannot blame the Government for the fourth but I know their strategy. The first option was total deregulation; the second was the Keep Sunday Special option; and the third was that supported by the Shopping Hours Reform Council. The Government tried their best to confuse us by allowing a fourth option to be introduced but Keep Sunday Special was prepared to do everything possible to reduce the complexity of the vote on 8 December, unlike the Government.

It is passing strange to say the least that the press did not highlight the Government's defeat on 8 December which was far worse than the defeat in 1986 when I was proud to be able to announce that the Government were beaten by 14 votes despite having a majority of 140. This time, the Government received 174 votes for total deregulation but there were 404 against. That clearly shows the feelings of hon. Members at the time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: If the hon. Gentleman was right and the Government's option was total deregulation—which it was not—the voting should tell him that the Government allowed a completely free vote so the result was a true decision of the House. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would not muddy the water by pretending that the Government had a secret agenda—they did not.

Mr. Powell: The Minister made the same comment to me in Committee on 8 December. However, in the week before the vote on 8 December the *Evening Standard* carried one big headline which said that Major supported total deregulation. It was also reported on the inside pages that the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer supported total deregulation. It stated that 90 per cent. of the Cabinet and a number of hon. Members supported that option, so the Minister cannot argue that total deregulation was not the Government's preference when all his senior Cabinet colleagues supported it. He said that there was a free vote on 8 December; why is there not a free vote tonight on employment protection? Why is there not a free vote on double-time payments? If there were a free vote, I am sure that 298 hon. Members would not have voted against the previous amendment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Is there a free vote for Labour Members tonight? I ask only out of interest.

Mr. Powell: Of course we have a three-line Whip. The Government used a three-line Whip to get the partial deregulation option passed. If we examine the chapter and verse of what they were offering in terms of employment protection, it is clear that some of my colleagues were conned. We tried to explain where they have been conned and criticised them for it but some Conservative Members have also been conned.

This group of amendments contains some reasonable and realistic proposals. I refer in particular to amendment No. 60 which deals with the hourly rate of pay and amendment No. 65 which deals with double time. I ask the Committee to ensure that they are carried with a good majority.

Mr. Alton: I am happy to support the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and I congratulate him on his impassioned plea to the Committee to accept the amendments which go to the very heart of the Bill. No one who values the right of employees and workers to receive a decent remuneration for their labours can be ambivalent about them.

It is clear that the so-called compromise is nothing but a deregulatory option and was simply second best for those who favour total deregulation. Some people believed that there would be employment protection but the Government must have seen them coming.

Let us consider the Government's record since 1986. They have abolished the wages councils and we all know their attitude to the social chapter, to the rights of workers in general and to trade unions. If one considers the Government's approach only this week to the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill which covers every day—not only Sunday—it is clear that they did not intend to provide employment protection in this Bill. They will never ensure a proper rate for the job.

In the debate on schedule 2 in Standing Committee, the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) said in an intervention that people must have the choice of being allowed to work on Sundays. Interestingly, the hon. Gentleman revealed that that would enable people who could work on a Sunday to earn £16 for their efforts. That is the sort of sum that we are talking about. Double time? Double what? People will be forced to work on Sundays; they will have no choice. They will lose their jobs, or not get jobs in the first place, if they will not work on Sundays, so we are right to be passionate about the amendments, which go to the heart of the Bill.

8 pm

I say to hon. Members who are reconsidering the question, and are looking intelligently at what is on the agenda, as the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) has

done, that there will be another opportunity before Third Reading to undo the damage that the Bill seeks to do. We can do that on Report. The hon. Member for Ogmore told us that on an earlier vote this evening the majority was 18. In other words, if eight or nine Members changed their votes on Report we could narrow and restrict the Bill. The same was true of the Government's three-card trick when we first considered the options. The majority then was 19.

The only genuine employment protection will be to restrict the number of shops that can open on Sundays to those that meet the reasonable needs of most people. By and large, that will distinguish between the big hypermarket stores and the small convenience shops that serve our communities. We should support the protection of the jobs in those small corner shops, and the people whose livelihoods are based on their being able to stay in business. That, too, is employment protection.

We should do well to consider the evidence from elsewhere, and unregulated countries provide some evidence of what may happen. During an earlier debate I mentioned a survey in Scotland. One in five of the shops that replied to that survey admitted that they did not give any premium pay whatever for working on a Sunday, and more than one in three did not give a day off in lieu. That is what will happen if we have purely voluntary arrangements here. There will be a continued erosion and continued downward pressure on rates of pay.

In a study of 900 small retailers in Cambridge, Coventry, York, Wales and London surveyed in 1993 by the department of applied economics at Cambridge university, two thirds of the staff working on Sunday received no premium payments whatever. In New Zealand, where legislation almost identical to that in the Bill was recently introduced, the Second Sweating Commission, set up in 1990 to consider the conditions of employment of shop workers, concluded:

"The extension of shop trading hours has gone hand in hand with the deterioration of employee rates of pay and conditions. Extensions to shop trading hours strengthen the position of the employers . . . while . . . weakening and handicapping the . . . ability to improve [employees'] wages and conditions".

That is the main reason for the amendment, and the reason why we must build in proper remuneration for people already being required to sacrifice the time that they want to spend at home with their families on Sunday.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) rightly asked for two votes at the end of the debate, because there is another issue associated with the group of amendments—the number of hours that people work. When hon. Members voted for the semi-deregulatory option last year, they believed that people would work for a total of six hours. That is not the case. The time when the shop is being prepared beforehand and cleared up afterwards is an extension of the six hours, so that we already have the eight hours that many in the Shopping Hours Reform Council and others have on their agenda. We know where that is leading—down what the hon. Member for Deptford called the slippery slope.

If the amendments are not accepted, no one in his right mind will be able to carry on supporting the Bill. Anyone who gave it the benefit of the doubt on previous votes must surely change his or her vote on Report, and reduce the number of premises that will be allowed to open on Sunday. I hope that we shall be able to return to that debate in the context of whatever we decide today. We should not rely on a vote on Third Reading. It is all very well for some to say we shall go back to the 1950 position if we proceed to a Third Reading vote that simply negatives the whole Bill, but most of us do not want to go back to that position. We want proper employee protection and reasonable remuneration, and we want to tighten the categories of shops that can open on Sundays—the very provisions that the hon. Member for Ogmore proposed in his private Member's Bill last year.

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): I shall speak to amendment No. 60, but I also support the other amendments in the names of my hon. Friends and all that has been said about them. I ask hon. Members to consider a minimum hourly rate because, although there is an amendment on double pay, it has already been said that double nothing is still nothing. There is a minimum level of pay that should apply in any society that regards itself as having any semblance of decency. The suggested formula linked to social security payments would not give a fortune to people who turn out to work on Sunday, but it would provide a reasonable return for a proper day's work, especially for a Sunday-only worker.

The old-fashioned idea of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work was a good one. It is still good, but regrettably people are working for less than £1 an hour these days. Indeed, this morning I heard of someone working for 80p an hour. Hon. Members may ask why on earth people agree to work for so little, but the answer is clear. Hon. Members who take the time to visit their constituencies and move among the people who live there know that there is considerable pressure on people to earn a few more bob to look after themselves and their families. Unemployment appears to be endemic in this society. The idea that people can come to a voluntary agreement about how much they will sell their labour for is nonsense. The truth is that with unemployment so high—notwithstanding the small but welcome decreases, it looks as though it will stay high and we do not know the true level—it is not possible for an individual worker to be in a position of equality with an employer which would enable him or her to negotiate a proper rate of pay.

Ms Eagle: Does my hon. Friend agree that Conservative Members who trust the market to preserve premium payments, and who therefore oppose statutory premium payments for Sunday working, are being naive about the dynamics of how the market works? Does he also agree that proof positive of the downward pressure on wages is provided by what has happened in former wages council industries since wages councils were abolished? Wages in those industries have plummeted from what were already low enough levels to rates such as he has just mentioned.

Mr. Purchase: My hon. Friend is right. Her experience in the trade union movement has shown her clearly the dynamics of the market as they affect supply of and demand for labour. Unfortunately, thousands of people who work for a pittance on Sundays, and on other days, have no real knowledge or experience of how to maximise their position within the market. Inevitably such people have to fall back on the Houses of Parliament to offer them some kind of protection consistent with decency in a decent society. That is certain.

I turn briefly to the question of those employees who are covered by trade union agreements and who have good representation. The calculation that I offer, which is based

on social security levels, would produce an hourly rate of £3·57. That does not seem much, I agree. However, compared to what is currently paid, at least it makes sense for people to work on Sunday in the belief that they will make a real contribution to, usually, their children.

We have read recently about child poverty in the United Kingdom. I am ashamed as a citizen of the country to learn —I thought that I knew about child poverty—that our children are in such poverty and that we are in the bottom quartile of any league table. I know that those people who will work on Sundays will be mainly women, single parents and married women. The sole purpose will be to give a little extra to those children. I make an impassioned plea on behalf of children because more than ever they need the benefit of a little more coming into the home. If we as parliamentarians cannot make a law that enables people to look after their children under difficult circumstances, we must ask ourselves whether there is any moral basis on which we can gather as parties and agree that there are certain levels of pay below which no one should be paid.

It is regrettable that the Government have already stated that they will resist double-time working. If that proposal is lost, it would be a disgrace. If they fail to recognise the justice of the case put by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock), at least we should provide some kind of fallback of a modest, hourly rate of £3·57, which would be indexed to social security payments year on year, or whenever they were changed to take account of increases in the cost of living. The overwhelming fraction of people who work in the retail industry and who are not covered by trade union agreements have a right to look to us to offer some minimum protection.

Of course, to offer protection would fly in the face of everything that the Government have been saying. The Government have said that we should get rid of the wages councils, and the International Labour Organisation conventions. The Government have asked why they matter and have said that everybody is free to sell their labour for what they can. However, only under conditions when markets are clearly in demand for labour can workers assert themselves and claim what is rightfully theirs. Those conditions do not apply.

If we cannot guarantee double-time working as my hon. Friend has suggested, we should have a minimum rate of pay. That would still mean that people would earn less than £30 for eight hours' work on a Sunday. We have decided that Sunday is special and that shops are to open only for six hours. Yet we know that that day will run into eight hours, and if one adds the travelling time of possibly half an hour each way, people will be away from home on a Sunday for nine hours. All that I am proposing is that they receive a reward of, probably, less than £30.

In the past month, Conservative Members and, I suspect, Opposition Members, too, have paid £30 just for a bit of dinner in one of the restaurants in London. I have seen them. Yet, when it comes to the vote tonight, I wonder whether they will have the decency to recognise that people working on that special day have a right to a decent level of remuneration.

If we do not establish a minimum rate for Sunday work, there will be Sunday-only workers, working for low wages, which are probably less than the rates for which they work the rest of the week. The people who have to go to work for extra money will be taken on as Sunday-only workers and employers will not be quick to pay the same rate as they pay in the week if there is a reserve army of labour which is ready, forced and with no option but to work for less. Those people will be employed and we will discover scandalous rates of pay.

Soon after, the gaffer would sidle up to them, tell them that they did a good job for him on a Sunday, ask them if they would like to work on a Saturday afternoon and pay them the same rate. Before you can say "Jack Robinson", Dame Janet, you can be absolutely sure that the rates of pay in the retail industry will be pushed down and they shall be not only in the lowest quartile, but right at the bottom of the pay league for people who labour in difficult and, on occasions, dangerous circumstances. In some of the shopping queues in the sales, people need protection.

8.15 pm

I am absolutely serious in saying that it will not be long before the general rate of pay in the retail industry becomes smaller and smaller. Recently, we have witnessed a new phenomenon of large, decent, proper and fair employers buying out trade union representations. Under constraints, the workers may be prepared to take a fistful of dollars or 30 pieces of silver to sell their trade unions rights. In the longer term, with the lack of proper, reasonable and fair employers, we know that they are on to the game and that they intend to come out the winners. By opening on a Sunday, they know that there will be no more sales made, but that the sales will be merely transferred from one day to another.

Our duty is to press the Government as we have never pressed them before and to tell them that they will be accused and be seen as being unfair to people who give up their Sunday for the convenience of those who wish to shop on a Sunday. The people who shop are, in almost every circumstance, better paid than those labouring in the shops. The Government will be seen as unfair and unreasonable in not accepting a minimum rate of pay on Sundays, which is tied to the pathetic levels of social security that we presently endure. I ask the Committee to support the group of amendments.

Ms Jackson: May I say what a pleasure it is to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase). I heartily endorse every argument that he made, but I shall speak to the amendment on premium pay for Sunday workers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) referred to the fact that there is no choice or freedom for millions of people over the decision whether they will work on Sunday. We should consider not only that unemployment has risen to intolerable levels, but that one in four of the poorest people in the entire European Community lives in these islands. Concomitant with unemployment are increasing and deeper levels of poverty throughout Britain. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East pointed out, those who suffer most are invariably the most vulnerable—children.

In my constituency I know of women who are desperate to work on Sunday, even though the rates of pay are shamefully low in a country as rich as ours and when we are so close to the 21st century. Those women want to work for two essential reasons. Sunday is probably the only day on which they are free of their domestic responsibilities, their children, to be able to work to bring home that little bit extra which may mean that their

[Ms Jackson]

children have, for example, a new pair of shoes. Women work on Sunday not because they have empty hours to fill and want to make a little pin money but for the basic essentials of life with which to provide their children. We know that 1·5 million families in which the breadwinner is in full-time employment are eligible to claim family credit. Thus, low rates of pay are becoming the norm rather than the exception.

Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle), I was not at all in two minds over how to vote on the issue of Sunday trading. I have never believed, and I do not believe now, that a Government who have brought in their train the reduction of workers' rights as exercised by trade unions, who have abolished wages councils and who advertise the British work force to our European competitors as the cheapest in Europe will defend workers and workers' wages.

Many women who work on Sundays give up time with their children and time with their partners. One of the arguments advanced on Second Reading was that Sunday shopping was a leisure activity that families should be able to enjoy together. We should bear in mind the fact that women who work on Sundays to provide the basics for their families have given up that possibility, as have their children and partners. They are being asked to subsidise families whose economic circumstances are much better than their own. That is something for which the House should not legislate. The House should legislate for the entire population who will be affected by the Bill.

The House spoke comparatively clearly on the issue of Sunday trading: it did not want total deregulation and it definitely felt that Sunday should still be regarded as something of a special day. One of the easy ways of preserving that special element is to ensure that those who work in the retail industry receive premium payments—that they get double pay.

There was never any doubt in my mind: I knew that the Government would never allow worker protection and would whip against the possibility of double pay on Sunday. But I know that some Conservative Members were prepared to give the Government the benefit of the doubt and went through the Lobby thinking that they would give the Government the opportunity to show that they were concerned for workers in the transmogrification —if that is the correct word—of Sunday from a special day into a partially special day. Regrettably, none of them is present at the moment, but I would say to them that they can make the difference in the vote tonight. We have an absolute duty to our people to ensure that, in this instance, the Government truly mean what they say. They should not whip for total deregulation and they should allow everyone to exercise his or her conscience in respect of partial deregulation on the understanding that the Bill would afford sufficient protection to those who, for a variety of reasons, have to work on Sundays. I say to those Conservative Members that they should make their Government—for the first time in my experience of this Administration—deliver their promise.

Mrs. Wise: I do not think that the Government are naive in wanting to leave wages, including wages on Sunday, to market forces. They are under no illusions: they know that the process will result in lower and lower wages. They want to make true their statement that low pay is better than no pay. They are driving social security rates down as near to no pay as they can manage, compelling people to feel that low pay is better. That is absolutely deplorable. It is deplorable from Monday to Saturday and it is deplorable on Sunday. The Minister himself said that Sunday has always been treated differently. Are we not therefore entitled to expect that difference to be followed through, especially in these times when wages are being driven down?

It is deplorable that the number of hon. Members on the Conservative Benches has varied between two and five. Of course, we do not expect them to be interested in this matter. What we expect and what we get are crocodile tears and pseudo-concern for the work force. They say that people want to work on Sunday. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) that the reason why people volunteer to work on Sunday is straightforward and simple: it is not just that they want the money; it is that they need the money. Those of my hon. Friends who have talked about desperation hit the nail on the head. People are desperate to earn the money.

At the moment, for many people, going to work on Sunday is more remunerative than going to work on any other day. I suggest that there are three reasons why many large companies are willing to pay double time or significant premium payments short of double time. The first reason is trade union organisation, which long ago produced a better rate for Sunday—buttressed in the past by the fact that there was a legal minimum rate for Sunday working. Until 1986, the wages councils could deal with, for example, premium pay for unsocial hours, holidays and Sunday work. There has always been some Sunday work in shops and the legal minimum was double time.

The trade unions built on that and secured voluntary agreements with the better employers to pay double time, which outlived the abolition of the power of the wages councils to fix Sunday rates. Double time is not a new idea on the part of the trade unions or of Labour Members. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) said, it has a long tradition—it is the norm and the custom and it should be the absolute minimum.

Another reason why some employers still pay double time is that, until now, workers have had other choices and have had to be attracted into working on a Sunday. Until very recently, most shops did not open on a Sunday and workers had other choices. If retailers wanted to attract workers to work on Sunday, they had to do something special, and double time was the answer.

The third reason is that many employers have been trying to induce people to work illegally. Given that they were trying to persuade workers to break the law, it is not surprising that they had to have something substantial on offer to those workers.

Once this Bill and the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill have gone through, at least two of those conditions will no longer apply: more and more shops will be opening and it will be harder for people to find alternatives. There will not need to be inducements for illegal work because Sunday working will be legal.

Until a short time ago, it was hard to persuade people to work on Sunday. I shall tell the House about workers who picketed against Sunday work two years ago—they stood outside their shops with placards protesting against Sunday work. Some of those workers now work on Sunday because conditions have deteriorated in the past two years

and they feel more driven into Sunday work. With this situation of workers being driven into such work, we need legal protection as we have never needed it before.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I agree fully with the line of my hon. Friend's argument about Sunday shop work. Is she aware that if the Government's proposal goes through, the next thing is that deregulated street sweepers, refuse collectors and all those other grades will suffer in exactly the same way? It does not stop at shop work; it goes on. There will be virtually a compulsion for workers in the public cleansing sector to clean shopping centres because they will be so busy on Sundays.

8.30 pm

Mrs. Wise: My hon. Friend is right. Of course, this goes far beyond those who will be immediately affected by the Bill. That point has been made several times this evening. There is a danger for all workers if Sunday becomes simply another working day, and that is exactly the road down which we are headed.

Some of those employers who are most vociferously in favour of Sunday trading were against it not long ago. Tesco and Sainsburys have not always been in the Sunday trading lobby. What changed the minds of many large retailers was the chill wind of competition. Some retailers were willing to break the law. They stole a march on those who traded legally, made a killing and forced retailers who wanted to trade legally into the same shabby route of illegal trading. That is what happened. Competition has been an engine for more and more illegal trading. That is exactly what will happen with wage rates.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but she is going rather wide of the group of amendments relating to a limitation on hours and rates of pay.

Mrs. Wise: I am sorry if that is how it seemed, Dame Janet. I was simply explaining the force of competition. The force of competition will be felt, especially with regard to wage rates.

Many of the firms which now negotiate with trade unions, and which seek to be better and fairer employers, will find that unless they as well as their workers are buttressed by legal provision, they will be driven even against their will to cut wages and make it harder to enter into reasonable voluntary agreements. Better employers need worker protection to be written into the Bill, especially with regard to wage rates, or they will suffer the pressure of competition and their workers will suffer the consequences.

Those who say that they want to work because they need the money and they are getting double time, and think that this will continue indefinitely, will find that they have been living in a fool's paradise because of the relentless driving down of wages as a result of the relentless chill wind of competition. It is imperative for hon. Members on both sides of the Committee, who have regard for the needs of workers and better employers to be protected against unfair competition, to vote for double time and protection against excessive hours being worked on Sundays. Without such protection, we will be on a slippery slope. Many workers who now say that they want to work will in the not-too-distant future say to hon. Members, "How could you let this happen?" They will have undercut their conditions and those of shopworkers in general.

Mr. Donald Anderson: In a series of powerful speeches, my hon. Friends have shown that the amendments relating to hours of work and premium payments should be at the heart of the Bill. They relate to dilution, the wretched effect on other sectors of workers and the increasing pressure on families. In spite of that, it is saddening but perhaps not surprising that throughout this debate we have heard from only three Tory Members. That shows how little significance the Government attach to the provisions relating to the protection of vulnerable sections of our society.

From the start, many of us argued that, essentially, there were not three options but two options before the House —deregulation and the attempt at an orderly regulation of what happens on Sunday. Effectively, the Shopping Hours Reform Council option was the most that those who truly wanted total deregulation could get at that time. They realised that there would be slippage. If we allowed six hours, why not allow seven or eight hours? That was the most that they would get.

Is not removal of all protection on wages wholly consistent with the philosophy of deregulation? It is sad that a number of my hon. Friends naively placed faith in the Government and were prepared to give them the benefit of their judgment. The Government have now proved that it was highly misplaced faith. They do not want to include forms of protection for workers. Indeed, the way in which they are reacting to the amendment suggests that they had a hidden agenda from the start: to remove all premium payments. The Bill is a means to do that.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said, perhaps about 11 per cent. of the work force work on Sunday at present, but the more people who work on Sunday, the more who will be forced to work in ancillary trades and the more Sunday will become just like any other day. If Sunday becomes just like any other day, as the Government would like, with all the attendant social disadvantages that we foresee, what possible argument can there be for having premium payments on that day? This is what the Government want; it is consistent with the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. Indeed, if that Bill had been before the House earlier, that would have fundamentally altered the basis on which this Bill has been debated. Why would we need freedom to shop on Sunday if there were freedom to shop every hour of the day on the other six days?

There will be slippage. That is why we say that there must be statutory protection as set out in the amendment. Voluntary protection is good only at the time that it is entered into. It is absolutely clear that the army of distressed people—Tesco workers and others—who were dragooned by their employers to lobby us during earlier debates were put up to that by their employers. We know that they had draft letters to send to us. Those same shop troops—the poor, bloody infantry of Tesco—will be dropped as soon as it suits Tesco to do so. Indeed, any premium payments that are now paid will be dropped when it is convenient for employers to do so. They were useful at the time, and when they are no longer useful and have served their purpose, they will be dropped.

I promised the Whips that I would be brief, so I shall end on this note. For the Government, there is a basic

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

question. Do they acknowledge in any way that Sunday should be different? The workers will have to give up their family life and leisure pursuits on a Sunday, and will have the hassle of going into work. The travelling time and so on will mean that it will be not just for six hours, but for much more. Do the Government accept that those workers should in some way be compensated, because Sunday is special?

We cannot rely on the employers to compensate workers. We know jolly well that there will be dilution as soon as it becomes practicable. The only way to compensate and protect those workers is by statute. That is why I, and my hon. Friends, support the amendment.

Mr. Bayley: I regret that the House voted at Second Reading to give the public the right to shop in any shop whose owners wished it to open for a six-hour period on Sunday. The House voted to allow the big chain stores to obtain a greater market share and to make bigger profits, at the expense of smaller businesses, some of which will go out of business if the Bill is passed.

I shall speak briefly on the matter. This amendment is, in fact, the crunch. The Commitee must decide whether to balance the right of big firms to make bigger profits against the right for their workers to get an enhanced payment on the day when the firms are making those bigger profits. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) has talked about "back to basics", and I have not been surprised at the number of people who, in letters to me, used that phrase in relation to Sunday trading.

For example, my constituent Mr. Blakeborough wrote: "The PM talks about 'back to basics'. For many people like myself Sunday is very real 'basic'; it is God's day, and by the way Tories MPs voted they have shown that materialism is all." I hope that those Conservatives who have put their faith in that slogan will vote on a "back to basics" basis this evening. That would make sure that higher profits for the big chain stores are balanced by a decent enhanced rate of pay for shopworkers who work on Sunday.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) said that 50 years ago when he worked on the railways and in retailing he got double pay for working on Sundays. Are we saying that we are now abandoning the basic double pay rate for Sundays that applied 50 years ago? If the Government want shops to open on Sunday—clearly they do—the Committee must consider at what cost that will be. If at the end of the 20th century it is sweated labour of the work force, the cost will be too high.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I shall start by referring to amendment No. 50, which would keep Sunday working to the equivalent of a normal eight-hour day. I doubt whether the large stores, which are confined to six hours opening by the Bill, would want to employ staff on Sunday for anywhere near as long as eight hours, whatever the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) might think. It would not be particularly good business to keep workers in a shop when it was not open and trading.

The difficulty with the amendments is how they apply to small shops. The hours of small shops are unrestricted under all of the choices that have been put before the House. A small shop could reasonably decide to open from 9 am to 6 pm. That would be nine hours, and the amendment would cut across any such decision and result in the shop having the trouble and expense of having to shut earlier than it wished. The shop would otherwise have to employ another Sunday worker for the latter part of day, and probably for a length of time for which nobody would be interested in working.

The principal reason why I must say no to the amendment is that employers and employees in retailing, as in virtually every other occupation, should be and are free to decide between them what arrangements they enter into. Having entered into them, they should keep them. The schedule creates a massive exception to the rule, so that any employee who also works on a weekday for the same employer will have the enormous additional leverage over the terms of his Sunday work by being able to opt out. The Sunday-only worker can leave the job only if he does not like the terms but, equally, they are terms that he found acceptable when he took the job.

That is the same as in every other industry. Why should hours be limited in that way just for shop work? Why should hours be restricted in shops when they are not in factories, in the leisure industry and in catering? Indeed, hours are only limited across the board when safety is the issue.

I suspect that there will be as many Sunday workers who regret the shortness of working time available in large shops as there are those who find that the working day in small shops is too long. I do not believe that Opposition Members have made out a case for a restriction on working hours in the retail trade that does not exist elsewhere.

8.45 pm

At the heart of the group of amendments is the fact that it would bring double pay for Sunday work. Hon. Members have spoken passionately in support of double time, and they will have been expecting that I would not be able to give them encouragement on the amendments. We are at one on the general principle that shopworkers should be able to choose whether to work on Sunday. Again, I am sure that the freedom of choice—this is directly relevant to pay—will give Sunday workers an effective lever in their negotiations with employers about their rates of pay for Sunday work.

It would not be right for the law to step in and set those rates that the amendments would. It is not the Government's job to do that. Having established that employees have the freedom to choose whether to work on Sunday, it is up to employers and employees to make their own terms.

Mr. Purchase: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: No, I will not because I know that the Committee wants to come to a decision. I am sorry, because I would love to debate with the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he will understand.

Employees and employers must make their own terms depending on individual businesses. The situation may vary sharply. Some large and profitable retailers will be able to afford double time pay. They pay it now, and they will go on doing so. Often, however, smaller shops will not be able to do so. The amendments would simply have the effect of driving them out of business or preventing them from opening on Sundays. Either way, there would be fewer jobs and, once again, wage fixing would have proven to be the enemy of employment. It would inevitably reduce the range and quality of retail services that are available to the public.

Ms Glenda Jackson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: I am sorry, but I do not think that I can give way. The Committee wants to reach a conclusion.

For the reasons that I have given, I must ask the Committee to reject all the amendments in the group.

Ms Ruddock: The Minister just asked why hours should be limited in shops when they are not elsewhere. It is the Opposition's view that hours should be limited and that workers should not have to work unsocial and unlimited hours, especially for poverty wages. For that reason, we shall seek to return to the issue at a later stage. With the leave of the House, I shall not put amendment No. 50 and its group to the vote. It is my understanding that it will be possible after we have moved the next group of amendments for us to have a separate Division on amendment No. 65.

On amendment No. 65, if the Government's view was that some small shops would have a problem with paying double-time payments, Ministers could have tabled an amendment to cover that. I remind the Minister, however, that those small shops are frequently paying pitiable amounts in wages. If the worker is getting but £1 an hour for six or eight hours on Sunday, double that amount is still a small amount for the employer to pay. It is essential, however, for the employee to have that double payment. I remind the Minister that, from all our experience, it is premium paying that creates the volunteers. If the voluntary principle in the Bill is to be meaningful, it needs to be coupled with double-time payments.

The Minister has failed completely to recognise that linkage. For that reason, we shall seek to have a separate vote on this important issue after discussing the next group of amendments. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Barron: I beg to move amendment No. 52, in page 18, line 45, at end insert—

'or refused or proposed to refuse to give an opting-in notice, or having given such a notice refused or proposed to refuse to agree to do shop work on Sunday or on a particular Sunday, as required under paragraph 3(1)(b) above'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 61, in page 18, line 49, at end insert—

'(5) In determining for the purposes of this paragraph whether the dismissal of a shop worker was fair or unfair, it shall be for the employer to show that the reason (or, if there was more than one the principal reason) for the dismissal was not a reason falling within sub-paragaraph (1) or (3) above.'.

No. 62, in page 19, line 23, at end insert—

'(4) In determining for the purposes of this paragraph whether the dismissal of a shop worker was fair or unfair, it shall be for the employer to show that the reason (or, if there was more than one the principal reason) for which he was selected for dismissal was not a reason falling within sub-paragaraph (1) or (3) above.'.

No. 54, in page 19, line 43, at end insert—

'or refused or proposed to refuse to give an option-in-notice, or having given such a notice refused or proposed to refuse to agree to do shop work on sunday or on a particular Sunday, as required under paragraph 3(1)(b) above'.

No. 59, page 22, line 27, at end insert—

'Enforcement

20.—(1) An employee who presents a complaint of unfair dismissal alleging that the dismissal is unfair by virtue of paragraphs 7 or 8 above may apply to the industrial tribunal for interim relief.

(2) The tribunal shall not entertain an application for interim relief unless it is presented to the tribunal before the end of seven days immediately following the effective date of termination (whether before, on or after that date).

21.—(1) An industrial tribunal shall determine an application for interim relief as soon as practicable after receiving the application.

(2) The tribunal shall give to the employer, not later than seven days before the hearing, a copy of the application, together with notice of the date, time and place of hearing.

(3) The tribunal shall not exercise any power it has of postponing the hearing of an application for interim relief except where it is satisfied that special circumstances exist which justify it in doing so.

22.—(1) If on hearing an application for interim relief it appears to the tribunal that it is likely that on determining the complaint to which the application relates that it will find that, by virtue of paragraph 7 or 8 above, the complainant has been unfairly dismissed, the following provisions apply.

(2) The tribunal shall announce its findings and explain to both parties (if present) what powers the tribunal may exercise on the application and in what circumstances it will exercise them, and shall ask the employer (if present) whether he is willing, pending the determination or settlement of the complaint-

(a) to reinstate the employee, that is to say, to treat him in all respects as if he had not been dismissed, or

(b) if not, to re-engage him in another job on terms and conditions not less favourable than those which would have been applicable to him if he had not been dismissed.

(3) For this purpose "terms and conditions not less favourable than those which would have been applicable to him if he had not been dismissed" means as regards seniority, pension rights and other similar rights that the period prior to the dismissal shall be regarded as continuous with his employment following the dismissal.

(4) If the employer states that he is willing to reinstate the employee, the tribunal shall make an order to that effect.

(5) If the employer states that he is willing to re-engage the employee in another job, and specifies the terms and conditions on which he is willing to do so, the tribunal shall ask the employee whether he is willing to accept the job on those terms and conditions; and

(a) if the employee is willing to accept the job on those terms and conditions, the tribunal shall make an order to that effect, and

(b) if he is not, then, if the tribunal is of the opinion that the refusal is reasonable, the tribunal shall make an order for the continuation of his contract of employment, and otherwise the tribunal shall make no order.

(6) If on the hearing of an application for interim relief the employer fails to attend before the tribunal, or states that he is unwilling either to reinstate the employee or re-engage him as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2), the tribunal shall make an order for the continuation of the employee's contract of employment.

23.—(1) An order for the continuation of a contract of employment is an order that the contract of employment continue in force—

(a) for the purposes of pay or any other benefit derived from the employment, seniority, pension rights and other similar matters, and

(b) for the purpose of determining for any purpose the period for which the employee has been continuously employed,

from the date of its termination (whether before or after the making of the order) until the determination or settlement of the complaint.

(2) Where the tribunal makes such an order it shall specify in the order the amount which is to be paid by the employer to the employee by way of pay in respect of each normal pay period, or part of any such period, falling between the date of dismissal and the determination or settlement of the complaint.

(3) Subject as follows, the amount so specified shall be that which the employee could reasonably have been expected to earn during that period, or part, and shall be paid-

(a) in the case of payment for any such period falling wholly or partly after the making of the order, on the normal pay day for that period, and

(b) in the case of a payment for any past period, within such time as may be specified in the order.

[The Second Deputy Chairman]

(4) If an amount is payable in respect of part of a normal pay period, the amount shall be calculated by reference to the whole period and reduced proportionately.

(5) Any payment made to an employee by an employer under his contract of employment, or by way of damages for breach of that contract, in respect of a normal pay period or part of any such period shall go towards discharging the employer's liability in respect of that period under sub-paragraph (2), and conversely any payment under that sub-paragraph in respect of a period shall go towards discharging any liability of the employer under, or in respect of the breach of, the contract of employment in respect of that period.

(6) If an employee, on or after being dismissed by his employer, receives a lump sum which, or part of which, is in lieu of wages but is not referrable to any normal pay period, the tribunal shall take the payment into account in determining the amount of pay to be payable in pursuance of any such order.

(7) For the purposes of this paragraph the amount which an employee could reasonably have been expected to earn, his normal pay period and the normal pay day for each such period shall be determined as if he had not been dismissed.

24.—(1) If on the application of an employee an industrial tribunal is satisfied that the employer has not complied with the terms of an order for the reinstatement or re-engagement of the employee, the tribunal shall-

(a) make an order for the continuation of the employee's contract of employment, and

(b) order the employer to pay the employee such compensation as the tribunal considers just and equitable in all the circumstances having regard-

(i) to the infringement of the employee's right to to be reinstated or re-engaged in pursuance of the order, and

(ii) to any loss suffered by the employee in consequence of the non-compliance.

(2) Paragraph 23 applies to an order under sub-paragraph (1)(a) as in relation to an order under paragraph 22.

(3) If on the application of an employee an industrial tribunal is satisfied that the employer has not complied with the terms of an order for the continuation of a contract of employment, the following provisions apply.

(4) If the non-compliance consists of a failure to pay an amount of pay specified in the order, the tribunal shall determine the amount owed by the employer on the date of the determination.

25.—Where a dismissal is unfair by virtue of paragraph 7 or 8 above, the amount of the basic award of compensation shall be not less that £2,700.

26.—(1) Where an industrial tribunal makes an award of compensation for unfair dismissal in a case where the dismissal is unfair by virtue of paragraphs 7 or 8 above then, unless

(a) the complainant does not request the tribunal to make an order for reinstatement or re-engagement, or

(b) the case falls within section 73(2) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (cases where employer takes requisite steps to renew employment or re-engage employee),

the award shall include a special award calculated in accordance with paragraph 27 below.

(2) Section 71(2)(b) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (additional award of compensation in case of failure to comply with an order for reinstatement or re-engagement) does not apply in a case where the dismissal is unfair by virtue of paragraphs 7 or 8 above.

27.—(1) Subject to the following provisions of this section, the amount of the special award shall be one week's pay multiplied by 104, or £13,400, whichever is the greater, but shall not exceed £26,800.

(2) Where the award of compensation is made under section 71(2)(a) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (compensation where employee not reinstated or re-engaged in accordance with order) then, unless the employer satisfies the tribunal that it was not practicable to comply with the order for reinstatement or re-engagement, the amount of the special award shall be increased to one week's pay multiplied by 156, or £20,100, whichever is the greater.

(3) Where the employer has engaged another worker who has agreed to do work on Sunday, the tribunal shall not take that fact into account in determining practicability nor shall the tribunal take into account the employee's refusal to work on Sunday.

(4) Where the employer has engaged a permanent replacement for the complainant, the tribunal shall not take that fact into account in determining for the purposes of sub-paragraph (2) whether it was practicable to comply with an order for reinstatement or re-engagement unless the employer shows that it was not practicable for him to arrange for the complainant's work to be done without engaging a permanent replacement.'.

Mr. Barron: As the Committee wants to come to a conclusion quickly on the subject of the previous debate, I shall be brief.

The Minister will be well aware by now that amendment No. 52 is a probing amendment. We wish to find out exactly how the protection of people who refuse to work on Sundays will be policed under the schedule, particularly under paragraph 7. Paragraph 7(3) clearly states that workers are protected from unfair dismissal

"if the reason for it . . . was that the shop worker gave, or proposed to give, an opting-out notice to the employer."

In the amendment we also want to insert

"or refused or proposed to refuse to give an opting-in notice".

Amendment No. 61 proposes to insert into the policing arrangements in paragraph 7 the provisions in the Employment Act 1978 under which an employer has to prove that an employee was not unfairly dismissed as opposed to an employee having to prove that he was unfairly dismissed. The Minister may think that the schedule places the burden of proof on one group in a dispute under the Sunday Trading Bill as opposed to another—*[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman. There are far too many private conversations going on. They are making it difficult for me to hear the hon. Gentleman, and that I wish to do.

Mr. Barron: I hope that the Minister understands why we tabled amendment No. 61 and that he will respond. Is the test within the policing provisions of the Sunday Trading Bill that the employer—as in normal circumstances—has to prove that the employee has not been unfairly dismissed rather than the employee proving that he has been unfairly dismissed?

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As I said, the probe—if I had time to respond to it—would be satisfied in that the matters that worry those who tabled the amendment are taken care of by the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman particularly referred me to amendment No. 61. I understand his worry. I know that the Deakin Ewing report asserts that the burden will fall on the employee to prove that he has been dismissed. Paragraph 7 of schedule 4 provides protection by means of a cross-reference to the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, which requires the employee to show that he has been dismissed. It is then for the employer to show the cause and that he acted reasonably in making it a ground for dismissal. That should satisfy the hon. Gentleman. If he would like, I will write to him on the matter so that he can discuss my reply with his hon. Friends well before Report stage and take counsel on whether to pursue the matter further.

Mr. Barron: In view of what the Minister has said, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment proposed: No. 65, in page 19, line 29, at end insert——

'Right to double-time payments

9A.—(1) A shop worker working on a Sunday shall be remunerated at twice the hourly rate applicable on a weekday to that job.

(2) It shall be the duty of the employer of a shop worker working on a Sunday to give him a written statement of the hourly rate applicable for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above and of how that rate has been determined.

(3) A complaint by a shop worker that he has not been remunerated as required by sub-paragraph (1) above, that he has not been given any statement required by sub-paragraph (2) above or that he is aggrieved by anything in or by any omission from such a statement may be presented to an industrial tribunal.

(4) An individual tribunal shall not consider a complaint under sub-paragraph (3) above unless it is presented to the tribunal before the end of the period of three months beginning when the act complained of was done.

(5) Where an industrial tribunal finds that a complaint presented to it under sub-paragraph (3) above is well founded the tribunal shall make such of the following as it considers just and equitable—

(a) an order declaring the rights of the complainant and the respondent in relation to the act to which the complaint relates, and

(b) an order requiring the respondent to pay to the complainant compensation not exceeding the limit for the time being imposed by section 75 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.'.

—[Ms Ruddock.]

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 269, Noes 299.

Division No. 115] **[8.54 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George

Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel

Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Ms Ruddock: I beg to move amendment No. 55, in page 21, leave out lines 15 to 29 and insert—

'13—(1) Where under the contract of employment of a shop worker who is either a protected shop worker or an opted-out shop worker—

(a) the employer is, or may be, required to provide him with shop work for a specified number of hours each week,

(b) the shop worker has done shop work on Sunday (whether before or after the commencement date), and

(c) the shop worker gives the employer written notice, signed and dated by the shop worker to the effect that this paragraph is to apply,

the employer shall be under a duty as far as reasonably practicable to provide him with shop work on weekdays in excess of the hours normally so worked by the shop worker on weekdays before he ceased to do shop work on Sundays to the extent that his earnings from the shop work so provided are equivalent to the earnings of the shop worker from working on Sunday on the last occasion when he so worked.

(2) Any failure of the employer to offer alternative hours of work or to remunerate the shop worker as required by sub-paragraph (1) above shall be regarded for the purposes of paragraph 10 above as a detriment.'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this we may take amendment No. 39, in page 21, line 52, at end insert—

Right to Additional Hours

'15a. Where an employer has available alternative work, an employee who has regularly worked on Sunday and subsequently gives notice of opting out has the right to be offered additional weekday hours.'.

Ms Ruddock: In putting these matters before the Committee, we are concerned specifically about endeavouring to maintain the vital voluntary principle that is attached to Sunday working, despite the way in which Conservative Members have just voted, because we believe that this principle is important and that premium payment is inherent in it. We seek, through the amendment, to ensure that where established employees who have been working on a Sunday and who, in many cases, have been in receipt of a premium payment seek to forgo Sunday work, they should not suffer any detriment in making that choice.

We believe that it is impossible freely to choose to give up Sunday working if, as a consequence, an employee will lose a substantial amount of income. We believe that, in many cases, an employer will have scope to enable the worker to make up his or her hours on other days of the week.

Threats to the voluntary principle result not just from employer pressure and employee intimidation—although we are all familiar with both and know that they are real and, sadly, could be widespread—but from sheer economic compulsion. More than three quarters of shopworkers—especially part-time employees—are women, and they are among the lowest-paid workers in the country. It is the pressure to gain some income that drives many people to work on Sunday.

If retail employees doing additional work on Sunday seek to give up that work, it is essential that the voluntary principle be underpinned through recognition of the need of the workers to maintain a certain standard of living.

Mr. Pike: I know of people who work voluntarily on Sunday but have been told clearly that, as the work pattern in their trade now involves a seven-day week, they will not have a full week's work if they do not work on Sunday. I assume that that is the type of vision that my hon. Friend is getting at in the amendment.

Ms RuddocR: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. He makes an important point.

If a worker has been engaged and is working on a Sunday, that worker is obviously benefiting from wages for Sundays, whether double or plain-time. If the voluntary principle enshrined in the Bill is to be meaningful, it is obvious to us that many workers will not feel able voluntarily to opt out of Sunday working unless they can find some other means of getting the additional income. Many employers will have the scope to offer workers alternative hours during weekdays.

Most people who have been working on Sundays will be valued workers. The amendment seeks to persuade employers that they deserve such consideration. We should, therefore, adopt the amendment so that they can have a real choice as to whether to work on Sundays.

In an earlier debate, the Minister suggested that there was no real comparison between the mechanism for opting in or out and a worker giving up his or her work. He said that opting in or out of Sunday working was a much smaller decision. I do not wholly agree with him because, for most Sunday workers, opting out will be a major decision. Even with the voluntary principle, most shopworkers will not easily opt out, for the reason that we have expressed again and again in this debate—they are there for the money. That is why they will work and will not easily give up that work.

If employees are not to be put in the position where they have no choice, they must be able to seek alternative hours. That is the thrust of the amendments. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to them.

Mr. Pike: This is an important issue concerning the protection of workers' rights. I spoke at length on this issue in a previous debate on the Bill on the Floor of the House.

We all know that there are volunteers and volunteers. When I did my national service, on the first day after we reported at the Royal Marines training centre in Lympstone we were asked to step forward as volunteers. We all did so because we felt that we had to. Workers feel the same way.

Many workers will volunteer to work on Sundays because they desperately need the money and know that they will not be employed if they do not take that option. Some workers have come to me saying that, although they originally chose to work on a Sunday as a part of their working pattern, they no longer wished to do so but had been clearly told by their employers that they could not be provided with a full working week within the other six days without doing a number of hours on a Sunday. They were told that, unless they wished to reduce their working week—they were receiving premium payments, so there was no argument about that being paid—they could not change to working on a different day because the working pattern was already established for those days. At that stage, Sunday working no longer remains voluntary but becomes compulsory. The only way that employees can get out of it is to opt out and reduce the number of hours that they work.

[Mr. Pike]

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) was right to move the amendment, because it seeks to protect people who want to work Sundays now but may want to change in future. They want genuine protection for their working hours and earnings. We all know that, unless such assurance, as in the amendment, is written in the Bill, it will be meaningless and workers will not get the protection to which I—like many others—believe they are entitled.

Mr. Alton: I have some sympathy with the amendment. If it were passed in some form, perhaps not as it is written on the amendment paper, it would protect workers who opt not to work on Sundays. If the spirit of the amendment were accepted, it would mean that they could substitute another day instead and shift their working hours around.

The problem is in amendment No. 55, which contains the words

"as far as reasonably practicable"

That clearly is a let-out measure. I should be interested to hear the Minister's view. I question how that could be enforced in law. It would allow an employer always to argue that it is not reasonably practicable for him to make such arrangements. Even if the amendment were accepted, it would not achieve what the hon. Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) have argued for.

I hope that the Minister will assure us that, if the amendment does not achieve its objectives, he will at least accept the arguments that are being put tonight and look again at the principle, either on Report or in another place.

9.15 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is an optimist. I am afraid that, although I agree with some of his comments, I will not be able to give any encouragement that a similar amendment could meet those objections or that it would be right to do so. The amendments would ensure that shopworkers who have worked on Sundays but cease to do so are provided with additional weekday work to compensate them for the earnings that they would have made on Sunday or, in the case of amendment No. 39, if I follow it, for just the additional hours.

I do not see how that could be done without being unfair to employees who worked only on weekdays but who would also like to work some extra hours during the week. They would find ex-Sunday workers getting preference for any extra hours going and, if amendment No. 55 had been carried, getting those hours at double time, too. There would be no justice in ex-Sunday workers getting priority over weekday workers. I believe that it would be unfair to employers as well, who would have to pay for the extra hours worked during the week and employ somebody else to do the Sunday work that had been vacated. That would be a very large extra burden, pushing up costs sharply and reducing efficiency.

The hon. Members who put their names to amendment No. 55 have, like the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), at least partly recognised how unreasonable it is.

Ms Ruddock *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Lady wants to tell me again that the amendment is reasonable.

Ms Ruddock: The Minister correctly anticipates what I am about to say. We introduced reasonableness to the amendment because we have recognised some of the things that he is saying. In promoting the amendment, we seek to encourage best practice among employers. We believe that there is scope for that and that many employers might voluntarily make such arrangements, recognising the worth of their workers. We are attempting to give a little strength to that idea.

Mr. Lloyd: Like the hon. Lady, I am always in favour of best practice. It is a question of what we should write into the law.

There is another difficulty, however, and here I return to what was said by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill. What does "reasonably practicable" mean? The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) has formed an idea that is very satisfactory in terms of guidance and codes of practice, but it is not necessarily satisfactory in terms of law. It is hard for an employer to know what is "reasonably practicable" in legal terms. That would be extremely difficult for an employee—who would have to take the matter to an industrial tribunal—to assess and it would be impossible for the tribunal to judge, unless it engaged in a management audit of a shop's manning arrangements and adjudicated accordingly.

I believe that, if amendment No. 55 is passed, no one will know where he or she is. People will not know whether a shop is acting within the law if it fails to find extra weekday hours for ex-Sunday workers. If amendment No. 39 is passed, an unfair and, in some cases, insupportable burden will be placed on employers, to the especial detriment of weekday workers who would like extra hours during the week.

Mr. Pike: I have often heard Ministers defend the words "reasonably practicable" in other contexts. It seems strange that the Minister of State is not prepared to accept that wording now.

Does the Minister not think it reasonable for an employee who now accepts Sunday working as a voluntary part of his working week to be given a first option to return to a working week involving the other six days if his circumstances change at some future date? Would not that constitute a fair extension of the voluntary principle involved in the legislation?

Mr. Lloyd: First, I am in favour of the use of the phrase "reasonably practicable" in legislation when it is "reasonably practicable" to use it. In these circumstances, I do not consider it practicable. Secondly, the question for most shopworkers who work full time during the week is whether, now that it is lawful to work on Sundays, they will do additional work on that day. I accept that the circumstances cited by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) could arise, but, under schedule 4, they would arise only if an individual shopworker chose to accept terms of that nature. An existing shopworker will start from scratch —that is, whatever was the agreement made on day one; a new worker will have to opt into not just the idea of Sunday work but the particular arrangements proposed by the employer.

Mr. Pike: Is the Minister saying that the existing shopworker has that option only once and cannot reverse his choice later?

Mr. Lloyd: Like anyone else, he will have the choice of reversing on three months' notice. Indeed, if the existing shopworker has not formally opted into Sunday work, he can continue to work on Sundays and stop at any time without notice. It is a complicated point but, if the hon. Gentleman reads the schedule carefully, he will find that the protections extend further than he seems to think.

The right to opt out is there for Sunday workers to use if their consciences or circumstances change. Employers should be under no obligation to make up the time that employees have freely chosen to give up. Of course, many employers will want, if they can, to find extra weekday time for valued Sunday workers who can no longer continue to work on Sundays. The larger employers will be better placed in that regard. I applaud such efforts and hope that they will be widespread, but I do not think it right to compel all employers to do the same in all circumstances. Although I see much merit in such action, I can envisage the legal difficulties correctly identified by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill.

Ms Ruddock: The Minister has completely missed the point. He says that a shopworker can freely choose to give up Sunday working. Our point is that many shopworkers may find themselves with critical problems that necessitate their giving up Sunday working, perhaps for the sake of family obligations. They may not be able to do so, however, for economic reasons. We therefore believe it right that when a worker has been working Sundays and is forced by circumstances to try to opt out, he should be able to go to his employer with a reasonable request to be given alternative weekday hours.

The Minister suggests that that is unfair to weekday workers, who may themselves want additional hours. We, however, are talking about workers who already have the hours and are possibly receiving premium payments for them. They may have to lose income, and that is why we propose the substitution of other hours. It is not an unfair principle: these people may incur financial loss—hence the reason for the amendment.

Arbitrary changes in hours of work, duties and even places of work are now commonplace. The employers certainly have the upper hand. They have even instituted zero-hours contracts, and various forms of casual and unprotected work are increasingly prevalent. We have heard plenty of testimony to that in these debates.

This was but a small attempt to give shopworkers a degree of control over their hours of work and how they are arranged. It was an attempt to redress the balance, which my colleagues and I believe has been tilting increasingly in favour of the employers. I regret the fact that the Minister has been unable to make a more positive response, but I hope that the employers will take note of what he has said about best practice and how it might be encouraged. That is very little for shopworkers to hope for, but it is clearly all they are going to get from the Government.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I beg to move amendment No. 57, in page 22, line 12, leave out from 'employment)' to 'For' in line 18 and insert

'in subsection (3) (keeping of records)'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendment No. 58.

Mr. Lloyd: These are technical amendments, reflecting the outcome of the vote on the choices held on the first day of the Committee of the whole House, before Christmas. They ensure that appropriate references in the Shops Act 1950 refer to the Bill rather than to the parts of that Act that this Bill repeals.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 58, in page 22, leave out line 21. —*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

Schedule 4 agreed to.

New clause 2

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OF SUNDAY-ONLY WORKERS

'(1) Where a Sunday-only worker is employed on work substantially the same as work performed on a weekday by a shop worker in the same employment, if any term or condition of the contract of employment of the Sunday-only worker is or becomes less favourable than it would be if the worker was not a Sunday-only worker, the relevant term or condition shall be treated as so modified as to be not less favourable.

(2) A complaint by a Sunday-only worker that his contract of employment had not been treated by his employer as modified as required by subsection (1) above may be presented to an industrial tribunal.

(3) An industrial tribunal shall not consider a complaint under subsection (2) above unless it is presented to the tribunal before the end of the period of three months beginning with the date when the complainant became aware of the failure of his employer to treat the contract of employment as modified as required by subsection (1) above.

(4) Where an industrial tribunal finds that a complaint presented to it under subsection (2) above is well founded the tribunal shall make such of the following as it considers just and equitable—

(a) an order declaring the rights of the complainant and the respondent in relation to the act to which the complaint relates, and

(b) an order requiring the respondent to pay to the complainant compensation not exceeding the limit for the time being imposed by section 75 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

(5) In section 136 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (appeals from industrial tribunals to Employment Appeal Tribunal) in subsection (1) after paragraph (g) there shall be inserted the words—

"(h) the Sunday Trading Act 1994.".

(6) In this section—

"shop worker" has the same meaning as in Schedule 4 below and

"Sunday-only worker" means a person who is employed as a shop worker to work only on a Sunday.'.—*[Ms Ruddock.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Ms Ruddock: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

There are two objectives to the new clause. We seek to give rights to Sunday-only workers and to underpin the general worker protections in the Bill.

At present the majority of Sunday-only workers in the retail trade work illegally. If the House does not pass this Bill, we must assume that their retail outlets will be closed, and these workers will not work at all. It follows that those who would be covered by the Bill and who might become legitimate Sunday-only workers constitute a new group of workers—workers who, even under this Bill, would have virtually no rights. That seems inappropriate.

9.30 pm

We are used to the Government removing various employment protection provisions for workers. But, through the legislation, the Government propose to create a new pool of workers. The Opposition regard it as their

[Ms Ruddock]

duty to try to amend the Bill to make some provision for those workers. We seek to afford them rights on sick pay, pensions, holidays and other contractural benefits that are comparable with those of week-day workers. We are aware that those are contractual matters. It would be difficult for us or any other amenders of legislation to propose measures that interfered with those contracts. I am sure that the Minister would be quick to tell us that we could not do so. It is reasonable to seek to make some comparision between those who work for one day only, Sunday, and those who work for the same enterprise on a week day.

Effective worker protection under the Bill will depend on a number of factors. There are two key elements—first, a common culture of respect for the provisions across the board among employers and employees and, secondly, retail employers' commercial incentive to comply and/or disincentive for non-compliance. Sunday-only workers, by their very nature, fall outside the normal provisions of worker protection, and of the Sunday Trading Bill and existing legislation, principally, the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 because of their insufficient service time. That period is two years for those who are essentially full-time workers and five years for those working as few as eight hours.

Some Sunday-only workers may fall within the scope of existing employment protection. They will have to accrue the appropriate number of years of work before such protection becomes effective. At present, very few legal Sunday workers have worked the length of service required for their protection. Where workers have no protection, it is almost impossible for them, especially if they are without the benefit of trade union representation, to secure decent conditions and terms of employment.

Sunday-only workers form one of the most vulnerable groups of workers in our society. They are casual workers who are open to commercial exploitation. Not only might they be exploited on Sunday, but they might be pressed into employment on an ad hoc basis at other times. We believe that it is essential for their protection, and for the protection of week-day workers, that the terms and conditions of the Sunday-only workers are comparable with those of week-day workers.

As some of my hon. Friends said in an earlier debate, we do not want Sunday workers' wages and conditions to become depressed as Sunday trading increases, with a knock-on effect for the week-day worker. If the legislation is passed, Sunday workers will become a newly legitimised group. We seek to protect them and to ensure that they do not develop into a ghetto of casual workers on inferior terms.

Mr. Purchase: I support new clause 2. It is reasonable that people employed on a Sunday-only basis should enjoy protection on a pro-rata basis with colleagues in the same establishment who are full or part-time employees. I hope that hon. Members will be able to support the new clause.

Let us consider someone who has been employed on the basis that he or she will work only on Sundays with no prospect of remission with pay from that work. Although the clause keeps referring to "him", it really deals with "her" because it is almost inevitable that Sunday-only workers will be females. Their children will sometimes confound them by being sick the day after they have been in robust health. After spending a night looking after an ill child, or waking up to find their child is not well, there is no way that they can go to work. It is reasonable that a person in that position should receive, on a pro rata basis, sickness pay for the day when she is unavoidably absent from work.

People take on such employment to improve their household income. The word "pin money" was used earlier, but I suspect that not too many people work for pin money in the old-fashioned sense, but, rather, to supplement their income, which is inadequate for a decent standard of living.

A holiday entitlement should be given to those who are fortunate enough to work for a decent employer who—notwithstanding the comments of Conservative Members—pays double time and at sensible rates. It is wrong that we should even consider allowing someone to work 52 Sundays every year without a pro rata holiday entitlement.

It is commonplace for workers to enjoy, after a period of time, 20 days or four weeks holiday per annum. Four Sundays off is all that the new clause seeks to provide. It would be just enough for Sunday-only workers to enjoy an Easter Sunday, a couple of weeks off in the summer or a week with the children during their Whitsun break. Those are eminently reasonably arguments.

I understand that the new clause has to be so long because it sets out new provisions for people who would not otherwise be covered. It is a plea on behalf of Sunday-only workers, who overwhelmingly are women, to enjoy the sensible pro rata arrangements that apply at their workplace. Those arrangements include sickness pay and allowing workers time off if their family, including relatives for whom they are responsible, unexpectedly fall ill. It is not unreasonable to expect a good employer to allow for that contingency and to allow sickness pay and holiday entitlement.

A Sunday-only woman worker may become used to an income of perhaps £15 a week, which may not seem much but is a lot for a family that is otherwise totally dependent on social security. She is the sort of worker who arrives for work 15 minutes before the shop opens and stays half an hour after it closes. It would be unfair not to pay her the income to which she has become accustomed and with the help of which she has elevated her family's status. She may have worked in that shop for three or four years and not had a day off or missed a beat.

Unless we include provisions in the Bill, the majority of employers, and certainly those who do not recognise trade unions, will not concede such workers' rights. It is reasonable for the House to provide pro rata benefits in sickness and holiday pay for women who will give up their time to enable us to shop on Sundays. Every hon. Member should support what is, after all, a very modest proposal.

Mrs. Wise: It would be intolerable if the Bill were passed without the new clause being added. It is an essential recognition of the fact that people who work only on Sundays are human beings with the same rights and needs as other workers. Without the new clause, there will be no guarantee that Sunday-only workers will have sick pay or holidays. Indeed, the probability is that they will not and that any time taken off work for whatever reason will be unpaid. Such arrangements are intolerable for Sunday-only workers and extremely dangerous for workers in general.

I am probably arguing my case in a way that will lose me any potential support from Conservative Members

who, I am sure, would like nothing better than to find yet another mechanism to undercut and drive down wages and conditions. Nevertheless, I appeal to the Committee to accept the amendment.

The retail industry is a major employer and it would be extremely dangerous to allow casual work to become so prevalent that it undermines the conditions of those who work more regularly at other times. In this instance, the interests of all shopworkers are the same—they need protecting. I hope that the Committee will accept the

Ms Glenda Jackson: My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) pointed out that, for a variety of reason, the majority of workers who work exclusively on Sundays are undoubtedly women. He also dealt eloquently with the problem of women who might be unable to go to work because their children have fallen ill. As he rightly said, children have a habit of suddenly becoming ill. However, women are responsible not only for family members at the younger end of the age range but, increasingly, for elderly relatives.

It has been estimated that women carers save the country in the region of £6 billion a year, which is a sizeable sum. Quite rightly, the country is moving towards the idea that as our life expectancy increases we should be cared for in our own homes as long as humanly possible. That is what care in the community is all about.

Many women desperately need the additional sums that Sunday working provides, no matter how small they might be. However, they are caught in the trap of human values which I should have thought the Committee would be eager to preserve. Those values have to do with care and affection for members of the family, especially as they grow older. As a nation, we are living longer and the quality of our life is increasingly dependent on family members who are willing to care for us. The Committee should consider the issue seriously.

When we discussed the possibility of reducing the length of notice that must be given from three months to one month, the Minister said that that would strike especially hard at shops selling particular specialities to the consuming public. In the case under consideration that would undoubtedly be so, and it would strike against the very employers who take the time and trouble to train their Sunday-only employees, to make it incumbent on them that if, for a variety of reasons, one of the newly-trained Sunday-only employees could not work on that one day, that person would automatically have to be dismissed. The employer would again be on the treadmill of having to train workers and losing them once they were trained.

9.45 pm

Mr. Pike: Is not there a danger that if the shopworker falls ill but does not get sick pay he or she will turn up to work anyway? If such people are dealing with food, would not that be highly dangerous? In the interests of hygiene and of food safety we should ensure that sick pay is given, to enable workers to stay at home in such circumstances.

Ms Jackson: I thank my hon. Friend for making that valid point. In recent years there has been a marked increase in all forms of food poisoning, traced back to a reduction in standards of hygiene, especially where food is prepared. One of the growing trends is for large supermarkets to provide food for consumption, if not on the premises, within easy walking distance, so my hon. Friend makes a valid point. People would not think twice about turning up for work with a cold if they would otherwise lose money. Moreover, it is well documented both scientifically and medically that it is sometimes possible for people to be carriers of diseases from which they do not themselves suffer. The possibility of diseases spreading throughout the community becomes stronger if people who are desperate for the regrettably small sums that they earn on a Sunday have to calculate whether they will lose that money.

It is important for the Committee, especially Conservative Members, to readjust their thinking about what it means to be employed, and what the exchange of skills for wages means. There should be an equal contract, but among Conservatives there seems to be a prevailing view that it is a privilege to have a job. Given the shamefully high unemployment that the Government's economic policies and incompetence have heaped upon the country, that is not surprising, but as a House representing all the people of our country, we should not allow such ideas to sway us when we make decisions on such important amendments.

My hon. Friends and I have already said that most Sunday-only workers will be women. Those women sacrifice a great deal to enable their fellow citizens to shop on a Sunday, and the House should acknowledge those sacrifices. If the House is unwilling to acknowledge them in cash terms, in the money that people take home in their pay packets at the end of the working day, we should argue fiercely and strongly that what they cannot have in cash they should have in kind. They should be able to enjoy the benefits of other workers, although those are few in comparison with those of our European competitors—sick pay, holiday pay and the ability to participate as equal partners in a job that I sometimes think that Conservative Members do not regard as real work.

Conservative Members may consider it a doddle, to use a popular phrase, for a woman to sit at a check-out. They think that all she has to do is to pass the items that customers buy across a computerised machine. As I have said as someone who had her first experience of the working world as a shop assistant, it was an extremely draining job. One was constantly meeting members of the general public and on occasions they could be extremely bloody-minded.

Mrs. Wise: Is my hon. Friend aware that passing goods through the check-out is designed to be performed to targets and that the operator is expected to process anything up to 25 items a minute? Does she agree that, hour after hour, that is enormously fatiguing?

Ms Jackson: I entirely agree. I have no doubt that given the commercial pressures which retailers are under, the number of goods which will be required to pass through the check-out will increase and the amount of time given to the assistant sitting there will decrease. That is invariably the case.

The Committee must acknowledge that we are talking about real work. There is great sacrifice, in the main, on the part of women employees, who will be the majority of Sunday-only workers. The Committee should ensure, as far as it is humanly possible, that the sacrifices and skills of those women are acknowledged. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East said, the service that those women have provided for their fellow citizens

[Ms Jackson]

should also be acknowledged. If it is not the will of the Committee that those skills, sacrifices and services are acknowledged in hard cash, I strongly urge Conservative Members to support them being acknowledged in kind.

It is a difficult job to deal with the general public, especially when there is a marked stress on output. We have heard in previous debates that many retailers allow long queues to gather at check-outs because they are always conscious of overhead costs. Those at the sharp end in all such circumstances are the women sitting at the check-outs. The House should as far as possible—that possibility is infinitely wider than preceding votes have shown—support those women.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am once again constrained by the clock, so I shall sum up the Government's view of the new clause as quickly as I can. If I have followed what it means correctly, or certainly what it is intended to mean, the new clause would require that all the terms and conditions which are made available by an employer to his full-time, weekly staff would have to be available to Sunday-only staff.

I have considerable sympathy for the general idea, although we are talking more about part-time workers, not only about Sunday-only workers. Again I am dubious about whether it is fair and practical that workers who work one day or a limited time during the week should automatically receive all the benefits enjoyed by those who have earned those benefits, who have devoted far longer hours or years to their work. Those full-time workers rely on their jobs for their pensions, bonus rights, maternity benefits and career breaks. The new clause makes it clear that the employer is obliged to make available similar terms.

For example, an employer would have to make arrangements for Sunday-only workers to join the company pension scheme. That would certainly create problems for a properly managed pension scheme. I suspect that it would also be unwelcome to many, if not all, Sunday workers, who would not want to see stoppages taken out of their pay for the pension fund, especially if they were building a pension with another employer, or were students who had not yet entered into full-time work, or were wives who wanted to build up some income to pay for a mortgage or for a particular occasion, as has been said before.

Of course, the Government want to see good pay and conditions, but the trade-off between the two is best left to the employers and the employees, or the unions on their behalf, to negotiate. I do not believe that the new clause would do Sunday workers a good turn. It would certainly impose a rigidity that would diminish the amount of Sunday work available and the level of straight remuneration in the form of take-home pay for Sunday-only workers. It would probably dilute some benefits for full-time workers. It would certainly cut the unions out of helping Sunday workers to secure the best deal available for them as part-timers.

The interests and needs of part-timers are not always the same as those of full-time staff, and the benefits can be quite different. On benefits, certainly, the matter is much more complicated than the amendment recognises and it would be in everyone's interest for the provisions in this Bill to be left unchanged—although I accept that the House may wish to return to the position of part-time workers in a different Bill and on another occasion. That is a matter for the House and for my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Employment, who was sitting next to me a few moments ago and who will no doubt read with enormous interest what I have said.

Mr. Alton: This is a good new clause because it recognises that people who are employed on a Sunday should receive treatment commensurate with that accorded to those employed during the rest of the week, on a pro rata basis. It recognises that those who work on a Sunday should have the same dignity and rights as anyone else.

We should not underestimate the Bill's scope. The Shops Act 1950 has led to about 300,000 people being employed. The Keep Sunday Special option would have led to about 100,000 extra people being employed. The deregulatory option to which the House agreed—the so-called compromise—will lead to about 1 million extra people being employed on a Sunday. Unless we build in safeguards such as that proposed in the new clause, those people will be exploited on rack rates of pay and we shall have a charter for the downgrading of the retail trade. Jobs that were once permanent full-time jobs will be replaced by part-time work, with people being exploited as a consequence. That is why it is important that the Committee should accept the new clause.

Ms Ruddock: I regret to say that the Minister has once again missed the point. I reiterate what I said in my opening speech: if the Bill is enacted, the Government will be creating a new group of workers—workers who go to work on Sunday because it has become legal to trade on Sunday. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has given us the figures, which are very substantial.

Those new workers will go to work without any form of employment protection. The new clause seeks to give them not different or wonderful conditions but decent conditions commensurate with those enjoyed by workers working for the same employer in the same retail outlet on a weekday. That is very little to ask and it is typical of the Government that they should refuse that most modest of requests.

We are talking about a pool of the most vulnerable and poorly paid workers. As my hon. Friends have so eloquently said, many women go to work for very little money. Difficult family circumstances often render their wages vital. They go to work out of economic necessity. They should not go to work to line other people's pockets and provide profits for companies and services for the public without any recognition of the sacrifices that they make and of the fact that their responsibilities often go beyond the workplace and include care of the young and the elderly and other family responsibilities.

That group of workers clearly needs protection. Our new clause offers the most modest provision to ensure that such workers are given the terms and conditions developed for weekday workers, often as a result of trade union pressure in the workplace. Those who will work on Sundays under the Bill are a new pool of workers who are not protected. This new clause seeks to protect them and give them some reasonable conditions. We will take the new clause to a vote because we believe that this new pool of workers must gain some recognition for their service to

the community if the Bill is passed. We urge Tory Members to join us in voting for this modest proposal and for the protection of Sunday-only workers.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 273, Noes 305.

Division No. 116] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael

Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fyfe, Maria
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er.V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress leave to sit again.*

Committee reported progress.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Sunday Trading Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Again considered in Committee.

New clause 3

NON-ABATEMENT OF STATUTORY PROVISIONS

'(1) Any provision in an agreement between a shop worker and his employer (whether a contract of employment or not) shall be unenforceable to the extent that it purports—

(a) to exclude or limit the operation of any provision of this Act, and

(b) to preclude any person from presenting a complaint to or from bringing any proceedings before an industrial tribunal under any provision of this Act.

(2) For the purposes of this section "shop worker" has the same meaning as in Schedule 4 below.'.—*[Mr. Purchase.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

10.15 pm

Mr. Purchase: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may wish this to be a mere formality, and I am anxious to oblige them so that they can rush away to their clubs, but they would only have to rush back again later. [HON. MEMBERS: "They are not rich enough."] No, they are not.

The new clause ensures that any worker protection in the Bill is underwritten and cannot be abated. Let me explain to hon. Members who may not have experienced the difficulties of employer-employee relationships. Let us suppose that the Government had been generous this evening and had accepted some of the modest amendments that we proposed—for example, double time for working on Sunday.

Although we know that, in many instances, the basic rate of pay is low, and that twice times not a lot is still not a lot, it is clear that the employer may well cuddle up to the employee and suggest not only that he or she may work on Sunday, but that the employer could perhaps find them a couple of hours on a Saturday as well. Under the new, totally unregulated shopping proposals that will come before the House shortly, an employer might even suggest that the employee could work a couple of evenings as well, saying, "If you'll work without wanting double time on Sunday, I'm sure I can accommodate your additional needs," which will lead to more income in one way or another.

The new clause will prevent that, because it is a sure bet that, once abatement of the measures in the Bill starts, it will be a slippery slope. I understand that the Minister believes that there are few or no loopholes through which abatement could be practised, but it is for him to demonstrate that that is so. I must put on record that the Opposition want a non-abatement clause to ensure that any protections for workers are enacted in full and to the benefit of all concerned.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) is seeking to ensure that no agreement or contract which an employer may persuade an employee to enter into can override or take away the rights provided to the employee by schedule 4 of the Bill.

I am sure that none of the rights can be removed or curtailed by any such device, and certainly not by the devices that he adumbrated. However, as I want to be sure that there is absolutely no way in which an employee can lose those rights, and as the new clause has only recently been printed on the amendment paper, I shall take legal advice to ensure that there are no such loopholes to close. If there are, I shall table an amendment or a new clause on Report. I do not believe that there are any loopholes, but I am certain that, if there were, the wording of the hon. Gentleman's new clause would not be sufficient to cover them.

The hon. Gentleman has my assurance that I shall look carefully into the matter. If he wants to come to see me at any time and tell me of any additional worries, I shall be very happy to meet him with my officials.

Mr. Purchase: The Minister is generous. Following what the Government have done this evening, we were due a little generosity—and we have received very little indeed. None the less, I thank the Minister for his undertaking. If he finds difficulties or loopholes, he may well come back with his own amendments. Such amendments would be welcomed by the Opposition. The essence of our case is that we want reasonable and proper protection for workers while they serve the rest of us on Sundays.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Bill reported, with amendments; as amended, to be considered tomorrow, and to be printed.

Statutory Sick Pay Bill (Allocation of Time)

10.21 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move,

That the Order of the House [14th December] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1. (1) The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments to the Statutory Sick Pay Bill shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

(2) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with sub-paragraph (1) above—

(a) the Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the Lords Amendment as amended.

(b) the Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to the Speaker to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by the Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments the Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to the Lords Amendment.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

2.—(1) The Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

(2) The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

(3) For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) the Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) the Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to the Speaker to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by the Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

3.—(1) The Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) Such a Committee shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

4.—(1) In this paragraph "The proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) Proceedings under paragraph 1(2) or 2(3) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(4) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(5) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that shall have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings of the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

(6) If the House is adjourned, or the sitting suspended, before the expiry of the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion, no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

The motion provides that further consideration of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill should be concluded no later than two hours from now, and specifies the order in which the amendments are to be considered.

This is not a long or complicated Bill, and the House has already had ample time to debate its main provisions. The House should bear in mind the fact that the Bill will take effect from 6 April this year. I believe that we owe it to industry and commerce to complete our consideration in good time to enable employers to introduce the changes as smoothly as possible.

Against that background, I commend the motion to the House.

10.22 pm

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): It is extraordinary that we should be starting our consideration of Lords amendments by yet again debating a guillotine motion. The debacle of the handling of this Bill continues. It started on 16 December, when the Government failed to secure, through all reasonable channels, a means of dealing with this Bill and with the Social Security (Contributions) Bill.

I believe that the Government now rue the day they chose to steamroller this measure through the House. They have shown utter contempt for proper scrutiny, and have caused outrage not only among Opposition Members but among the public. The legislation will affect businesses large and small throughout the country.

Although it is barely eight weeks since the Government used their original guillotine motion, and despite their arrogance and contempt, we have no intention of delaying matters further. When the Government, with barely six hours of debate, rushed the original provisions through, we predicted that it would be examined in greater detail in another place, and that, in particular, the provisions as they affected small businesses would be gone into.

Under the new legislation, the arrangement is to remove the opportunity for large businesses to reclaim a rebate on statutory sick pay and reduce the amount that small businesses can claim to 80 per cent., but not until after the first four weeks. We predicted that the Government would come under great pressure from small businesses, which the Labour party now represents so effectively. Clearly, we are now the champions of small businesses. We knew that, as a result of the pressure that we placed on the Government, as well as the opportunity for enlightened debate in the other House, amendments would be brought forward.

We pointed out clearly on Second Reading that the shift of the burden of some £750 million on to small businesses at a time when they were trying to recover from the Government's economic mismanagement was a burden against which they would rightly fight. Although the Government said that the 0·2 per cent. changes made to national insurance contributions would not lead to costs to small businesses, we had always questioned that, and will look carefully at the figures when the legislation comes in.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bradley: No, time is short because of the guillotine motion.

Mr. Sykes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman is clearly not giving way.

Mr. Bradley: We have important points to make in this debate, and although I shall be happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman when we debate the amendments, which I am sure he is interested in and will wish to contribute to, I cannot give way at this stage.

We do not intend to delay the House at this stage, but we predicted that the Government would have to table an amendment at the Lords amendments stage to recognise the horror felt by small businesses at the provisions of the Bill. I shall delay the House no longer but simply put on record again the fact that the Government's shoddy contempt for the House has led us to this unfortunate position. That is why the Labour party will continue to harass the Government and effectively scrutinise this legislation at every turn throughout this Session of Parliament.

Question put and agreed to.

Statutory Sick Pay Bill

Lords Amendments considered.

After Clause 2

Lords amendment: No. 1.

(" .—(1) In part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (statutory sick pay), after section 159 insert—

"Power to provide for recovery by employers of sums paid by way of statutory sick pay.

159A.—(1) The Secretary of State may by order provide for the recovery by employers, in accordance with the order, of the amount (if any) by which their payments of, or liability incurred for, statutory sick pay in any period exceeds the specified percentage of the amount of their liability for contributions payments in respect of the corresponding period.

(2) An order under subsection (1) above may include provision—

(a) as to the periods by reference to which the calculation referred to above is to be made,

(b) for amounts which would otherwise be recoverable but which do not exceed the specified minimum for recovery not to be recoverable,

(c) for the rounding up or down of any fraction of a pound which would otherwise result from a calculation made in accordance with the order, and

(d) for any deduction from contributions payments made in accordance with the order to be disregarded for such purposes as may be specified,

and may repeal sections 158 and 159 above and make any amendments of other enactments which are consequential on the repeal of those sections.

(3) In this section—

"contributions payments" means payments which a person is required by or under any enactment to make in discharge of any liability of his as an employer in respect of primary or secondary Class 1 contributions; and

"specified" means specified in or determined in accordance with an order under subsection (1).

(4) The Secretary of State may by regulations make such transitional and consequential provision, and such savings, as he considers necessary or expedient for or in connection with the coming into force of any order under subsection (1) above.".

(2) In section 176(1)(c) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (parliamentary control: orders subject to affirmative procedure), at the appropriate place insert "section 159A(1)".

(3) the Secretary of State—

(a) shall lay before each House of Parliament the draft of an order under section 159A(1) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (inserted by subsection (1) above) framed so as to come into force on or before 6th April 1995, and

(b) if the draft order is approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament, shall make the order in the form of the draft,

unless before 1st December 1994 he lays before each House of Parliament a report explaining why he does not intend to make such an order.")

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take also Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 4, the last of which involves privilege.

Mr. Scott: It is widely recognised that we are aware of the special needs of small employers faced with more lengthy absences due to sickness. That is why we have always intended to make generous improvements to the existing small employers' relief provisions by increasing the number of employers eligible to benefit from that

[Mr. Scott]

concession. We shall also reduce the period after which full reimbursement becomes available, from the present six weeks to four weeks.

Those changes will be brought into effect from 6 April 1994 by means of affirmative regulations, a draft of which I propose to lay before Parliament tomorrow. Some 750,000 employers—almost two thirds of those eligible to pay statutory sick pay—will be eligible. The small employers' relief scheme will be of benefit to small firms when an employee goes sick for a long time. An alternative means of helping those employers has been proposed in another place.

We have never been opposed in principle to a new reimbursement scheme. Our concerns have centred around the need to avoid possible abuse of the new scheme and the need to obtain the relevant statistical data from employers so as to set the reimbursement threshold at an appropriate level.

10.30 pm

The lack of time available to consult both sides of industry more widely on the details of the proposed scheme means that we are unable to move as fast as some Members of the other place would wish. We believe that more time is needed to consider the proposed scheme in more detail. The amendment accepted in another place acknowledges the strength of our concerns and is worded in such a way as to allow sufficient time for the collection of data on employers' monthly statutory sick pay and national insurance contributions. That information will be crucial in enabling us to set the new reimbursement threshold at a level that will cost no more than the planned costs of the proposed enhancements to the existing small employers' scheme.

The new clause allows the Secretary of State to provide by order for employers to recover that amount of their statutory sick pay payments that exceeds a specified percentage of their national insurance contributions liability in a given period. If, following consultation, the Government decide that they do not wish to proceed with the new scheme proposed in another place, the amendment also requires the Secretary of State to lay a report before Parliament explaining his decision. That is a wise way to consider the future of the provision. The new clause also provides for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to repeal the existing small employers' relief provisions at sections 158 and 159 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992. That would be a logical consequence of introducing a new SSP reimbursement scheme. It would be nonsensical to have both schemes running at the same time. The intention of the amendment is clearly to replace the existing system, not to augment it. The Government should accept the amendment, which I commend to the House.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): It is rich for the Minister to move the amendment and claim that the Government always had the interests of small businesses in mind, and that it was only a matter of time before the amendment appeared. We should pay tribute to the other place for debating the subject so effectively and putting pressure on the Government to recognise the factor that we recognised on Second Reading—the great unhappiness among small businesses about the Bill's original provisions.

We only have to look yet again at the comments made by the small business organisations at the time to recognise that, even then, the Government were in trouble over the provision. The Institute of Directors stated that it was worried about the damaging effects on business of the new burdens created by the changes in the statutory sick pay provisions. Surprisingly, the Confederation of British Industry stated:

"It poses fundamental questions about who should bear the cost of social security provision."

I shall not expand on that subject tonight as I would be straining the terms of the amendment. A marker has been put down to show us that we should keep a wary eye on the Government, otherwise other potential social security and social insurance provisions may be passed on to small businesses. Maternity pay may be the next provision that businesses have to fund in future. In the past it has been funded through the social security system.

The Forum for Small Business—not an organisation that would normally support the suggestions that we made at the time the problems arose—made the following statement:

"Current proposals if implemented are likely to become the principal cause of a significant number of insolvencies."

On Second Reading, we flagged up the potential problems for small businesses when the £750 million statutory sick pay burden was shifted to industry. We are debating a major change, and the time for us to do so is being limited. Any amount of time was given to ensuring proper debate of an earlier measure that merely—I use the word "merely" for purposes of comparison—reduced a 100 per cent. clawback to 80 per cent. I shall not repeat all the arguments that expressed our outrage at the guillotining of this Bill; we are all living with the consequences.

As the Minister said, the amendment was prompted by widespread anxiety—first expressed by the Labour party in the House of Commons, but pursued more vigorously by the other place because of the extra time allowed there—about the way in which small businesses would be affected by not being able to claw back rebate for sick pay in the first four weeks.

It was felt that—as the Opposition had made clear in this House—most illness leading to a requirement for sick pay occurred in those first four weeks; indeed, research had shown as much. The Government were placing a particular burden on small businesses; they were tackling the problem of long-term sickness, rather than considering the short-term sickness that potentially posed the biggest problem for small businesses. An epidemic, for instance, could cause enormous problems for the businesses that can least afford not only to pay sickness benefit to staff, but to provide replacement staff.

Having heard the arguments advanced in the other place, the Government considered them carefully. They had two main objections.

First, as the Minister said, the shift of burden might be open to abuse by employers who, the Government believed, might move their statutory sick pay payments from one month to another so as to reach the set level over a period. We therefore welcome the new mechanism to avoid that problem.

The Government's second worry was that there would not be enough time to implement the scheme—the

necessary consultations could not be concluded in time to have the revamped arrangements in place by April. As we now know, the new proposals to meet the Government's objection to their Lordships' original plan decree that the revised scheme will come into force on 6 April 1995. This will give the Government not two but 14 months to prepare the scheme. Our chief reason for not opposing the Lords amendment is that it will allow for proper consultations to be held with the main organisations that will be affected by it.

One of the merits of the proposed new scheme is that there will be some simplicity in its implementation. There is always the danger, however, now that more and more legislation is effected by regulation, that schemes will become much more complicated when translated into regulations. We want to ensure that the regulations, when they eventually appear, do not cause more bureaucratic and cost complications for small businesses. That would defeat the whole object of the exercise. The Opposition maintain that this is a time when small businesses can ill afford additional cost burdens. I therefore hope that the regulations will ensure that the simplicity of the new system is maintained.

I hope to hear from the Under-Secretary this evening which bodies and organisations he proposes to consult. I hope that the Government will consult not just those who represent small businesses but others who will be affected by the changes. I am, for instance, especially worried about the effects on disabled people.

On Second Reading, we expressed our anxiety lest the changes to SSP led to what might be termed a charter to sack the sick. We wanted to ensure that the fact that small businesses will be denied the chance to reclaim SSP for four weeks did not lead to a reluctance on the part of employers to employ certain categories of people. We were thinking particularly of disabled people.

There is grave concern about this in the Committee scrutinising the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill. We have yet to debate the medical test that the Government intend to introduce, but they seem to assume that about 70,000 people who are on invalidity benefit will become "employable". We have always feared that they may be too sick to be employable—employers may look at their sickness record and be reluctant to employ them given the possible burden that they represent following the changes in statutory sick pay —but not sick enough to be able to claim the new incapacity benefit.

They will fall between two stools, because they will remain on the unemployment register, which the Government claim they are trying to reduce, but the Government are not aware of the difficulties that people with a sickness record experience in seeking employment.

I very much hope that the Government's consultation will not only cover bodies that represent firms but will range wider and will consider how the changes that the Government propose will affect particular groups of people.

10.45 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, when the Government limited reimbursement of SSP to 80 per cent., the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said:

"The employers say that, if the Bill is passed into law, they will be extremely careful about who they employ, and will make their decisions on the basis of an applicant's health record. Anyone with a poor health record or a poor prognosis of good health for the future will be unlikely to get a job."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 652.]

That is what was said last time. The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) has said it this time. Have the predictions that the hon. Member for Oldham, West made about the outcome of the Statutory Sick Pay Act 1991 proved accurate?

Mr. Bradley: It is clear from talking to disabled people or to their organisations that they feel a great impediment to employment generally because of their disabilities. I pay tribute to some of the work that the Minister has done to facilitate disabled people entering the employment market, but all the surveys that have been conducted by disabled groups show that great difficulties remain. We want to ensure that there are no further barriers to employers taking on disabled people.

Extra costs and burdens are being placed on small businesses by their having to pay a greater proportion of sick pay. I should be amazed, therefore, if the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) does not recognise that small businesses will look even more carefully at the sickness records of people with disabilities.

It would be in all our interests to ensure that there is no impediment to disabled people returning to employment. That is the purpose of our seeking assurances tonight that that point will be covered in the report that will be provided to the House.

In the other place, amendments were proposed to the principal amendment that we are debating. Assurances were given, which I am sure will be repeated tonight, that we shall debate the report on the new scheme. If the Government's consultation reveals that there may be major difficulties in introducing a scheme, the amendment aims to ensure that it will not be quietly dropped. The details of introducing a scheme, or of not doing so, must be properly debated in the House.

We should not want the issue to slip away, nor would small businesses. The Government have many tried and tested mechanisms which could enable the report to slip off the agenda despite promises having been made in all good faith. Such mechanisms could include the pressure of parliamentary business in which we might be engaged in 14 months' time.

The Minister mentioned the costings of the amendment, which need to be made clear. There is still a debate about the cost of the changes, and the Government's belief that the extra burden of £750 million on businesses will be offset by alterations to the national insurance rate and that the reduction of 0·2 per cent will even out the effects needs careful consideration, as do any changes that result from the Lords amendments.

We should also be grateful for further comments on how the Government regard the provisions concerning a percentage of national insurance being used as the criterion for repayment of statutory sick pay. We should be grateful for some preliminary estimates of how it will work in practice. As the amendment has only just come from another place, I shall be happy for the Minister to write to me with details of the costings, which would be useful in our future deliberations on the report.

I look forward to obtaining the necessary information and assurances from the Government so that we can accept the amendment.

10.54 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I found my case on the remarks on the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley), who has covered the most important issues in this debate, which is important but nevertheless constrained in terms of time. The hon. Gentleman made a comprehensive speech and the Minister should pay proper attention to it.

I was disappointed by the intervention of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin). If he is looking for extreme statements made recently by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), he picked a mild one. The hon. Member for Oldham, West regularly used to anticipate, even encourage, Armageddon in every speech that he made from the Front Bench.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South should not discourage Labour's new social security Front-Bench team, which is much better than before, and I do not mean to sound patronising. If he is interested, he can meet me outside later and I will show him some truly extreme statements made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

Mr. Devlin: I have no doubt that such statements will recur in the speeches of the new Front-Bench team, who seem to be recycling some material.

Mr. Kirkwood: I part company with the hon. Gentleman on that point, but we are straying out of order.

It is worth spending a moment considering how we allow the other place to make important changes, such as this amendment. I welcome the amendment, which is a great improvement as far as it goes. It has already been said that, if the proceedings in this place had been better ordered, we should have agreed something similar. That would have been the right way to proceed.

I know that there were difficulties about the timetabling. I listened carefully to all the arguments about having time to organise ourselves, and I know that improvements have been made, but it is worth stressing that the Government have to ca' a bit canny in future, to use the vernacular, in order to ensure that the House has an opportunity to consider in good time the detailed improvements that can and should be made to Bills such as this.

We should spend time on the process of consultation with small businesses, too. I am not making a party political point, because Governments of all kinds have difficulties with that. The mechanisms in place are perfectly adequate for big business—international companies and world leaders such as ICI and GEC. They have well established contacts with the Government machine, and with Departments at all levels, and they can look after themselves. It must therefore be reasonably easy, so long as one takes the time to go through the process, to collect sensible views from a range throughout industry, and arrive at some idea of what the options are.

That is much more difficult when we are dealing with businesses employing two, 10 or 20 people. It is difficult for those businesses, too, because they are organised across all sorts of different interest groups, from tobacconists to knitwear manufacturers. They themselves find it difficult to arrive at a consensus.

There have been developments and improvements in that direction, through the formation of the Federation of Small Businesses, but it is still difficult for the Department, even using its best endeavours, to arrive at a consensus. The Government should work harder at trying to make contact with what they would call very small businesses.

Their definition of a small business is probably one with 100 or 200 employees, but we must not forget that the regulations probably bear down most heavily on the firms that the hon. Member for Withington was talking about when he said that, if a company with 10 employees was hit by a flu epidemic and four of them were sick, it would have a real problem. I realise that it is difficult for Government to cope with such small firms with so few employees, but we always have to work harder to do better in that respect.

I understand the function of the report, but what is in the Government's and the Minister's minds about monitoring the process? Ministers will always say that everything is continuously under review, but there is a case for examining the effects on people with disabilities.

It is wrong to over-dramatise the argument, but there is a fair point to be made about the potential and even subliminal discrimination that may take root if the regulations are not carefully monitored. I hope that the Department will set up some systematic monitoring over the next two or three years, so that the Minister can satisfy himself that he is taking all possible steps to examine how the principles work out in practice.

An awful lot can go wrong with the implementation of detailed regulations. With the best will in the world, when simple concepts are put into the hands of the parliamentary draftsmen they can come out looking complicated and difficult to implement. Efforts have been made to simplify the process; I realise that, and I welcome it. But will the regulations spawned by the amendment be approved on an affirmative or a negative basis? If regulations are to be introduced, the House should know that.

I hope that, by that time, the usual channels will have got back into kilter, so that we shall not have to debate every motion and statutory instrument on the Floor of the House. If that goes on much longer, we shall all end up in lunatic asylums [HON. MEMBERS: "You first."] Yes, perhaps I shall be one of the first inmates. It is important to know whether the orders will be affirmative or negative, so that we know what scrutiny of detailed regulations the House faces.

The question of costings, on which the hon. Member for Withington ended his speech, is important too. There has not been time to do much detailed arithmetic, but there must be some ball park figure in the Government's mind. It would be helpful to the House if the Minister would say a word about that matter when he sums up.

11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): It seems that the proceedings on the Bill can end with some harmony at least. There seems to be all-party agreement on the Lords amendment, if perhaps a little marred by the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley), who still talks about a shift of the burden to industry.

In fact, industry is the net beneficiary of the changes to statutory sick pay and the consequent reductions in national insurance contributions. Since small companies tend to have a lower incidence of sickness and absence than large companies, small companies especially stand to gain from the changes that the Government are bringing about.

The hon. Member for Withington asked about the consultation process, and especially expressed the hope that great complications and administrative burdens would not arise as a result of any new measures which may arise from the Lords amendment. I agree that extra complications and administrative burdens would be a serious disadvantage. Of course, it is in the mind of the Government to keep such burdens and complications to a minimum.

We intend to consult both sides of industry. We shall consult employers, unions, give especial weight to the opinions of small businesses and their organisations, and we shall also consult disability organisations.

The hon. Member for Withington raised the point about disabled employees. I remind him, as has my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), that no evidence has ever been proffered to justify the charge levelled against the SSP scheme ever since it was first introduced more than 10 years ago, that it would have an adverse effect on disabled employees.

Research carried out by the Centre for Research in Social Policy shows that the reduction in SSP reimbursement from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. three years ago had no impact whatever on the willingness of employers to recruit employees with disabilities. It confirmed earlier research findings that such employees tend to take less time off through sickness than able-bodied colleagues.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South was right to ask the hon. Member for Withington to recall the forecast of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) so rightly observed, the forecasts of the hon. Member for Oldham, West could be a most entertaining catalogue, which could keep us here for a long time.

Mr. Bradley: On the question of forecasts, may I assume from the Under-Secretary's comments on the burden that will be placed on small businesses and the way in which he says they will be net gainers from the scheme, that he has given a commitment not to increase national insurance contributions in the future?

Mr. Hague: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to pre-empt the decisions of all future Chancellors and Secretaries of State, any more than he would want to pre-empt those of any future Chancellors or Secretaries of State from his party, remote though that possibility may be. People can look to the record of what has happened to national insurance contributions during our time in office and how it compares with the 13·5 per cent. level reached for employers' national insurance contributions with the surcharge in the 1970s. The record tells it all.

If there are great difficulties in the creation of the new scheme outlined in the Lords amendment, we will be able to consider them in the report to which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred. He may also like to know that, assuming that there is not a report but a new scheme, the orders will be affirmative. I am sure that he will be pleased to note that.

The Government will now proceed to consult industry on the proposal. Employers and their organisations will be able to compare the benefits of the new proposal with the existing help for small employers. They will be able to judge whether the loss to those employers who will not benefit under the new scheme is outweighed by the gains of those who will.

We will proceed to collect data on employers' monthly SSP and national insurance contributions payments so that the reimbursement threshold can be set at the appropriate level. I do not yet have any preliminary estimate, but there will be no secret about the estimates when we have arrived at them. We will also—this is most important—consider the monitoring and policing requirements of the proposed scheme to reduce the risk of abuse.

It is good to see that the measure has the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House, and can proceed successfully.

Lords amendment agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Assessment of Deficits (European Community)

11.6 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Government's assessment as set out in sections 2, 4 and 5 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report for the purposes of section 5 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993.

It will be within the memory of many hon. Members that section 5 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act, which put the Maastricht treaty into our own domestic law, contains a provision requiring the Government to report to Parliament for its approval an assessment of the medium-term economic and budgetary position in relation to public investment expenditure and to the social, economic and environmental goals set out in article 2 of the treaty of Rome as amended by the Maastricht treaty. That is the occasion of the debate.

When the Maastricht Bill was being discussed in the other place, having been passed by this House, the Lord Advocate gave an assurance that the Government believed that, as a result of the inclusion of that provision, a debate in this House would be required before the information was submitted to the Commission in accordance with the provisions of the treaty as referred to in section 5 of the Act. That is the reason why the debate is taking place in the House this evening. It is a debate occasioned by section 5 of the Maastricht Act.

That bears no direct relationship to the question that the House is now being asked to address, however. Although the occasion is the passing of the information to Brussels under the terms of the treaty, the question that the House is being asked to address—which those on the Opposition Front Bench clearly identify in their amendment—is whether the House approves the contents of chapters 2, 4 and 5 of the Red Book tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor on Budget day. The Red Book has already, on more than one occasion, been considered by the House as part of the Budget debate. As the terms of the Budget have been carried repeatedly in votes in the House, I think it not unreasonable to assume that the contents of the Red Book have been approved by the House. None the less, the debate gives the House the opportunity yet again to endorse the contents of the Red Book.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): As this is a new procedure, it would be helpful to the House if the Minister could explain what happens under the provisions of article 103. If the Government's motion on these sections is approved and sent to Brussels, what happens to it thereafter? Under what circumstances will we get a report back, bearing in mind the amendment tabled by some Conservative Members?

Mr. Dorrell: Information that is tabled and submitted to the Government following the debate and sent to Brussels to satisfy our treaty obligations is used by the Commission in preparing the reports that it is required to prepare under the multilateral surveillance procedures and under the assessment of excessive deficits. That is the purpose of the submission of the information; it is not, however, the question that is before the House this evening. The question before the House this evening is whether it will approve again, as it has on several occasions, the contents of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" presented by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor on Budget day.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): While we appreciate that paragraphs 1, 9 and 11 of article 104c do not apply to Britain, does my hon. Friend appreciate that section 7 means that the Council could give instructions to member states, including Britain, and that the recommendations shall not be made public? Paragraph 7 states: "these recommendations shall not be made public". Therefore, we could have a situation in which the Commission tells the Government to do something, keep it secret and the House will not be aware of it. Does the Minister agree that, if the Commission gives such an instruction under paragraph 7, the Government would tell Parliament what was going on?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is usually meticulous in his use of the language. However, he has elided the concept of a recommendation contained in paragraph 7 of article 104c with the concept of an instruction. Those two words are not synonyms. I repeat the point: the House is being asked to approve a document that it has approved on many previous occasions. I commend the Government's motion to the House.

11.10 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Select Committee on European Legislation considered these documents today and a severe reprimand was given to the Department and the Ministers concerned regarding the failure to perform this——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. That has nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. Smith: Looking around the Chamber, I have to say that it is a bit like old times for all of us. The fact that we are debating the motion tonight and that the House has a right to vote on what the Government submit to Brussels is the result of Labour's ingenuity and determination in successfully forcing the Government to incorporate section 5 in the European Communities (Amendment) Act. It is entirely right that the House should have the opportunity to examine and vote on submissions before they are sent to Brussels under the convergence and multilateral surveillance provisions of articles 103 and 104C.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The hon. Gentleman is priding himself on the heroic posture of the Labour party during the Maastricht debate. Perhaps he would be good enough to remind hon. Members of the benefits that the Labour party obtained for itself and the nation by its attitude to the Maastricht treaty, set off against the way in which it supported the Government and made possible the imposition of the treaty on our nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That does not relate to the motion.

Mr. Smith: I was wondering how to work within the surveillance procedures the gains that we made in terms of local authority representation on the Committee of the Regions, the democratic right of the House to scrutinise

business and, more importantly, the right to stretch the Government on the rack over their failure on the social chapter—denying the people of this country the rights that are taken for granted across the rest of Europe.

The country has a right to expect that the Government, in presenting the motion to the House, would make some effort to address the requirements of section 5 and specifically relate their submission to the goals of article 2 of the Maastricht treaty, which refers to

"harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment, a high degree of convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life".

Instead, what we have in front of us is the same tired and failed message that the Government have been trotting out since last year's Budgets.

That is a message which the country does not believe and which has demoralised the Conservative party's constituency activists—where it has any left. The Budgets broke the Conservative party's election promises on taxation to the extent that fully 69 per cent. of the population say that they will never trust the Conservatives on taxation again.

Mr. Budgen *rose——*

Mr. Smith: On that point, I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Budgen *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That does not have much to do with section 5. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. Let us get back to section 5.

Mr. Smith *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may reach for the Red Book, but he knows full well that there is nothing in it about opinion polls. I know my way around that book as well as he.

Mr. Smith: There is a great deal in the Red Book about taxation, and the Government have broken their promises on that.

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Gentleman assist the House by explaining what the Labour party's present position is on what has been described as the multilateral surveillance procedure? We would imagine that, as part of its support for getting as quickly as possible towards a single currency, it is in favour of the subordination of the British national interest to foreign economic surveillance. Will the hon. Gentleman be good enough to explain what the Labour party's attitude to that matter is?

Mr. Smith: What the hon. Gentleman presumes to be the Labour party's policy is not. We believe that there is merit in the discussions involved in multilateral surveillance. They would provide co-operation with our European partners for the goals that the Opposition and the people of this country hold dear, which include getting back towards full employment.

Mr. Budgen *rose——*

Mr. Smith: I shall not give way again to the hon. Gentleman; I have already done so twice, and I want to make some progress.

The Budgets that we are invited in effect to approve as our submission to Europe are those that brought up the level of Tory tax increases to £12·50 extra on a typical family from April. Those tax increases, as the Chancellor and Ministers admit, will check the economic recovery, and that will do nothing to rescue the people and the economy from the damage that the Budget increases will inflict.

The Budget policies failed to stimulate investment in the face of all of the representations that the Government received from industry. The Budgets leave manufacturing investment languishing at barely one-third of the level of that of Germany. Our manufacturing investment per employee is one of the lowest in the European Union. It is only one third of the level of the Netherlands, it is 46 per cent. lower than in France and 26 per cent. lower than in Germany. No wonder Britain's record on economic growth is so poor.

Whatever comfort may be taken from the present relative growth rates in Europe, what counts is the long-term growth record cancelling out the differential effect of the timing of recession and recovery in each country.

Mr. Dorrell *indicated assent.*

Mr. Smith: On that important count, Britain lags badly. The Financial Secretary agrees that the long-term growth record is the important criterion. That shows that, between 1979 and 1993, the Japanese economy grew by 63 per cent. and the American economy by 35 per cent. In Europe, the Italian economy grew by 32 per cent., those of the German lander by 32 per cent., the French economy by 31 per cent. and the United Kingdom economy by only 25 per cent.

Mr. Dorrell: The proposition with which I was agreeing was that which the hon. Gentleman advanced to the House and then proceeded to ignore. That proposition is that one compares growth rates by looking across a longer period and comparing performance from similar points in the cycle. The hon. Gentleman's comparison for the United Kingdom economy used 1979, which was the nearest thing to the peak of the cycle that the previous Government ever succeeded in creating, and 1993, which nobody could possibly regard as the peak of any economic cycle. The hon. Gentleman set out precisely the right basis for making long-term economic comparisons and proceeded immediately to ignore it.

Mr. Smith: I fear that, however long a period we take, the Financial Secretary will be disappointed, because Britain has such a poor performance on long-term growth, as a direct result of the low figures on manufacturing investment per employee, which I have just pointed out.

However, that is not the only difficulty that the Government face. We have a large balance of payments deficit for this stage of the economic cycle. The Financial Secretary made the important point that it is necessary to compare appropriate points of the economic cycle. He could not dispute that, for this stage of the economic cycle, the balance of payments deficit that Britain is running is depressingly large and, what is more, is set to get worse.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman is wrong again. He just asserted that the balance of payments deficit is getting worse. It is not. It is getting better.

Mr. Smith: I said that it was set to get worse. Time will be the test of who is right on that. As I am sure that the Financial Secretary is well aware, many commentators predict, a few years down the road, a terrible problem with the balance of payments deficit as a result of the Government's failure to improve Britain's industrial competitiveness.

Accompanying the balance of payments deficit is the most serious failure of all—the failure to tackle the mass unemployment which drains individuals of hope and the country of the wealth that their energies and talents would create if they were employed. Mass unemployment floods into the public sector borrowing requirement. The Government's record could not be presented to Brussels as one which promoted, in the words of article 2 of the treaty, "a high level of employment". Even as unemployment, on the Government's figures, has started to turn down, levels of employment have fallen even further.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman referred to western Germany, but did not refer to Germany as a whole. Does he agree that one of the reasons why it is necessary to refer to western Germany, rather than the whole of Germany, is that the whole of the report—every statistic in it—omits to include the whole of Germany? It leaves out the eastern part of Germany, which reduces the value of the report substantially. It means that we have nothing more than a shambles on our hands, and no means of judging whether the convergence criteria have been reached throughout Europe as a whole.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman said it. He can recognise a shambles over there when he sees one. I was referring to the western lander for the precise reason that, if one compares the period from 1979 to 1993, there is no meaningful comparison that one can make for that period that would include the eastern lander. Of course the statistics will have to reflect fully the position in eastern parts of Germany and include it with the whole. I only wish that the Government made the same determined effort to invest in worn-out infrastructure in depressed parts of Britain as the Germans have made in methodically setting about restoring the eastern part of Germany.

I was saying how badly the Government's proposals failed to address the corrosive, serious effect of unemployment in our nation and that levels of employment had fallen even further. Under the social goals to which the Government are supposed to relate their report to the EC, article 2 refers, as I have said, to a high level of social protection.

It is important to ask what social protection there is for those who have seen even basic employment rights taken away, wages councils abolished, sick pay, invalidity benefit and unemployment benefit cut and, tonight in the House, rights to premium pay defeated. This is not so much social protection as social intimidation. It is the exact opposite of the social partnership in the workplace between the community, employers and government at all levels that we need to see for sustained economic success and for the social solidarity referred to in article 2.

In a report which purports, as section 5 and article 2 do, to deal with social solidarity, the Government might have been expected to say something about crime and fraud, both international and domestic. Their poor record has seen crime rocket by 124 per cent. since 1979. British people are the most likely in Europe to be the victims of burglary. Even the Tories cannot pretend that that has nothing to do with the deepening social divisions in Britain and the fragmentation of social cohesion resulting from their free market theories, which leave far too many people looking after number one. That opens the way for the illicit drugs industry and allows far too many people to be tempted to make more in crime—as they can—than from legitimate employment, with far too little prospect of being caught and convicted.

People are deeply worried about social fragmentation, unfairness and division. There can be little doubt that Britain is deeply divided. As Labour Members have been saying for a long time and as the Institute for Fiscal Studies showed yesterday, Conservative tax policies have thrown fairness out of the window. Middle and lower-income Britain is paying a high price for the failures of the 1980s. The Financial Secretary dubbed it the yuppie revolution but, as he said last year, it was "built on sand". As a result of the Government's tax policies, the top 1 per cent. of income earners have received 30 per cent. of the income tax cuts since 1979, but are paying only 4 per cent. of the tax rises being imposed.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman might also like to refer to the fact that the top 10 per cent. of taxpayers are now producing 45 per cent. of the yield of income tax, whereas when Dennis Healey left office they were producing only 35 per cent.

Mr. Smith: I notice that the Financial Secretary did not challenge my case, which concerned the fairness and the unfairness of the top 1 per cent. receiving 30 per cent. of income tax cuts but paying only 4 per cent. of the rises.

In place of Conservative promises before the election not to extend value added tax and to achieve year-on-year cuts in taxation, people are faced with the unfairness of VAT on domestic fuel and the prospect of year-on-year tax increases. Page 23 of the Budget report that we are invited to approve tonight shows year-on-year increases in the share of national income going on taxation, rising to 38·5 per cent.—a higher tax take than in any year of any Labour government, which destroys once and for all Conservative claims to be a party of low taxation.

The Conservatives have added to the indirect tax burden. A typical family on average earnings pays 13 per cent. of its earnings on indirect tax, compared to 11·3 per cent. in 1978-79. The Conservatives have also added to the direct tax burden so that that same family pays 21·9 per cent. of its earnings in direct tax, compared with 20·9 per cent. in 1978-79.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The implication of the picture that the hon. Gentleman is painting is that mainland Europe's success in social cohesion, taxation policy and so forth has a direct, lasting and beneficial effect on unemployment. Will he confirm that the unemployment record of most of the countries of mainland Europe compares very unfavourably with the record in this country?

Mr. Smith: If the hon. Gentleman studies the period that I was examining—I think that the Financial Secretary believes that it is right to study a long period of time—works out how many periods of growth and recession there were during that time and their extent and compares them with the record of each of those other countries, he will

realise what an abysmal record the Government have. They have diminished the opportunities and prosperity of the people of this country.

The tax burdens that I mentioned are the effects of the Government's incompetence at managing the economy, which is matched in scale only by the extent of their broken election promises. Their failures make Britain weaker, more demoralised and more divided.

Conservative Members too are certainly demoralised, and no wonder. On 22 January the Financial Secretary gave a keynote speech, which was intended, I dare say, to propel left-wing Conservatism into the next century. So replete was it with references to social obligation, the importance of public service and the rejection of jingoism that it could not, by any stretch of the imagination, have been given at last year's flag-waving Conservative conference. It did not register so much as an attack upon the Labour party as, perhaps, a putative application for membership. *[Interruption.]* For the benefit of the Financial Secretary, I repeat: not so much an attack on the Labour party as a putative application for membership.

It is quite clear that the people whom the Financial Secretary had in his sights when he made that speech were very much closer to home. Let me give an illustration. The Financial Secretary said:

"Patriotism—like freedom—is a much-abused concept. The Conservative is well aware of the dangers and rejects the exaggerated histrionics of flag-waving nationalists. They offer symbols in place of substance—a cheap imitation of the real thing."

I wonder to whom that could have been referring. *[Interruption.]* I hear someone ask "Where is he?" Where indeed?

But it gets better. Whom could the hon. Gentleman have had in mind when he said:

"Furthermore, the Conservative will reject a narrow, inward-looking view of patriotism. Love of country does not imply hostility to foreigners."

Let him tell that to the Chief Secretary and to the noble Lord Tebbit.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it ill behoves those of us with foreign names to make cheap jibes about foreigners?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend has said it and, as usual, he is right.

The Financial Secretary went on to say:

"European institutions do not represent a threat to our national identity or our national interests."

It is difficult to imagine those words escaping from the mouth of the Chief Secretary, even in an unguarded moment.

It is abundantly clear that, in the House and in the country, there are real divisions between the right and the left of the Conservative party. The former says that, with the long-term weakness of the economy, we should cut public services further so that we may move towards a more balanced budget and return to cutting taxes on the very rich. The latter says that, with the economic failures we face, the Government need to raise taxes so that they may inflict a bit less damage on public services.

The Financial Secretary and the Chancellor have referred to the quality of public services. They must mean that they want a bit less damage than their hon. Friends on the right want. Both groups contrast with the Labour party, which says, "Let's put in place the measures for economic success so that we may help to make people better off and provide them with better public services and a fairer distribution of taxes."

The sections of the Budget report that we are considering tonight offer no basis for sustainable success. They hold in prospect no means of getting Britain to pull together for jobs, no restoration of the social fabric, no end to decline. They are measures that the Government should be ashamed to send to Brussels, let alone put before the British people. They should be rejected, and we shall vote against them tonight.

11.34 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): When Labour Members forced the Government to accept the amendment that led to this debate, Conservative Members had the vague idea that they meant to do something constructive with the debate on the Government's convergence plans. But they obviously just wanted an insurance policy. They know that their procedural expertise is a little lacking from time to time, so they wanted an extra opportunity to have the same old familiar, boring rant that we have heard several times already on this subject.

When one of the biggest issues in British politics—how Britain should conduct itself in the debate on European monetary union—is under discussion, it is disappointing that the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) should studiously avoid saying anything of consequence on the subject. Moreover, we are united in our total perplexity at the fact that the Labour party has only just discovered that taxation can check economic recovery. It is a remarkable thing for Labour Members to learn. They obviously did not know it at the last general election.

When the hon. Member for Oxford, East talks of social protection, he means his union friends in work, rather than those who are out of work. The best social protection that any economy can offer its people is a job. We are absolutely united on the fact that we now have falling unemployment, lower unemployment than the EC average and are leading the European Community in the jobs stakes.

On social cohesion, let us look at some of the socialist Governments running other European countries. Prime Minister Balladur is having to cope with chaos and dislocation in France; Spain is suffering from more than 20 per cent. unemployment; and there is almost total chaos in Italy. If one is looking for social cohesion, one need look no further than this country as a good example of social protection, jobs and economic success.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Apart from the brilliance of Ministers, of which we are all aware, does not my hon. Friend think that Britain's splendid achievement within Europe may be because we were chucked out of the exchange rate mechanism, unlike the others?

Mr. Jenkin: My hon. Friend leads me to my next point. Part of the ingredient of our success in achieving falling unemployment is the fact that we were thrown out of the exchange rate mechanism. I use the words "thrown out" advisedly because they were used by the former Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont). We were then able to pursue policies that were in this country's interests and to set the economic agenda according to our domestic monetary

[Mr. Jenkin]

conditions, not according to an external discipline that had become inappropriate for the circumstances in which we found ourselves. That important point is pertinent to this debate which, I remind the hon. Member for Oxford, East, is meant to be about convergence.

Why do we want convergence? What is so axiomatically good about it? Our economy has improved markedly since we made a conscious decision to let it diverge from those of our European partners. The treaty on European union contains an obligation to converge, which has been put there for political rather than economic reasons. People have a political agenda that they want to achieve in Europe and the economy is the tool with which they want to achieve it.

Amendment (a), tabled in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, talks of many supposed failings in the Government's economic policies. But if the Opposition were ever in government and took us into a single currency —their espoused policy—and did away with the opt-out which the Prime Minister attempted to negotiate at Maastricht, they would abolish the very means to deal with the problems which they think they can cope with better.

Mr. Rowe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is making an intelligent and helpful speech. Does he agree that, while there are manifest short-term economic advantages in our being divergent from the present state of Europe, in the long term, political differences throw all economic advance off course? That has been demonstrated at least twice this century—between 1914 and 1918 and between 1939 and 1945. It makes a great deal of sense to have the twin track of a political and an economic agenda.

Mr. Jenkin: I agree that we need a twin-track agenda to ensure that we have a strong defence policy, coupled with clear foreign, economic and trade policies that bind us together. But it is trade that binds the interests of our nations together. The causes of both the first and second world wars were as much about protectionism as anything else.

To impose a single currency upon the diverse nations in Europe is a different proposition. In imposing a single currency, one imposes a uniform economic discipline, but the political characteristics of each of the member states are very different. They have their own priorities, geographical characteristics and trading partners. France tends to trade with French-speaking countries, Britain tends to trade with English-speaking countries. A single currency does not automatically lead to the cohesion of Europe.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Will my hon. Friend consider convergence in relation to a single currency? We do not necessarily have to pursue convergence. We could allow countries that naturally converge to do so and adopt a multi-speed approach to the concept of a single currency, rather than following the politically dominated, forced agenda, which is essentially part of the treaty.

Mr. Jenkin: My hon. Friend is right, and he directs me to the subject that I wanted to raise: the definition of convergence. Many of my hon. Friends think that convergence means having less than 3 per cent. public sector deficit and less than 60 per cent. public debt ratio, low inflation and low long-term interest rates. Those are not articles of convergence, but four objectives that politicians have decided it would be interesting to achieve.

Mr. Duncan Smith: A wish list.

Mr. Jenkin: Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right —it is a wish list.

Convergence under a single currency would require imposing the same monetary policy and the same interest rates regardless of the circumstances in each of the member states. In the United States, where there is a single currency, there is a single interest rate, and a single financial, fiscal and monetary discipline. But that does not solve the problems of economic divergence in the United States. When the motor industry in Chicago and Detroit is booming, oil in Texas can be bust and silicon chips booming in California. One has to have massive fiscal transfers to pay for the discrepancies between the different parts of the economic unit.

The United Kingdom has a single currecy, but a widely divergent economic performance. We must pay for wide disparities in public expenditure—which is 18 per cent. per head higher in Scotland and 41 per cent. higher in Northern Ireland—to maintain a cohesive economic unit. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because we care about our country, that's why. How much more would we have to pay in taxes to maintain cohesion and convergence between all the various member states of the Community, given all the economic differences between them?

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): My hon. Friend is becoming so obsessed with the prospect of a single currency—to which Maastricht does not commit this country—that he forgets that the Maastricht convergence criteria actually constitute rather good Tory principles of public finance management. In the event that other countries observe them better than we do, given that the European Community is a single capital market, there will be fairly massive transfers that will not benefit this country.

Mr. Jenkin: First, the treaty on European union obliges us to converge in the run-up to a single currency. Secondly, if it is virtuous to have a 3 per cent. public sector deficit ratio, why have we not had one for the past few years? The Maastricht treaty was negotiated at the end of 1991.

The answer is that this country decided that it was politically expedient—and, indeed, beneficial to its economy—to run rather a large deficit. We decided to make that political choice. We would like to run a balanced budget; we would like to run a surplus. But it is for the House and the Government—both accountable to the British people—to decide what is best; it is not for the European Commission, in its wisdom, to decide when and how we should apply the convergence criteria.

If we are talking about convergence, I urge my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) to read the treaty. It is about multilateral surveillance; it is about being told off by the Commission, not when we in this House think action is inappropriate but when the Commission thinks it is. My hon. Friend is committed to the idea of convergence and a single currency for a political reason; his is a political objective. I am as internationalist as he is, but we choose to achieve our aims in different ways.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend has mentioned the public sector borrowing requirement. Does he agree that the current £50 billion is largely a result of the fact that,

because we remained in the exchange rate mechanism for an intolerably long time, the cost of social security payments and housing benefits, and a range of additional public expenditure, was heaped on the British people? Consequently, we are in the economic mess represented by the Red Book that we have before us.

Mr. Jenkin: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but I am not prepared to go over old ground that is accepted by a great many people in the country.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jenkin: I think that I must press on.

I have made my argument as clear as possible. The pursuit of convergence is a very expensive business: that is why there are structural and cohesion funds. We must pay for convergence, and it is the northern states that will have to slow down their economic growth to pay for disparities throughout the European Community.

I shall vote for the report, because I voted for the Budget; but the fact of its submission proves that monetary union is still happening. The idea that it has been stopped in its tracks by the collapse of the initial strategy must be discounted. The documents are beginning to flood out of the Commission. The strict convergence criteria were meant by some to make sure that monetary union never took place, but now the criteria turn out to be a little more malleable than we had thought. The goalposts are being moved.

The two documents about legislation on convergence —it is interesting to note that the treaty is giving rise to draft legislation on that already—try to define the 3 per cent. borrowing ratio and the 60 per cent. public debt ratio, because each country has a different definition of these elements. Goodness only knows how the Italians and Greeks define them. No figures for previous years' performance is offered in the documents.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The words have different meanings.

Mr. Jenkin: As my hon. and learned Friend says, they do. The Commission has a clear agenda and is starting to manipulate these definitions for its own purposes so that it can move back towards economic and monetary union, with all the expense that convergence implies.

Conservative Members can unite behind the agenda articulated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in his article in *The Economist* of 20 September:

"All over Europe, what are people worrying about? Not to reduce the number of currencies but to increase the number of jobs."

I commend that comment to the Minister.

11.51 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The Minister is a superbly conscientious man when offering assurances to the House. I hope tonight that before he gives us any more reassurances he will reflect on some of the others that the House has been given recently.

We were told in the debates on the exchange rate mechanism that it would bring growth and stability; we all know that it brought about a shambles. Last year, we were told that the general agreement on tariffs and trade round would lead to a great reform of the common agricultural policy; now we are throwing so much money at the farmers that they are positively embarrassed by it.

Something significant is happening tonight. For the first time in our history, we are going to submit our Budget plans and forecasts to the Commission, so that the Council can look at them and in turn tell us its thoughts on what we and others are doing. It will demand a great deal of information. It will monitor economic developments in each member state, carry out regular assessments and suggest detailed rules and recommendations.

All these recommendations will be directed to what the Commission thinks is the answer to our problems—to aim at this 3 per cent. figure. I know that Britain is doing terribly well compared with the other member states, but that is because we were thrown out of the ERM. The Minister, I know, is sometimes a little suspicious of our figures, so I took the trouble to get some independent figures from the Library. The Library informs me that if Britain adopted the 3 per cent. rule here and now—the basis of the EC's proposals—income tax would be increased by 23p in the pound. If the Minister did not like that he could, alternatively, impose VAT on everything at 34 per cent.

Mr. Dorrell: I thank my hon. Friend for that research. As he will know, however, because he is an assiduous reader of the documents, a proper reading of the excessive deficit provisions of the treaty shows that they do not require the United Kingdom or any other state to secure the 3 per cent. overnight. The treaty obliges us to endeavour to avoid excessive deficits, which it defines as 3 per cent. of GDP.

The document before the House outlines how the Government, chiefly for our own domestic reasons, do intend to reduce our public sector borrowing requirement to below 3 per cent. The Red Book shows that we will achieve that objective in 1996-97. I am sure that my hon. Friend, for reasons on which we both agree, will support the Government in delivering that objective. No suggestion is made in the treaty or elsewhere that we should seek to do that overnight.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am terribly sorry, but I have read what article 104C says about 3 per cent. These are specific aims. In fairness, Britain can receive only recommendations, strong letters and instructions, but if other member states do not do what they are told they can be fined, asked to put unlimited sums on deposit at no interest and have the facilities of the European investment bank withdrawn.

The Minister said that this does not have to be done overnight. That is perfectly true—as long as we can give a tale to the Commission and to the Council and can say, "We are terribly sorry that we are above 3 per cent. but here are our plans to reduce it."

Mr. Budgen: Not only can we be subject to such criticism and blackmail from our foreign governors but we are also likely to have great difficulty in raising money on international markets if we have been subject to an adverse report from what many people regard as people who control large sums of foreign money.

Sir Teddy Taylor: How right my hon. Friend is. Reports will be published in which the Council and Commission will say, "We think that the Government are making a mess of things." We would know that that is untrue. We know that we have brilliant Treasury Ministers who are doing a fantastic job. I am sure that the same would apply to all Governments, but if the Commission

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

says, "We think that the Government are heading for disaster because they are borrowing far too much money and their economic policies are crazy," what effect will that have on our stability as a nation and on how people regard us?

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I do not wish to use the same pejorative words as the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), but if the EC wishes Britain to converge, is it not reasonable to expect the Commission to assist Britain to do so? Does the hon. Gentleman believe that Britain is so assisted if the Commission allows the continuation of the situation in my area, where there is enormous anxiety about the survival of probably the finest engineering steel works in Europe, if not the world?

They are likely to be taken out because the Governments of Germany and Spain are determined to subsidise their industries to destroy British competition. Does the hon. Gentleman understand that, if the Commission does not help us, the possibility of convergence is made more difficult, and the effect on public expenditure of the destruction of a successful British industry makes the situation that Britain, and presumably South Yorkshire, faces a bitter one?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am well aware of the terrible problems facing the steel industry in south Yorkshire. Everyone is aware of the problems facing Britain. I ask the hon. Gentleman please to go and look at what the Council and the Commission have done. They have given permission for extra subsidies and the expansion of steel works in other countries on condition that we clobber ourselves. Do not blame the Government. The fact is that Europe is killing our steel industry, and the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) knows that. We have seen it happening and it is getting worse. For him to blame Tories, Labour or Liberals is a load of codswallop. Our steel industry is being deliberately killed because we are allowing extra subsidies and extra capacity in certain member states.

The Minister said that we do not have to increase VAT to 30 per cent. immediately. He said that the Commission will be kind. It will say, "As long as you are going the right way we will go along with you." I ask him to look at other member states of the EC. Are they going the right way with their borrowing? Every single figure shows that the massive borrowing of EC countries, but not Britain, is getting worse almost every day.

I ask the Minister to read today's edition of that splendid newspaper *The Guardian*, which reports that Germany now has more than 4 million unemployed and that the total went up by 340,000 last month. What will be the impact of that increase on Germany's overspending and borrowing? The same is happening in Spain and Italy. I mentioned our excessive problem, but in Greece the figure is 15·4 per cent. It is my calculation, not the Library's, that if we had to conform to the 3 per cent. target, we should be required to increase income tax to 23s 4d in the pound, which would be difficult to maintain.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend recollect that in Spain, despite the vast amounts made available to it in the form of subsidies—including the £108 billion over the next few years that was agreed at Edinburgh in 1992 under our presidency—37 per cent. of all people under the age of 25 are unemployed? That is why Spain has a general strike. It is an indictment of the way in which the Community is going, and what is happening in Germany will happen in this country.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Minister is a sensible chap and I appeal to him to consider what the EC is doing to its member states. He should not listen to the Foreign Office chaps but should examine the figures. Spain has mass unemployment despite mass aid. Costs to industry and commerce are increasing and Europe is unable to compete because of the crazy CAP and trade protection. Massive borrowing is also a factor in Europe's problems.

The House is well aware that things are going well in Britain, but what about interest rates? When considering convergence, the Minister should examine the figures for borrowing among the European member states and my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Dykes) should examine the European investment bank. The main sources of loans are the Arab countries which, sadly, do not have so much money now because of the price of oil—even the Saudis are paying their debts in instalments—and the Japanese, who are lending less. Unfortunately, the ever-increasing borrowing will soon meet non-available lending, which will have a pretty devastating effect on interest rates in Europe.

Please, will the Minister let himself be told what is happening? We tabled an amendment asking that the House of Commons be told what instructions or advice is given to member states. *[Interruption.]* If my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West cares to listen, I recommend that he read paragraph 9 on page 20 of the treaty which states that the Commission will tell the Government what it thinks they should do but that it will not tell anyone else. Communication will be secret and private. If Britain is to be told what to do, surely the Government should at least inform the House. Is that asking too much?

If the Minister has to proceed with what I believe to be another lunatic Euro-plan which will create more unemployment, misery and problems, I hope that he will at least promise to inform the House of any instructions or advice given by the EC to the Treasury. If other member states are told that fines are to be imposed and that they have to deposit money, why should not the Government tell us that, too?

Article 103 of the treaty states that economic policy is now of common concern. I therefore appreciate the fact that the control by the House of economic policy is being taken away, bit by bit. It is disappearing, as is our control of other matters that we used to decide for ourselves. We should at least have the right to be told what is happening. The Minister should reflect on the 250,000 people who lost their jobs because of the criminal decision to join the exchange rate mechanism and on the fact that the Government told us that the treaty would bring growth and stability. Despite the additional transfer of power and the mad 3 per cent. policy, which can never work across Europe, I hope that he will tell the House when he receives secret advice on a bit of paper from the Council or the Commission.

Is it wrong to say that we should be told what is happening? That is all that the amendment asks. As the Foreign Secretary, who is someone who wants to tell everyone everything, is sitting on the Front Bench, I hope

that we shall be given the assurance that, when the private secret letters come he will tell the House, so that not only the Labour party and the Conservative party but, most important, the people of Britain know what is going on.

12.4 am

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): I had not intended to speak in the debate, because I did not want to intrude on the private grief of the Conservatives. However, having heard some of what Conservative Members have said, I felt that it might be helpful if someone made a contribution that at least drew attention to the reality of what is happening in Europe rather than to the peculiar obsession of the anti-European wing of the Conservative party.

European economies are becoming more integrated every day. Multinational companies are buying plants in other countries, in some cases with the support of those countries' Governments and in other cases against their wishes. That integration will continue regardless of whether this country is in the exchange rate mechanism, and regardless of whether there is a single European currency.

As that process continues, we in this country can be bystanders or we can be part of trying to shape the structures, organisations and institutions of the Europe that is being created. Unfortunately, our Government have chosen to be bystanders and to opt out of that process, but we shall still have the opportunity over the next decade to take our place in influencing those decisions. If we examine what the Maastricht treaty really says we realise that, regardless of whether the timetable is kept to, it is possible and even likely that by 1999 a substantial minority, perhaps even a majority, of the member countries will go forward to establish some kind of single currency.

Many people will say, "That does not matter to us. We are not influenced by it, and they can do it if they want. We want a two-speed Europe." But if our economy is to be dominated by the largest country in the European Union, with its power, its strength and its deutschmark zone, which will influence the policies of BMW and the other companies that want to invest and to build export markets outside the European Union, and if we say that we do not want any influence on that process, we should have to be strong enough outside on our own.

Mr. Jenkin *rose*——

Mr. Duncan Smith *rose*——

Mr. Gapes: I shall give way in a minute.

We should have to be strong enough to resist those pressures. Our economy is already very weak, which is why our Government seem prepared to accept investment from anywhere, regardless of its long-term technological and industrial consequences, even if it is used to purchase the last remnants of the British motor vehicle industry.

The logic of the position of those who want to opt out and stay out is that we shall become, on the one hand, a kind of subcontractor, producing on the periphery of the European economy—the deutschmark economy—and, on the other, a kind of amusement park for American and Japanese tourists. That is the logic of the Government's policies, which will leave us with no manufacturing base or jobs and no industrial future. We must face that reality.

Mr. Jenkin: Although our economy is substantially smaller than that of western Germany, let alone that of the united Germany, we are not left behind by Germany. On the contrary, the Bundesbank does 60 per cent. of its bond trading and 90 per cent. of its foreign exchange dealing in London. We need be no more left behind if we stay outside the single currency than Hong Kong is left behind by China.

Mr. Gapes: That is an interesting parallel. Hong Kong is about to be unified with China in 1997 and lose its unique position. Germany has just gone through the most traumatic process of unification. It has also taken huge numbers of German refugees from central and eastern Europe and refugees from the former Soviet Union. Also, it has been recently reported that the east German economy is growing. The east German employment rate is no longer the major problem. The major problem it faces is the adjustment to the west German economy and to the process of the west European economy.

I suspect that in five or 10 years' time, the 80 million-strong Germany will be a powerful, united economy. No other former Warsaw pact or former COMECON country is in anywhere near the same shape, despite the fact that they have not had the serious problems with which the German economy has had to deal.

The basic position of that German economy is far stronger than the British economy. If we had had to take 5 million or 6 million people from Hong Kong and had had to deal with unification with a backward economy which had been run down over many years, the British economy would not have been able to cope. The Germans are having great difficulty, but I have no doubt that, in future, they will emerge in a much better position than Britain, France or any other west European country could possibly have managed.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gapes: In a moment, but not now. It is a myth to say——

Mr. Duncan Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gapes: No, not yet. The hon. Gentleman may be my neighbour, but I am not giving way.

It is a myth to say that the German economy is falling apart and that it is in terrible trouble. It has difficulties with unification, but it is coming through it.

In 1999, the German economy will be the motor force behind some sort of single European currency. When I spoke a few weeks ago to five Christian Democrat Members of Parliament—from the sister party of the British Conservatives in the European People's party—they told me and my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead (Ms Quin) that the policies of the British Labour party were much closer to their policies than those of their supposed friends in the Conservative party. *[Interruption.]* They said that they believed that they could work with us in government, but that they would have great difficulties working with the British Conservatives.

A few days ago, I met some French politicians, led by Giscard D'Estaing, who were meeting members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. They made it clear that the French, including the Gaullists, the socialists and UDF members, saw moves towards economic and monetary union and a single currency as going ahead. That is despite the referendum in France. They attributed the

[Mr. Gapes]

narrowness of that result to the unpopularity of President Mitterrand and the domestic unpopularity of that Government.

If the Dutch are moving that way, if the Germans continue to move that way, and if the French, across the political spectrum and including the Conservative party's supposed allies in the European People's party and the majority of its Gaullist friends, move that way, where is Britain? It is nowhere. It is sitting on the sideline. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is here."] Yes, it may be here but why is it not over there in Europe as well?

I shall conclude—*[Interruption.]* I shall not conclude, but I shall make two more points.

The British Conservative party is in a complete shambles. To preserve the pretence of unity, it has a drafting committee for a European election manifesto; it brings forward the sublime and the ridiculous and puts them on the same committee. It will be interesting to see what kind of manifesto the committee comes up with. Will it be the same manifesto as that of the European People's party—a manifesto that talks about federalism and a single currency? Will the British Conservatives be able to launch their European campaign saying proudly, "We and our European partners all agree on these objectives"? We must wait and see.

We in the Labour party know that, with our allies and partners in the party of European socialists and with those in many of the Christian Democrat parties in Europe who also believe in jobs, investment, social justice and the social chapter, we will be able to create the kind of Europe that provides employment and social justice for our people and for the people of the rest of Europe and contributes to peace, security and justice in the world.

12.15 am

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) most warmly. He gave us a superb exposition of the Labour's future view of the Community. I was grateful to the hon. Gentleman for conveying to us fraternal greetings from the European People's party—although a little disconcerted that the Foreign Secretary left his place on the Front Bench shortly afterwards.

The hon. Gentleman has focused sharply on a philosophical divide. It is a genuine divide, and it is an irritating divide, because it does not follow the normal fault lines of party politics. Conservative Members had the opportunity to study the faces of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends as he made his speech, and they did not give the impression of unanimous glee.

Mr. Radice: I did.

Mr. Biffen: Of course, I almost felt that my hon. Friend —I say hon. Friend because he is my pair—was the author of this advanced document of Euro-socialism.

One one side of the divide, which is a genuine one, are those who think of politics as a mechanical process and who are attracted by the whole proposal of convergence, because they see it following what is to them unmistakeably a predetermined path—albeit not in iron terms—with all the resources of Government being dedicated to making it come about. On the other side are those who are, by contrast, evolutionary in their approach to political problems and above all to European problems, who, by their lights, are no less communautaire than their opponents.

I think that I take a more Tory view of life. These are great ambitions, and they are ambitions much more realistically undertaken without any clear view of the timing of the objectives. One is perfectly entitled also to ask whether the objectives of uniformity and convergence are a proven success. There is a case to be made for European economies with a degree of diversity. At times, when one is coming out of a recession, a strong economy often helps by being a lead economy. I adopt a neutral approach to that question, therefore.

I do, however, observe that the European Community is an intensely diverse organisation. The nation states of Europe have a profound history, which is stronger than economics, and that diversity will be intensified by the enlargement of the Community to which hon. Members on both sides of the House are committed.

Let me come to what is perhaps a more pedestrian view. The present view—the Delors view and the view of that great roll call of political parties to which the hon. Member for Ilford, South subjected us, which I respect as part of a dirigiste tradition that is well established on the continent —is that convergence is something to be brought about by Government involvement, which cannot be left to itself to happen; that is a rather sort of Gladstonian liberal view no longer shared by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), but still held in affection by myself.

The European Commission looks at the situation and asks who will provide the resources to give real impetus to the process on the time scale of convergence. Recently, the general view was that it would be the Federal Republic of Germany. We can only observe that the federal republic —the united Germany—is in immense difficulty.

I say that without any trace of satisfaction. A Germany in turmoil is a danger for Europe. If we look at the priorities that confront German domestic politicians today, will German resources be used in the Mediterranean or to the east. Those resources must go to the east partly because there are economic opportunities there, but, above all, the political situation there is so fragile that that must be the first call on German interests.

What will happen? There will be a redistribution of the obligation and the privilege to help to finance this great politically contrived enterprise. We shall move more into the role of a contributor. The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) spoke warmly about the advantage that he hoped his constituency would get from this system. That is what we all hope and believe. However, the likelihood of Britain being a recipient of largesse from Greece or Portugal can be put to one side.

I shall conclude on this point. It is a technical point, but it runs to the heart of the difference. It is one of measurement. If politicians are given access to resources, the ability to measure equitably so that the judgment will be respected by the population at large is crucial.

There is no prospect of resources in western Europe being equitably assessed and managed. We view the statistical basis on which we work with some unease. Certainly, Sir Claus Moser, who is possibly in a position to make these judgments, has his anxieties about the quality of our statistics. But we should think of Greek and Portuguese statistics and those that will greet us from the east.

If we look at the protocol governing these matters in the Community documents, we see that the Commission will be charged with putting together the information on which decisions will be taken. One cannot go to the European people, who will justifiably be uneasy, on the basis of central allocations, basically because they do not trust other people's figures. It may seem a modest and technical point in this Chamber, but hon. Members should listen to the litany of disbelief in their constitutions about the equitable way in which Community resources are being distributed.

If we go down this semi-mechanical route, we will be storing immense trouble if there cannot be as much evident justice about European budgeting as there is about national budgeting. It is against that background that one could well have a growing disillusion, which, far from fostering European partnership, will do the reverse.

12.23 am

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Following that speech will be difficult. My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) referred to the precise point that Labour Members have completely missed—that the convergence criteria are deflationary; they are intended to be deflationary, and therefore will increase unemployment. It is no consolation to hon. Members on both sides of the House to know that the level of unemployment in Europe has risen to 17 million. The European Commission admitted last August that economic and monetary union is bound to increase unemployment significantly throughout Europe. Why on earth should we go through the charade of a debate such as this on the convergence criteria when everybody knows that they cannot work, and that they must not be allowed to work? It escapes me completely.

As I pointed out earlier, the statistics themselves are riddled with holes. They do not include eastern Germany as part of the statistical base for the convergence criteria as devised.

Mr. Andrew Smith: The hon. Gentleman is evidently opposed to the convergence process, and convinced that the figures are deeply flawed. He and his hon. Friends have made strong arguments that Britain should not be taking part. Will he take the opportunity tonight not to collaborate with the submission of the information, by not voting for the Government motion?

Mr. Cash: I have made it perfectly clear to the Whip that I have not the slightest intention of voting for the motion. I would not dream of doing so. I think that it is absolute rubbish, and the House should not pay the slightest attention to this ridiculous report.

I will go further. I was deeply concerned to hear the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary at Johns Hopkins university on 29 November last year. My right hon. Friend stated that, whatever one's view on the steps to be taken after stage 2 of economic and monetary union, everyone was agreed on the importance of better economic co-ordination and greater convergence in the European economies.

The plain fact is that it is not going to work, and it will induce unemployment. I will simply conclude on this point: what satisfaction can it give the people of this country to engage in a policy which is guaranteed to throw our people out of jobs?

12.27 am

Mr. Dorrell: It is always a pleasure to listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). The problem for the House this evening is the one to which I drew attention in my opening remarks. The motion asks the House to approve again a document that it has approved many times before, and to approve the contents of the Red Book because of a clause that was written into the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, which dealt with the Maastricht treaty.

The question for the House was whether we should endorse the contents of the Red Book. The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) sought to address that question in his speech, but, as my hon. Friend the member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) rightly said, the result was a boring rant and familiar claptrap.

The hon. Gentleman alleged that the plan set out in the Budget presented no prospects of growth, jobs or improving living standards. He was apparently blind to the fact that unemployment has fallen during the past 12 months, and that the growth rate during the same period has been 2 per cent. There are clear prospects of growth being sustained. That is the view not just of the Government, but of almost all independent commentators.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my hon. Friend also accept that the improvement in our economic performance has come about by our diverging from our European partners on a number of key measures, not least the exchange rate?

Mr. Dorrell: One of the key thinks which has been made possible the economic recovery, and which will continue to underwrite it, is the fact that we have inflation under better control in Britain today than for 25 years. The choice which the Government made to insist on facing down the inflationary pressures which were present in the British economy at the end of the 1980s was one of the key factors which has made recovery possible. I did agree with my hon. Friend's characterisation of the speech of the hon. Member for Oxford, East.

The House then had a real treat from the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes), who displayed a hitherto unsuspected skill in the art of dispassionate and forensic analysis of the position in which the different countries of Europe have found themselves. He offered us, I suspect, the speech of a graduate of the Prescott school of rhetoric. The whole House enjoyed his speech, even if we were, with great respect to him, not much the wiser when he sat down.

On the other hand, the majority of my hon. Friends who spoke recognised a sterile debate when they saw one. They understood that the House had already approved the document several times. There is not a great deal of point in reciting yet again familiar arguments from the two sides of the House. That is why I so much welcomed the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). He presented a view around which all Conservative Members can unite—the proposition that the proper way in which to see institutions and policies develop is to insist on an evolutionary approach to politics.

The view expressed by my right hon. Friend was one of the key arguments that I advanced in the speech which the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) was kind enough to quote in extenso. It was the reason why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister insisted at Maastricht that we should not sign up to an artificial timetable for

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economic and monetary union, and that if, at any stage in the future, we chose to join a European single currency, that was a decision that should be made at the time when it was to be put into effect, based on the circumstances prevailing at that time.

I suggest to my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North that that corresponds precisely with the evolutionary approach to such problems that he says—I agree with him—we should adopt.

My right hon. Friend also stressed—again, I agree with him—that, in deciding whether we should proceed with a particular form of evolution, we should take account of what Alan Clark would describe as the actualité. Part of that actualité in the evolution of European politics, as my right hon. Friend rightly said, is the current position in the German economy which is the result of reunification.

Another thing that he might have mentioned, but did not, is the result of the possible enlargement of the Community. All those factors should be taken into account in the way in which the Community evolves. That is precisely why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister insisted at Maastricht that we should not commit ourselves to a long-term plan for the Community which built in no flexibility to allow it to react to events as they evolved.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Will the Financial Secretary confirm that, under the provisions of the Maastricht treaty and the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, the Government are obliged to notify the Community that they do not intend to proceed to stage 3 before the Community proceeds to stage 3? Have the Goverment yet given notification that they do not intend to move to stage 3? If not, when does the Financial Secretary anticipate that it will be communicated to the Community?

Mr. Dorrell: No communication of that nature has yet been given to the Community. If it is given, it will be given at the time——

Mr. Smith: If.

Mr. Dorrell: As we have made clear from the beginning, we are anxious to keep the option open, observing precisely the principle that my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North expounded.

Therefore, the basis exists on which every Conservative Member can proceed in unity. It was set out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North, and it was endorsed by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North when he referred to the article written by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in *The Economist,* which advanced a similar approach to the problem. That is the basis on which we shall approach the future of European economic and monetary questions.

The question for the House this evening is whether the Government's plans set out in the document represent a proper way to proceed to deliver economic recovery and improving living standards. The Government's view, as the House well knows, is that sustainable, non-inflationary growth requires us to observe key disciplines of sound money and sound public finance. We do that primarily and principally because that is the only way in which to deliver the improving living standards that are the shared ambition of every member of the Conservative party. It is on that basis that I commend the contents of the Red Book to the House and ask its support for the motion before us.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 294, Noes 239.

Division No. 117] **[12.35 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*

Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John

Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the Government's assessment as set out in sections 2, 4 and 5 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report for the purposes of section 5 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993.

Nursing (Performance-related Pay)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

12.46 am

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): First, may I place on record my disgust at the Government's refusal to honour the recommendations of the pay review body for nurses by expecting efficiency savings to fund it?

In December 1993, the Department of Health put forward proposals to introduce performance-related pay for nurses, midwives and health visitors. The Department's guidelines for performance-related pay may be issued, but it will be up to local employers to decide whether to pay extra. There will be no jointly agreed rules or guarantee of payment. Trusts will be free to choose any performance measure they like.

As a result, the management side of the nurses' negotiating body proposed that local employers should be allowed to introduce performance-related pay based on the "achievement of increased productivity and/or improved efficiency".

I firmly believe that to go down such a road would be a disaster for the finest nursing profession in the world.

First, we should examine the advantages of the current system for setting nurses' pay through a national salary scheme, determined by an independent review body following representations from employers, Government and unions. A national salary for nursing staff has been in place ever since the foundation of the national health service. It was brought in to replace the chaotic confusion in the pre-war arrangements, when pay was determined by a local hospital board and local authorities.

The system of national pay has been very useful and the pay review body introduced in 1983 has also worked well, so nursing has enjoyed good industrial relations and stability. But, as everybody knows, the Government's motto for the public sector is, "If it is working well and workers seem to be satisfied and are benefiting, let's wreck it".

That is what the internal market, of which performance-related pay is a creature, will do.

Tonight I want to make the case for a national salary for nurses—that case is moral, economic and social. Is it fair that a nurse in my constituency of Halifax should be paid less than nurses in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Preston (Mrs. Wise), for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) when the jobs that those nurses perform are identical?

The clinical grading system can deal with differences in work between areas of the country, and the London allowance is intended to offset the high costs of living in the capital. But the Minister should say tonight whether he believes that other variations in pay are justifiable, particularly if they are based on factors outside nurses' control, such as local unemployment or the financial, or otherwise, success of the trust. The morale of nurses has never been lower. Does the Minister seriously intend to make it worse by allowing the crazy system to go ahead?

In economic terms, a national salary makes it easier for nurses, especially qualified ones, to move around the country. It avoids the prospect of competition for staff between hospitals and is simple to administer. Why interfere with that system? Why not leave it alone when it has been proved to work so well?

I am sponsored by UNISON—I do not receive a penny for myself, but money is paid to the Labour party. My union and the Royal College of Nursing have undertaken research. In a report on performance-related pay and United Kingdom nursing commissioned by the Royal College of Nursing, and written by Mark Thompson and James Buchan, the Institute of Manpower Studies concluded that there was no reliable evidence that PRP improved employee motivation and some evidence that it could be demotivating. It also concluded that there was no evidence that performance-related pay helped to retain good performers. It stated that there was no evidence that performance-related pay improved the performance of the organisation.

In an earlier report, the Institute of Manpower Studies considered performance-related pay in both the public and private sector. It looked at 20 different organisations. Its conclusions were:

"Few studies have shown any link between PRP and productivity and the claims for PRP were found wanting in practice".

Most people—certainly, most health workers and anybody with any knowledge of the health service—would agree that proposals for performance-related pay for nursing would be bad for patient care. It would be harmful if nursing were to become more financially driven, competitive and preoccupied with meaningless, if measurable, targets. Nurses are already sinking under excessive paperwork as the new market-led approach takes over. Nursing is not a production-line process or a service providing a profit. Performance-related pay would prove an extremely dangerous experiment that could seriously harm patient care.

In other parts of the public sector, performance-related pay is not the success that it is claimed to be. There is evidence in the Inland Revenue that the introduction of performance-related pay is leading to the demoralisation of staff. Surveys for British Telecom, much hailed by the Government as a success story, have found widespread resentment at unfairness in its operation, particularly where cash limits have been applied so that the numbers of staff who can qualify for higher levels of payment is not determined by their performance but by predetermined budget limits. I do not think that anybody doubts that the same would be true of the NHS.

A small number of trusts in the NHS have introduced schemes, but a survey in 1992 by NALGO, as it was then, found overwhelming dissatisfaction with performance-related pay for managers. PRP is not being introduced to support the NHS or the nurses. By imposing PRP linked to productivity, the Government hope to get nurses to fund their own pay increases well into the future. That is the real agenda; it has nothing to do with patient care of the care of nurses—and, of course, it involves many problems.

Recently, the Royal College of Nursing said:

"One of the greatest difficulties with introducing PRP to nursing is determining the performance indicators to be used. There is a danger that easily quantifiable measures such as the number of patients treated will be used and that factors such as the ward environment, the financial resources available and, perhaps most importantly, the quality of care provided may be overlooked. Current job evaluation schemes introduced into the NHS are already giving rise to these concerns: they concentrate on recognition and reward of management responsibility without giving sufficient consideration to factors such as patient care and communication skills."

Will nurses find that they are pressurised into discharging patients too early, in order to meet productivity targets? In Ayrshire and Arran trust, among others, there have been proposals for a system linking pay with attendance. Such a system would almost certainly put pressure on sick nurses. Imagine the consequences for a special care baby unit, or a maternity unit, if a nurse with influenza reported for duty.

Another crazy idea relates to throughput. I warn the Minister that nurses will not tolerate a system that encourages them to ignore the quality of care, and to push patients out of the door as quickly as possible. Linking patient discharge rates with pay could cause individuals to suffer; it could also conflict with the duty not to discharge patients until community services are available.

How could the throughput measure be applied to long-stay patients? In an excellent study, appropriately named "Nurses on the Production line", UNISON says:

"Using patient throughput could lead to more productivity but worse care. In addition, at present no measures of readmission rates exist and one of the main dangers of using throughput would be that those patients discharged too quickly would simply be readmitted later with complications."

A development that is already under way—because of the national shortage of beds, especially acute beds—would be massively accelerated.

The Government must have devoted some thought to the proposal, given that they allowed the trusts and the director-managed units to go ahead on such a loose basis. Will there be a practice of including bed utilisation rates and bed occupancy rates? If so, how will it work in practice? Such matters are often beyond the control of individual nurses.

Surely, if patient discharge rates are linked to pay, treatment regimes are bound to be influenced. There must be an effect on the quality of treatment. This idea is dangerous nonsense, and I hope that the Minister will note the points that I have raised on behalf of nurses.

Another way of using performance-related pay is the method employed in the United States, where PRP is linked with performance appraisal. In the United Kingdom, the Homewood trust runs such a scheme, rating employees from "ordinary" to "outstanding"; there are four grades within the appraisal. Although most unions and staff organisations do not oppose appraisal, they object to a link between pay and appraisal. My union, UNISON, is on record as expressing the fear that staff will be less open if their pay suffers after they have discussed their weak points.

I believe that there are many problems to do with performance-related pay that the Government have not taken seriously enough. What criteria will be used; how objective will it be? Performance-related pay systems are usually related to the individual, but nursing, by its very nature, is a team-based job in which people rely on each other and work together for the good of the patients. How much will this system upset what is a life-saving service?

Experience of performance-related pay linked to appraisal schemes in other areas suggests that racial and sexual discrimination will be a major problem if the scheme is applied to nursing.

There are so many drawbacks that it is difficult to know which ones to pinpoint in this debate. The Government's proposals to impose these measures mut be resisted as hard as possible. The public, Members of Parliament and all decision-makers must fight this just as hard as the police

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

fought the Sheehy plan. If we can get the issue on the political agenda, I am sure that the Government will back off as fast as they did when the police resisted Sheehy.

I appeal to all who may hear or read this debate, and to past and present patients and all hon. Members, to join me in praising the skills and commitment of nurses and in sympathising with them for the fraught time that they are having as they undergo some appalling changes to a market-led health care system. I appeal to everyone to condemn the scheme and to lobby the Government, to ensure that their thoughts on this dangerous and unnecessary experiment are put across to them.

This crackpot scheme deserves to be put in a hospital incinerator.

1.1 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) for raising the topic of the proposed performance-related pay for nurses, because it gives me an opportunity to explain the importance that the Government attach to the development of performance-related pay in the public sector. How we take this forward for nurses, the largest staff group in the NHS, is very important to the success of our whole approach.

We want to extend the link between performance and rewards to all NHS staff groups, and to make it much more explicit. The Government's policy on rewarding performance in the NHS can be traced back to the 1989 White Paper "Working for Patients", which set out a programme of reform. One of the objectives of the changes subsequently made to the NHS was to provide greater satisfaction and rewards for those working in it who successfully respond to local needs and preferences.

The White Paper proposed that NHS trusts should be free to settle the pay of their staff. The Government's objective throughout the service is progressively to introduce greater flexibility in order to allow managers to relate to local labour markets and reward individual performance.

Performance rewards are not new in the NHS. By April 1994 it is expected that 95 per cent. of all hospital and community health services will be provided by trusts, employing 90 per cent. of all staff. Many trusts are now actively drawing up local reward strategies, with firm plans for their introduction this year. The Government's objective is to devolve pay bargaining to a local level, and we are examining how trusts may make more progress.

Evidence suggests that, contrary to what the hon. Member for Halifax said, trusts are using their pay freedoms responsibly and are thoroughly researching their overall strategies before deciding the best way forward. They are pursuing the general aim that a well-motivated and rewarded work force will enjoy greater job satisfaction and will improve standards of patient care.

In evidence to the review body last autumn, the Government stated our belief that the link between pay and performance should be achieved by linking a larger proportion of the pay bill to performance. Any overall increases in pay must of course be affordable on a basis similar to that in the civil service: in general, any increase in pay must be funded from efficiency improvements.

Against that background, the Health Department, in evidence to the review body, urged it to recommend only modest increases in remuneration nationally to leave maximum scope to encourage local bargaining on self-financing pay increases. Local NHS employees should be free to adopt performance schemes most relevant to their needs. Local schemes might include the introduction of multi-disciplinary group awards, which could also recognise individual contributions to team effort and individual performance where one person is clearly responsible for ensuring that a particular service target is achieved.

The review body, in its 1994 report published on 3 February, made it clear that it wanted to facilitate a significant step towards local pay determination and productivity bargaining. It supported the Government's wish to move towards locally devised performance-related pay schemes. The report further commented that by next year a framework would be established for effective local pay determination with clear prospects for achieving pay increases based on local achievements and needs. It said:

"These are transitional arrangements for a transitional year. We would prefer not to make recommendations in this form next year. By that time we expect to see a framework established for effective local pay determination, with clear prospects for achieving pay increases based on local achievements and needs."

The review body was clear that its recommendations should not inhibit local productivity pay bargaining in any trusts that have prepared for this in 1994. It went on to say that had the discussions between parties at a national level and the preparations at local level been more advanced, it would have recommended an increase of 2 per cent. in national pay rates, with strong encouragement for local determination of increases beyond that.

We welcome the review body's enthusiasm for local determination of performance-related pay. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, commenting on the review body report, said:

"I afford the highest priority to the early introduction of arrangements which will link a significant proportion of pay increases from next year to the performance of staff achieving improvements in local services."

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): The Minister is carefully not defining performance. The main burden of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) was on the impossibility of satisfactorily defining performance in nursing work. Will he kindly address that point?

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Lady knows that we intend to leave employers to define how they wish to use this freedom. All employers in the private and public sectors must make their own assessments of the performance of their employees. It is absurd, although the hon. Members for Preston (Mrs. Wise) and for Halifax may not agree, to pretend that all employees have the same determination and commitment.

It is surely open to employers to assess their staff's performance, commitment and success in meeting targets and to use the freedom to reward them.

Mrs. Wise: What kind of targets?

Mr. Sackville: There are a number of ways in which employers can measure their employees' performance, and they do so in most professions. There is no reason to

exempt any profession from such a policy, no matter how unwelcome that might be to someone with the hon. Lady's political background.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I must declare that I am also sponsored by UNISON and receive no personal remuneration. The Minister is talking absolute rubbish and is not defining what he means by performance-related pay. The aim of the debate is to establish what criteria the Minister has in mind for the measuring of performance. He cannot leave it to the trusts or to people outside to decide; we want him to tell us so that the unions and work force in the hospitals know what he has in mind. Rather than abdicating his responsibility, he should give us an answer from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I am not going to attempt to prescribe to employers a set of rules on how they should assess their employees. Only they are capable of doing that. Assessments are carried out throughout the world of work. It is a ridiculous myth that in the public sector, with its rigid collective bargaining background, it is impossible for employers to assess their staff.

We understand that people do not work in the health service primarily for money. They work in the service for various reasons—they might wish to serve patients or they might get satisfaction from the work. That does not negate the idea that those who are able to demonstrate a high level of commitment and who are able to make a particular contribution should not be rewarded. We have every intention of ensuring that employers in the health service, like those in other spheres of activity, should have the freedom to assess employees, whether they be nurses or other NHS employees. I have no hesitation in commending that approach.

The hon. Member for Halifax gave a series of gloomy predictions about the effects of such a policy. She suggested that people would be measuring bed occupancy and trying to link pay to discharges. There is no reason for an employer to use his powers insensitively. It is perfectly possible for employers in the health service, as elsewhere, to assess which employees they believe especially deserve a higher level of performance-related pay. There was nothing in the hon. Lady's speech to deter me from that view. I commend the concept of performance-related pay in the NHS to the House.

1.13 am

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I have listened carefully to the Minister's speech and I have about three minutes in which to speak. He has added nothing to the sum of our knowledge of this topic. He has not replied to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) was trying to extract from him some information about what people should consider important when measuring employers' peformance. He was prepared to rule out some measures—he said that there was no reason for insensitivity—but he was not prepared to say which measures were ruled in.

I have spent some time in hospital recently. I have been in wards for some fairly long stretches over the past few years and I have been able to sit and watch, and lie and listen, and hear conversations with nurses, doctors and other people in the medical profession. My experience of being on a ward over a prolonged period—an experience that I understand that the Minister has never had—leads me to believe that it is not possible to measure the performance of a nurse fairly.

The only result of the policy will be to encourage resentment and jealousies—a feeling that some people are being preferred over others, and that, because certain friendships exist with hospitals and wards, favours are being given in the form of enhanced pay. The Minister will make some nurses feel that they are being badly treated. I can give him a copper-bottomed guarantee that he will undermine morale on the wards in hundreds of hospitals throughout the country if he continues along that route.

If the Minister wants to implement and impose local agreements for nurses, which my hon. Friends and I also oppose, that is another argument and another discussion. But when he insists on the introduction of some sort of measurement, he is beginning to meddle with the relationships that build up communities in wards and in hospitals—something that Ministers fail to understand.

The Minister need not take it from me; he can take it from the people in the profession. He should ask not the Tory doctors but the apolitical doctors, the senior nursing officers, the registrars, the nurses and the cleaners. The effects will work all the way through a hospital ward. People will see relationships that have been built up over decades at every level between professionals, and between people who are not professionals——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at sixteen minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 10 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BOURNEMOUTH-SWANAGE MOTOR ROAD AND FERRY BILL

SHEFFIELD ASSAY OFFICE BILL

FEDERATION OF STREET TRADERS UNION (LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990) (AMENDMENT) BILL

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BILL

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 17 February.

CROYDON TRAMLINK BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Committee on the Croydon Tramlink Bill *[Lords]* have leave to visit and inspect the site of the proposed works and areas affected by the proposed works, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visit and that any party who has made an appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by his Counsel, Agent or other representative.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Right to Silence

1. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy towards the right to silence.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): In appropriate circumstances, a court should be able to draw proper inferences from an accused person's failure to answer questions before and at his trial. At present, courts are precluded from drawing any inferences of guilt from the failure of an accused person to answer such questions. I do not think that that artificial restriction can be justified and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill contains provisions to modify it.

Mr. Bates: In welcoming my right hon. and learned Friend's answer, may I ask whether he agrees with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) that no one has anything to fear from being asked reasonable questions? Does he accept that many of our right hon. and hon. Friends are puzzled at the Labour party's failure to support such a modest measure in Committee?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend and, on that matter, with the hon. Member for Brightside. It is a matter of considerable regret that the hon. Gentleman's Front-Bench colleagues have not seen fit to follow his opinion on that question.

Mr. Gunnell: The Secretary of State will know that many of those who have made representations to us on that issue have pointed out that there will be a significant increase in the number of miscarriages of justice as a result of the proposed legislation, especially when it applies to those who have disabilities. Does the Secretary of State agree that, before he makes any changes, it would be better to wait until we have procedures in force to deal with miscarriages of justice, as recommended by the Royal Commission on criminal justice?

Mr. Howard: We should like to put those procedures in place as soon as posssible. The truth of the matter is that those who make disproportionate use of the so-called right to silence are professional criminals and terrorists. They make a mockery of our system of criminal justice and the sooner that we put an end to that abuse the better.

Mr. Heald: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the Lord Chief Justice said clearly in his Tom Sergant lecture that there is no reason why proper inferences should not be drawn under such circumstances? Does he agree with that statement?

Mr. Howard: I certainly agree. That was also the view of the majority of judges who gave evidence to the Royal Commission on criminal justice.

Mr. Allen: While unemployment and poor housing can never be an excuse for crime, does the Secretary of State accept that 14 years of Government policies on

unemployment, housing and education could have contributed in any way to the appalling rise in the levels of crime over that same 14-year period?

Madam Speaker: Order. The question is a specific one dealing with the right to silence. I must ask the hon. Member to relate his question directly to the question on the Order Paper.

Mr. Allen: Does the Secretary of State feel that the current Bill will in any way affect those factors?

Madam Speaker: Order. Those factors have nothing to do with the question.

Dame Jill Knight: On the question of miscarriages of justice, will the changes that my right hon. and learned Friend envisages take into account the appalling case, which aroused such public concern, of the parents who undoubtedly killed their small baby and yet walked free from the court because of that right to silence?

Mr. Howard: I very much hope that the changes that we are making will go some considerable way towards remedying the manifest injustice of the case to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention. The whole House will have seen just a moment ago the extraordinary extent to which Labour Front-Bench Members will go to talk about anything other than the real issues affecting law and order.

Wheel Clamping

2. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take to regulate private wheel clamping.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): We are currently considering what action it may be appropriate to take. In doing so, our aim will be to ensure that any measure introduced to prevent or to deter irresponsible and heavy-handed wheel clamping on private land does not prevent sensible measures being taken to control genuine parking problems.

Mr. Spellar: Does the Minister accept that that answer is quite unsatisfactory, given that his departmental consultations ended on 31 May last year? Is not it about time that he looked at the issue? The cowboy clampers are still making motorists' lives a misery. An amendment has been tabled to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. Why does not the Minister do something about it and take some action?

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that the consultation did not reveal any clear consensus on the way forward. I am very conscious of the fact that there is a balance to be struck here. We must protect the interests of the genuine landowner and the interests of the genuine motorist. Wheel clamping has proved to be an effective means of deterring some motorists who are parking illegally and causing considerable inconvenience at road access ways, hospitals, retail centres and on other private land.

Mr. Alexander: Does my hon. Friend agree that the activities of some companies are excessive? Does he agree that women in particular are put in fear and great anxiety when they have to redeem their cars? Although I accept all that he says, may I stress as a matter of urgency that those excesses should be removed?

Mr. Maclean: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. We have consulted on the issue and we are currently considering what we need to do. It would be wrong of the Opposition—I know that my hon. Friend did not seek to make this point—to conclude that there is a simple, easy explanation and way forward or to conclude that all the fault lies clearly on one side. It does not. Before the House rushes in and creates new criminal laws to deal with the problem, we must ensure that we protect the legitimate interests of both sides of the argument.

Police Authorities

3. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has had about his proposals for change in the method of appointment of police authorities.

5. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further discussions he has had with the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) regarding the Criminal Justice Bill and the Police and Magistrates Court Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Howard: I have received many representations from organisations, members of the public and hon. Members. Last week, I announced measures that we propose to include in the Police and Magistrates Courts Bill to reinforce the independence of local police authorities. We have had a number of discussions with representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers about that Bill and about the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Pickthall: I am amazed at the effect that my tabling the question had on the Home Secretary. Does he realise that his generous and ungrudging U-turn on the appointment of chairmen and chairwomen, and on the numbers in police authorities, has delighted most Members of the House, most members of the other place, members of police authorities and the police forces themselves? Will the Home Secretary now take one more U-turn towards democracy and remove his most distasteful proposal: to add five or more placemen or women to police authorities?

Mr. Howard: No. Independent local people who do not have the time or the inclination to become magistrates or councillors can make a valuable contribution to the working of the local police authorities. I do not believe that local police authorities should be denied the benefit of their service.

Mr. Streeter: Did those representatives reflect the growing public concern that some police authorities had been tardy in introducing modern management techniques and information technology? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree, therefore, that it is extremely sensible to have on police authorities people who bring management, financial and IT skills, which can only assist the police in doing their duty?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The Police and Magistrates Courts Bill will provide strong local police authorities to reflect the interests of local people, greater freedom for chief constables to manage

their forces and a clear framework for setting priorities and measuring performance. The measures will contribute to more effective policing.

Mr. Blair: Now that the Secretary of State has accepted that it is wrong to appoint the head of the police authority, what possible justification is there for proceeding with appointing one third of the members, thus ensuring that his national objectives for policing should override local priorities and forcing smaller police services to amalgamate, even where local people do not want that? As the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers said last week, after the Secretary of State's U-turn, that the proposals were still ill-conceived and publicly unacceptable, what possible support does he have for proceeding with them?

Mr. Howard: I have just explained to the House the purpose of my measures. It is for this House and the other House of Parliament to decide what measures we should take; it is not even for the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers. We must set in place the proper framework for policing in this country. We must have slimmed down and effective police authorities to which there will be proper local accountability. That is what my measures will achieve.

Legislation (Police Consultation)

4. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has received from police representatives since the publication of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

7. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has received from the police to his announcements of new measures to tackle crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Representatives of the police service have expressed strong support for the Government's new measures to tackle crime, particularly the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill now before the House. We have had a number of discussions with representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers about the Bill.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply. In the fight against crime and on law and order issues, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill is one of the most important Bills ever to come before the House. Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall the statement of the Opposition spokeseman on law and order, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), that we should not hesitate to applaud the Government when they introduce measures that are correct? Will he now take the opportunity to invite Her Majesty's Opposition to support the Bill in all its remaining stages? If they do not, what conclusion can people draw from the Opposition's stance on law and order?

Mr. Howard: The only logical conclusion that people can draw from the Opposition's reaction to these measures is that they cannot make up their mind about them. When the measures came before the House for Second Reading, the Opposition could not make up their mind whether to vote for or against, or whether to say yes or no—they simply abstained. Since then, in the Standing Committee, we have seen a series of attempts to weaken the measures in the Bill—to neuter them and make them have as little effect as possible.

Mr. Trimble: May I direct the Home Secretary's attention to the provisions in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill dealing with computer-generated pornographic images of children which were introduced as a result of a successful campaign by the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton)? Has he received any representations about the fact that those provisions do not extend to Northern Ireland, bearing in mind the ease with which computer material can be transmitted from one part of the kingdom to another? Is not it essential that the loophole be plugged as soon as possible, preferably this afternoon?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point which I shall certainly draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the great concern expressed by the police not only in my constituency but in other areas about the violent crimes being committed by many young people? Will he assure the House that his tougher measures will be implemented as soon as the Bill becomes law?

Mr. Howard: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that we will implement the measures at the earliest possible moment because we understand how urgently necessary they are to protect the public.

Mr. Michael: Will the Home Secretary read the report of the Committee considering the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill and admit that the Opposition have been trying to make effective a Bill that he has admitted will do nothing to cut crime? With crime up more than 124 per cent. under the Tories, and with only one crime in 50 ending with a punishment in the courts, when will the Home Secretary accept Labour's advice to be tough on crime and the causes of crime by providing a legal framework for a local partnership between the police, local authorities and the community to cut crime and protect the victims of crime?

Mr. Howard: I thought that the hon. Gentleman would be the last person to want me to read the reports of the proceedings of the Standing Committee. He has been comprehensively routed by my hon. Friend the Minister of State and by other hon. Friends on the Committee whenever he has dared to raise his head above the parapet.

Mr. Stephen: Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in condemning the appalling murder of Police Sergeant Robertson in Croydon? Will he give careful consideration to the amendment that I have tabled to the Criminal Justice Bill which would ensure that, when the persons responsible for that murder are caught, life imprisonment would mean exactly what it says?

Mr. Howard: I heard with great regret of the tragic death yesterday of Sergeant Robertson. The House will share my sense of outrage that it should happen to a police officer who was bravely doing his duty. The House will want to join me in extending the deepest sympathy to his

widow and children. His death reminds us again of the enormous debt which we as a society owe to our police officers.

As to the specific point raised by my hon. Friend, I will, of course, consider his amendment. He will know that one of my predecessors, Sir Leon Brittan, announced that the minimum sentence served for the murder of a police officer —I emphasise the word minimum—would be 20 years. I have indicated my desire to follow that practice.

Madam Speaker: Order. As the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) was not told that his question was to be linked, we shall now take Question 5.

Legislation (Police Consultation)

5. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further discussions he has had with the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) regarding the Criminal Justice Bill and the Police and Magistrates Courts Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Howard: May I immediately apologise to the hon. Gentleman for the fact that he was not informed, as he certainly should have been.

I have received many representations from and have had discussions with the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) regarding the Criminal Justice Bill and the Police and Magistrates Courts Bill.

Mr. McFall: I thank the Home Secretary. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is responsible for clause 45 of the Police and Magistrates Courts Bill, which covers Scotland. This morning, I talked to two Scottish chief constables, who expressed their concerns to me about the interest that the Secretary of State for Scotland can now take in operational matters as a result of that clause. That will interfere with the independence of the police, and they are so concerned about it that they would like to pass their concerns, through me, to the Home Secretary. Will a meeting take place with the relevant Minister to assure the police that their optional independence will be maintained following the passage of Bill?

Mr. Howard: I can certainly give the assurance for which the hon. Gentleman asks in relation to the operational independence of chief constables. That is essential and it is written into the Bill in exactly the same language as is on the statute book at present in the Police Act 1964.

Sir George Gardiner *rose*——

Hon. Members: Two minutes!

Madam Speaker: Order.

Sir George Gardiner: Since an obvious concern of the police authorities is the safety of their officers, may I say how much Mrs. Christine Robertson—a constituent of mine—will be comforted by the sympathy which my right hon. and learned Friend has extended this afternoon on behalf of the House? Does he agree that it is only the courage and dedication to duty of officers such as Sergeant Robertson which provides the shield to protect us all?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the first part of his remarks and I entirely agree with the rest of what he had to say.

Crime Reduction

6. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations his Department has had with the local authority associations regarding reducing crime; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): The Home Office has from time to time sought the views of the local authority associations on crime-related matters, including their contribution to local crime prevention schemes.

Mr. O'Brien: Does the Minister accept that the local authority associations are worried about some of the proposals in the Police and Magistrates Courts Bill? They are worried that the reduction in the number of local authority members on police committees will reduce the impact that it is necessary for local authorities to have if we are to reduce crime. We must have corporate organisation between the community, the local authority and the police committees. Will the Minister prevail on his colleague to rethink the Bill to allow greater representation of local authorities on police committees?

Mr. Wardle: As the hon. Gentleman will have noticed, local authority representatives will account for half the membership of police authorities. As he knows, the police Bill will place a requirement on police authorities to consult locally and to draw up locally focused policing strategies and report on them. The local authorities are part of the partnership against crime. In several schemes up and down the country, the co-ordinator has been appointed by the local authorities. Equally, in many other successful schemes the co-ordinator has been appointed by other sources.

Mr. John Townend: Has my hon. Friend had any demand for the restoration of some form of physical punishment? Does the enormous increase in crime among young people of school age suggest that we are paying the price, after a decade of abolition of the cane, of lack of discipline in schools and in the home?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend's powerful plea will have been heard by the House. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will always consider any representations put to him. My hon. Friend will also be aware that the House will shortly have the opportunity to debate the issue of capital punishment.

Mr. Redmond: The Minister must be aware of the Prime Minister's "back to basics" campaign. Will he ensure that there are sufficient policemen on duty in villages? We do not want any crap about there being more policemen. There is no doubt that communities are demanding more policemen. Will the Minister also ensure that they have sufficient technology to combat the current crime wave?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman will know that there are more police officers now—128,000—than at any time in the history of the police. He will know that spending on the police is almost £6,000 million. I am sure that he will have welcomed my right hon. and learned Friend's

announcement that the number of special constables should increase to 30,000 in the next three years. He will also have welcomed the parish constable initiative.

Madam Speaker: Order. As the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) was not informed that his question was linked, I am prepared to call it separately.

Crime Reduction

7. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has received from the police to his announcement of new measures to tackles crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My announcement of the measures that I am taking to fight crime have been warmly welcomed by the police.

Mr. Martin: I strongly support my right hon. and learned Friend's reforms. Has he received any representations about arming the police in this capital punishment-free era when any Tom, Dick or Harry can go out on to the streets armed with a knife or a gun, use it to kill police officers or members of the public in furtherance of crime and, if caught, not receive an appropriate penalty? They do not face much risk in carrying out the crime.

Mr. Howard: I do not accept the latter words of my hon. Friend, especially in view of the answer that I gave earlier on the sentences that are available. The question of arming the police is a difficult one. At present, it is for chief officers to decide in what circumstances their officers should be armed and how many should be armed. I do not believe that there is any middle course between that and arming every police officer in Britain—a course which I believe most people in Britain and most police officers would not want us to adopt.

Mrs. Ewing: Given the increased concern among the public and police authorities about crimes related to specifically to drugs, is the Home Secretary prepared to introduce specific measures to deal with drug-related crimes and to provide our police authorities with additional resources to tackle that problem?

Mr. Howard: We have a comprehensive strategy in place to tackle the very serious problem of drug misuse and we are pursuing that strategy vigorously. I hope that the country will take note of the vote on the decriminalisation of drugs that is being held in the European Parliament today, which is expected to be supported by the majority of socialist Members of the European Parliament both from this country and from the rest of Europe.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Further to the last supplementary question, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that during the years of Conservative Government we have had a strong attitude towards drug-related crime, but that the police are nevertheless very concerned that the proportion of such crimes has risen to something approaching 70 per cent. So the measures that we have taken hitherto have simply not been sufficient to deal with the problem. As he can see, the view is shared across all party lines in this House, so will he redouble his efforts to ensure that in the years ahead the proportion of drug-related crimes falls instead of rises?

Mr. Howard: I share my hon. and learned Friend's concern and I can assure him that we lose no opportunity of examining our policies to find out in which ways they can be made more effective. I entirely understand and share his concern.

Racial Violence

8. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received over legislation affecting racial violence.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): We continue to receive representations from a wide range of organisations and from hon. Members. The Commission for Racial Equality made a number of recommendations for changes in the law in its second review of the Race Relations Act 1976, which we are considering. The Select Committee on Home Affairs is also examining the issue, as part of its inquiry into racial attacks and harassment and we await its recommendations with interest.

Mr. Winnick: I deplore all forms of violence, including the horrifying murder of a police sergeant in New Addington, Croydon.

Has not the Minister given evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs in which he estimated that racial attacks could be as high as 130,000 a year? In view of continuing racially motivated attacks—in the main carried out by fascist gangs—on totally innocent people because of their origins or the colour of their skin, has not the time come to amend the law and to ensure that such attacks become an offence, in addition to offences under existing criminal legislation?

Mr. Lloyd: I am at one with the hon. Gentleman in deploring all assaults and attacks. I am glad that he has given me the opportunity to correct his misunderstanding of the figure that I gave to the Select Committee on Home Affairs. I referred to 130,000 racial incidents. Only a very small proportion were physical assaults.

The hon. Gentleman is barking up the wrong tree if he thinks that the law needs to be changed to make physical attacks an extra criminal offence; they clearly are a criminal offence at the moment. Whether the victim or the perpetrator is white or black, the sentence for grievous bodily harm can be life imprisonment. The important thing is to get evidence and a conviction.

The hon. Gentleman should be concerned about smaller incidents and harassment. Although each incident is not very significant, with repetition they become corrosive, deeply hurtful and destructive. That is where we should study the law to find out whether changes are needed.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is one certain way to cut out racial violence, or violence of any description? If someone is put in prison for five years they should serve five years. Let us stop all this nonsense about remission, rehabilitation and parole—let offenders serve five years. If the Prison Officers Association says that prison officers have no control over prisoners, let us make prisoners serve extra years if they misbehave.

Mr. Lloyd: Many people will have a great deal of sympathy with my hon. Friend's remarks. However, he forgets—but the judiciary does not—that the law enables a

prisoner to be released half way through his sentence and so the judiciary imposes sentences with that in mind. Release at half time, which is allowed under the Criminal Justice Act 1991, makes it possible for offenders to be supervised and at risk of being returned to prison. That is a better guarantee of their reintegration into the community and a better sanction for their good behaviour.

Ms Ruddock: The Minister will be well aware of the fact that the Labour party has tabled an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill that will effectively deal with racial harassment. The amendment is in a form that the hon. Gentleman has suggested may be acceptable to the Government, and we hope that they will accept it. Does the Minister realise how black people in this country feel? Does not he understand that when they are subjected to racial attack they become victims twice over—first, because of the violence itself and, secondly, because they know that they have been picked on as a result of their race. Surely it is time for the Government to take these matters much more seriously and to accept the amendment that we have tabled.

Mr. Lloyd: I am not sure that the hon. Lady is quite clear about her own party's amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill. My understanding is that it deals with racial violence rather than harassment. On the question of harassment, I have nothing to add to the points that I have just made. We are looking at the public order legislation, and we want to see the report of the Select Committee before finally making up our minds about what changes should be made. I believe that the pressure from the hon. Lady's party relates to a separate crime of racial violence, which would do nothing to secure the conviction of those who perpetrate racial violence and would, in the long term, be bad for community relations.

Mr. John Greenway: I promise my hon. Friend that the Select Committee will ensure that Ministers receive its report as quickly as possible. In the meantime, may I ask whether he agrees that what we require is not necessarily more legislation but better police practice? Does he share my admiration for the racial violence unit at Plumstead police station, which, over many years, has painstakingly built up a very good relationship with local ethnic communities? Does my hon. Friend know that much of that good work was undone by the Anti-Nazi League's march through south-east London a few months ago?

Mr. Lloyd: I believe that these marches do nothing but heighten tension. I agree with my hon. Friend that the police have made enormous efforts to establish good relationships with the ethnic minority communities and, thereby, encourage the members of those communities to report any crimes against them. My hon. Friend will know that we have recalled the racial attacks group to consider improvements in the practices in this area and to decide whether these could be improved further.

Police Injuries

9. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were injured in the performance of their duties in 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on the number of injuries is not held centrally. In 1992, in England and Wales, 14,946 police officers were assaulted while on duty. Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister agree that it is not all that long since policemen could expect, or at least hope, to complete their service without sustaining serious criminal injury? The dreadful incident yesterday and the figure that the Minister has just given the House suggest that policemen can no longer hold such a hope. Will the Home Secretary, the courts and the Crown Prosecution Service accept that they have an obligation to consider this matter urgently with a view to securing the improvement that is so desperately needed?

Mr. Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has made it clear that he will ensure that the police have the necessary equipment to protect themselves from attacks and assaults. The House has already made known its deep regret at the tragic murder of Sergeant Robertson yesterday. In fact, the number of assaults on police officers dropped in the last two years for which information is available, as did the number of serious assaults and fatal assaults. The police scientific and development branch keeps the question of body armour under review all the time, and chief officers are able to issue ballistic vests when that is considered appropriate.

Mr. Shersby: What resources is the police scientific and development branch providing for the testing of knife-proof and bullet-proof vests? Can the Minister give the House an assurance that there will not be any delay in the testing programme on account of lack of resources and that, where necessary, private sector firms that produce this equipment will be allowed to provide the necessary resources to enable testing to be carried out as quickly as possible?

Mr. Wardle: As my hon. Friend will know, the scientific and development branch is able to keep all new developments in body armour under review. It liaises closely in its findings with all police forces.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Minister acknowledge that if police officers wish to acquire and wear bullet-proof vests, they must pay for them, save in the narrow circumstances that he mentioned? Will he discuss with chief police officers and police authorities throughout the country whether that is appropriate?

Mr. Wardle: As I have already said, it is for chief police officers to decide the operational circumstances in which ballistic vests will be issued. One police force, the Northumbria constabulary, recently acquired 600 vests and, I understand, intends to make them available for wider use within the force. But it is up to chief officers to make the operational decision.

Young Offenders

10. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what would be the effect of allowing only Crown courts to pass secure training orders on persistent juvenile offenders.

Mr. Maclean: The principal effect of confining this sentence to the Crown court would be delay in dealing with offenders and additional costs for the criminal justice

system. The Government believe that it is important for youth courts to have the power to make a secure training order when the right criteria have been met.

Mr. Moss: Does my hon. Friend agree that restricting the provisions of the Bill to the extent that they have no practical effect is no different from opposing them outright? In their attempts to emasculate the Bill in Standing Committee, do not the Opposition show their total inadequacy in tackling the problems of juvenile crime?

Mr. Maclean: What we saw on Second Reading was a dithering Opposition who did not know whether to vote for or against the measures. In Committee, they tabled amendments that would have made it practically impossible for anyone taken to court to be sentenced for the persistent crimes that they were committing.

Mr. Mandelson: Is the Minister aware of the concern of the police about the video now being sold entitled "Police Stop", which consists of 50 minutes worth of spectacular car chases and motorway smash-ups? Does he agree that that reckless video provides copycat encouragement to young "twockers" and joyriders and should be withdrawn from sale forthwith?

Mr. Maclean: There is a tremendous responsibility on all those who make videos to ensure that they do not lead the young or innocent astray. As the hon. Gentleman knows, videos containing sexual or violent material must satisfy very strict criteria. I shall be happy to look at the video and include it in my review of the adequacy of the law relating to videos.

Lenient Sentences

11. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding his proposal to extend the Attorney-General's right of appeal against lenient sentences.

Mr. Maclean: I have received a number of representations on that issue. It is abundantly clear that the plans to extend the scope of the Attorney-General's powers command widespread and enthusiastic support.

Mr. Dunn: Has the Minister received any representations on that proposal from the Labour party?

Mr. Maclean: I am not aware of having received any representations from the Labour party on that subject. I am aware, however, that when the Government introduced the power in 1987, the Labour party fought against it tooth and nail and voted against the Attorney-General's right to review sentences and send to the Court of Appeal those sentences that he thought were unduly lenient.

Mrs. Roche: Will the Minister explain whether he has taken measures to investigate the fact, as was revealed in answer to parliamentary questions, that there is a great regional variety in the length of sentences in rape cases and that some sentences for rape are excessively lenient? What does the Minister propose to do about it?

Mr. Maclean: It is rather rich for a representative of the Labour party to complain that some sentences in rape cases may be lenient when the hon. Lady's party voted against our taking that power in the first place. Since we took that power, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has referred 129 cases to the Court of Appeal, and in 84 of those the sentence has been increased. Those include many rape cases. My right hon. and learned Friend will certainly send cases to the Court of Appeal if he concludes that his criteria have been met and the sentence is unduly lenient.

Car Boot Sales

13. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the sale of stolen property at car boot sales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Representations have been received from nine hon. Members and from five members of the public.

Mr. Luff: Is my hon. Friend aware that, although many chief constables may say that it is not a problem, many ordinary police constables and many of our constituents, who are sometimes advised by the police to go to car boot sales to seek the proceeds of crime for their homes, take a different view? Does my hon. Friend agree that it should be possible to maintain the enjoyment that many thousands of our constituents derive from car boot sales, while making it rather more difficult for the proceeds of crime to find such an easy market?

Mr. Wardle: As my hon. Friend will be aware, one local authority—North Yorkshire county council—makes use of local registration to register occasional sales and secondhand dealers. It has registered 4,000 and has had 50 prosecutions, all for non-registration. The North Yorkshire police have no information about any cases of handling stolen goods. I am reviewing with the North Yorkshire authorities the effectiveness of that scheme. Meanwhile, a police officer who identifies such problems will know that powers exist under section 22 of the Theft Act 1968 to deal with the disposal of stolen goods. The maximum penalty is 14 years imprisonment.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 February.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further meetings later today.

Mr. Flynn: In a letter to me from the Imperial Tobacco Company, the corrupt practice is exposed that, in the general election, it awarded 1,000 advertising sites to the Tory party because the Tory party promised not to ban tobacco advertising. The Government have now delivered on that promise to their paymasters. The cost will be borne by the nation in several thousand avoidable and unnecessary deaths. Will the Prime Minister promise today that never again will the Tory party accept bribes, favours or money from the tobacco industry?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman clearly overlooks the excellent record that this Government have

had in reducing smoking—down from 45 to 28 per cent. He knows very well of the changes in taxation that have been necessary to achieve that. He illustrates that no company that was remotely sensible would support the policies of the Labour party.

Mr. Waterson: Will my right hon. Friend consider making public funds available so that every business in the land can be sent a copy of the European socialist manifesto so that they may judge for themselves whether it is a constructive business plan or a fast route to failure?

The Prime Minister: I am not entirely sure that would be a proper use of public funds. I very much doubt whether anybody would really wish to read it. It is certainly clear that what is contained in that socialist manifesto, which was signed up to by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)—without, as I recall, reading it—would be desperately damaging for British industry. It is equally true that the decision in the past of Members of the European Parliament who support the Labour party to vote for ending single nation vetoes would in effect mean that we would not be able to sustain our rebate, at a cost of many billions of pounds to the British taxpayer.

Mr. John Smith: Given the widespread concern throughout the country at the arbitrary and unfair decisions that are being produced by the system operated by the Child Support Agency, why are the Government so opposed to allowing an independent review of its decisions?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, there will be a full debate on that issue later today. As I have said on previous occasions, we have made it clear that we shall keep the nature of the system under review and if it seems necessary to make changes we will do so. We are embarking on implementing a principle that is supported uniformly across the House. We need a little more experience of how it works. We will keep it under review. If it is necessary to make changes, we shall make them then, not now.

Mr. John Smith: Is not the Prime Minister aware that the phrase "keeping under review" has been the bromide response of bureaucrats down the decades? Why do the Government—despite all the evidence—stop the Child Support Agency from taking into account divorce or separation agreements involving the transfer of assets, which may be highly relevant to establishing justice between the parties?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman obviously did not listen to what I said a moment ago. I made it perfectly clear that we would continue to evaluate the workings of the Child Support Act 1991 and the agency. We intend to secure a well-accepted, consistent mechanism to deliver a better child maintenance system than we have had in the past. That is why I said that we would keep the matter under review.

This system is unlike anything that has been tried before. It is generally accepted to be right in principle—not least by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who is nodding. It is right to consider it and, having considered it, decide then whether further changes are necessary.

Mr. John Smith: The Prime Minister cannot be so complacent about the anger that is now felt throughout the country—and his Back Benchers certainly should not be so complacent about it. Does not 80 per cent. of the money recovered by the agency go straight to the Treasury? Did the Government intend that?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman reveals instinctively that he thinks in terms of "big government", rather than thinking of the taxpayer. The money is actually returned to the taxpayer who contributed it in the first place.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that Britain's only interest in Bosnia is assisting in the provision of humanitarian aid? Can he assure the House that we will not prejudice that effort by attacking any of the combatants?

The Prime Minister: The measures agreed yesterday at the North Atlantic Council are intended primarily to reinforce the peace process. There will be renewed diplomatic effort to encourage all sides to reach an agreement and stick to it.

No course in Bosnia is free of risks; that has been the case from the beginning. I do not myself believe, however, that doing nothing would be the right option for the House or NATO to adopt in the circumstances that have now arisen. In the discussions at the North Atlantic Council, we urged our allies to look forward. We do not favour purely punitive action; force should not be used unless it is genuinely necessary, and increases the chance of a peaceful settlement.

Another relevant point is the fact that NATO has warned all sides to cease their bombardment. It has taken specific and carefully constructed decisions to reinforce the efforts of the commanders on the ground, but the objective is to help the civilian population without changing the character of the United Nations' role.

Q2. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Prime Minister agree that, although private matters can be cruelly exposed within hours, issues of public accountability can sometimes lie dormant for years? Can he assure the House that British aid and export packages have never been used to cover the cost of large-scale commissions and backhanders?

The Prime Minister: I am aware of no circumstances in which that has happened. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence to the contrary, I hope that he will show it either to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary or to me.

Mr. Cash: Has my right hon. Friend seen the manifesto adopted by the European Peoples party on 3 February? Is he aware that it contains a commitment to a single currency, a central bank, the social chapter, a common immigration policy and a constitution for the whole of Europe? Does he agree that Conservative Members could not possibly accept those proposals, and repudiate them explicitly?

The Prime Minister: Neither do we have to accept them; nor will we. The Conservative party at the European elections is in agreement and will contest those elections on a distinctively British Conservative manifesto on the future of Europe.

Q3. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Illsley: On the subject of the appropriate use of the taxpayers' money, does not the Prime Minister agree that it is an absolute disgrace that the Department of Employment can waste £59 million on unused computer equipment, when thousands of my constituents are facing cuts in unemployment benefit as a result of his mismanagement, or are bureaucratic waste, sleaze and corruption no longer his responsibility?

The Prime Minister: The Government always study Public Accounts Committee reports carefully. The lessons in that have already been learnt and put into practice.

Q4. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that national health service trusts, general practitioner fundholding and the patients charter are yielding valuable improvements in efficiency and quality of service? Does he further agree that not only the patients, but those who work in the national health service do not want those reforms undone and everything turned upside down, as the Labour party proposes?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The test that we should apply to the health service and efficiency is perfectly straightforward. Is the health service treating more patients? Is it providing better care and is it treating people more quickly? The answer to each of those questions is yes. The national health service treated 2·5 million more patients last year than in 1979. By contrast, the ludicrous document launched by the right hon. and learned Gentleman this morning, contains nothing that would lead to a single extra patient being treated. The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that he would like to abolish trusts and fundholding. That is a recipe for inefficiency, upheaval and chaos.

Mr. Jamieson: Is the Prime Minister aware that his education Minister in the other place announced last week that there would be no extra assistance to grant-maintained schools for their liability to pay value added tax on fuel? Is he aware that grant-maintained schools are now paying £2·50 in every £100 in taxation rather than on books?

The Prime Minister: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that more and more schools are seeking to become grant maintained and doing so week after week?

Q5. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Gillan: In his very busy day, has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity to look at the recent Confederation of British Industry survey, which shows that business confidence in Britain is at an all-time high? Orders are up and, in the words of the CBI survey, the recovery is deepening and widening. Does he agree that such good economic indicators and such good signs bode well for private investment in projects such as crossrail?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend refers to one of a number of surveys that have highlighted the improving economic circumstances. The survey to which my hon. Friend refers shows business and export optimism up in each and every region of the country. Orders are up, output is expected to rise and investment in plant and machinery is expected to rise. That is against a background of low inflation with unit costs falling in most regions. The prospects for British business are extremely good. By getting inflation under control, cutting public spending and bringing interest rates down, we have provided exactly the right economic circumstances for long-sustained growth with low inflation and the creation of employment.

Yugoslavia

Q6. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Prime Minister what is his estimate of the number of people killed in Sarajevo since the passage of the United Nations Security Council resolution of June 1992 authorising the use of force by UNPROFOR to protect the safe areas.

The Prime Minister: We do not have reliable estimates for casualties in Sarajevo. The death toll has been high. The killing of 68 shoppers in the market last Saturday was a step change in a deteriorating situation. There can be no guarantee of peace in Sarajevo or in any other part of Bosnia. There is no feasible and certain means of resolving the problem from outside, but the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's decision yesterday will put the parties under heavier pressure to stop the bombardment and make peace.

Mr. Macdonald: Does the Prime Minister accept that there can be no logical or moral justification for distinguishing between Sarajevo and the other UN-designated safe areas in Bosnia, and that about 2,500 civilians have died in all those safe areas since June last year, when the UN authorised the use of force to protect those people? Will he, therefore, undertake to work to extend the ultimatum that has been issued in respect of Sarajevo to those other safe areas?

The Prime Minister: We have to determine what is practicable. We are already working, as far as Srebrenica and Tuzla are concerned, to try and ensure that the situation improves. We are now doing that having seen the special difficulties in Sarajevo. To follow to its logical conclusion the concern that the hon. Gentleman set out would involve our becoming involved, very probably with troops on the ground, throughout the whole of the area of conflict. However strongly the hon. Gentleman may feel about the matter, or others, that is not a practicable proposition.

Air Strikes (Bosnia)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, I should like to make a statement on Sarajevo.

In the senseless atrocities last week, about 70 civilians were killed. Their deaths showed again how urgent it is to end the war. It will not end by military victory. A lasting settlement cannot be imposed. It can only be achieved by agreement between the parties. The Government repeat their full support for the efforts of Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg. I welcome recent indications that the United States wants to take a more forward part in the peace process.

Meanwhile, every sane person wants to see an end to the bombardment of Sarajevo. As hon. Members will be aware, and as the Prime Minister has just said, the Secretary-General of the United Nations wrote to his NATO counterpart on 6 February, asking the North Atlantic Council to authorise its military command to launch air strikes on request from the United Nations. Mr. Bourtros-Ghali recalled NATO's readiness, following its decisions last August that were reaffirmed at the NATO summit in January, to carry out air strikes to protect UNPROFOR and to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo.

NATO ambassadors met yesterday, in the North Atlantic Council. They reaffirmed NATO's support for a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Bosnia, agreed by all parties. They commended the United Nations negotiating efforts to secure the demilitarisation of Sarajevo. In support of those efforts, they agreed on three main points.

First, with immediate effect, they accepted the Secretary-General of the United Nation's request to be prepared to launch air strikes, at United Nations initiative and in co-ordination with UNPROFOR, the United Nations force on the ground, against artillery or mortar positions that UNPROFOR determines are responsible for attacks against civilian targets in Sarajevo.

Secondly, the North Atlantic Council called on the parties to respect a ceasfire around Sarajevo. The Bosnian Serbs were called on to withdraw all heavy weapons from within 20 km of the city, excluding an area within 2 km of the centre of the Bosnian Serb capital of Pale, or to place their heavy weapons under UNPROFOR control. The Bosnian Government, for their part, were called on to place their heavy weapons in the same area under United Nations control and to refrain from attacks within the city.

Thirdly, the Council decided that all heavy weapons, along with their direct and essential military support, found within 20 km of Sarajevo and not under United Nations control after 10 days from 24.00 GMT—midnight—tonight, 10 February, would be subject to NATO air strikes. Those air strikes would be conducted in close co-ordination with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

As the Prime Minister has just said, the Government fully support those decisions. We helped to ensure that they were discussed and taken in NATO rather than any other forum because of the need for professional military advice. The NATO Council will be kept fully informed of all developments, day by day, and will review yesterday's decision at the latest on 2 March. We were clear that any strategy for the use of force should be forward looking. There was no support in the Council for action which was simply punitive.

We have, since last August, been prepared—publicly prepared—to see air power used, if necessary and practicable, to back the United Nations in carrying out its mandate. The United Nations, with NATO support is taking an increasingly firm position and not only in Sarajevo.

It is pressing ahead with the rotation of troops in Srebrenica; pressing for Tuzla airport to reopen; confronting obstacles to road convoys; and warning off the Croatian regular army from entering the war on the side of the Bosnian Croats. The North Atlantic Council decision forms part of this pattern, specifically aimed at improving the situation in Sarajevo, helping the United Nations to fulfil its mandate and contributing to pressure on the parties to end the war.

We look to the parties, particularly the Bosnian Serbs, to respond. Their aims cannot be achieved on the battlefield, or by killing and mutilating civilians. They should end the siege of Sarajevo and hand it over to the United Nations administration. Such an agreement would mark a real step towards a peaceful settlement. If the Bosnian Serbs do not so respond, they are now in no doubt of the action which NATO and the United Nations will take.

No one would pretend that this was for us or for anyone an easy decision. The risks are clear, and so are the advantages if it succeeds. It is the job of Governments to test and re-test options of this kind and decide where the British interest lies.

There is a strong British interest in maintaining the strength and solidarity of NATO. In Bosnia, our interest lies in preventing the war from spreading, in helping forward the work for a peace settlement, and in relieving the suffering of the Bosnian people. We judge that these interests of ours are best sustained by supporting the NATO decision and working for its success.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The House will be grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for making a statement so quickly after the very important decision of the NATO Council yesterday. May I first associate myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends with his comments when he says that everyone wants an end to the killing in Bosnia, especially to the senseless slaughter of innocent civilians?

I also accept what the right hon. Gentleman had to say about there being no victory on the battlefield. It is quite clear that the combatants are gearing up for a spring offensive. We should make it clear to them all that we will have no part in supporting any side in seeking to achieve a military victory; rather, we should impress on them again and again the need for a swift negotiated settlement to this awful series of conflicts.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that we believe that the decison taken by NATO yesterday was the correct one? It was the correct decision in terms of ending the slaughter of innocent people in Sarajevo. It was also the correct decision in terms of reinforcing the will of the international community as expressed through the resolutions of the Security Council of the United Nations, the decisions of the Council of Ministers of the European Union and, of course, NATO itself.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the decision, if implemented, will fall within the terms of existing

resolutions of the Security Council, and that it will not be necessary for further meetings of that council to take place before the use of air strikes can be authorised?

Will the right hon. Gentleman explain to the House why the decision was not taken, as it could and should have been, many, many months ago? The tragedy is that those, including myself, my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition and many others, who called for the use of NATO's vastly superior air power in April of last year, were condemned by many of the right hon. Gentleman's supporters sitting behind him.

The international community has come to accept, however, that that is the right decision. We had to make it clear, to the Bosnian Serbs in particular, as the right hon. Gentleman said, that we are not willing to countenance the continuing slaughter of people, as occurred last weekend in Sarajevo.

Will the right hon. Gentleman also explain what action will be taken to safeguard, in so far as it is possible, our troops already deployed in UNPROFOR and the troops of other countries during the period set out in the ultimatum —in the next 10 days. The ceasefire, which has been so quickly established by Lieutenant-General Rose—who deserves our congratulations—is welcome. If it is sustained, will NATO deploy extra troops in Sarajevo and elsewhere?

Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that efforts to open Tuzla airport, another decision of the Security Council, will be redoubled? Can he assure us that we shall take effective action to ensure that, in addition to Sarajevo, other towns and cities that have been designated as safe areas will be made safe for their citizens?

I emphasise that we agree with the support of the right hon. Gentleman and the Prime Minister for the NATO decision. We simply regret that it has taken them so long to agree with the Governments of the United States of America, France and other countries, who have pressed for the decision for a long time. Most of all, I express the hope and the wish that the Bosnian Serbs will accept, comply with and implement the decisions that have been taken, without the need to resort finally to the use of air power. If they do not, we should not flinch from the decision to use it.

Mr. Hurd: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman supports the decision that was taken yesterday. I confirm that our advice and view is that it falls within the scope of existing Security Council resolutions and does not require a further Security Council resolution. But the first use of air power—if that has to be used—does require the authority of the United Nations Secretary-General.

The right hon. Gentleman should be in no doubt that if, at any time during the past 18 months or two years, we and our allies had felt that the tragedy could have been brought to an end through military action, we would have so acted. If we and our allies had thought that such action was practicable, we would not have been handicapped for moral or legal reasons.

In May last year, we began to discuss with our allies the possibility of the use of air power, and in August NATO publicly declared its readiness. One has to weigh the results of one's actions. We had to test and re-test, over and over again, the different possibilities and options. The NATO allies were right to conclude yesterday that we could proceed, and that the benefit of proceeding outweighed the risk of proceeding. That is why I believe that it was right yesterday for us and our allies to take the action that we did.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to extra troops. I cannot say that extra troops may be needed in Sarajevo, or whether there will be a redeployment of existing UNPROFOR forces. UNPROFOR is short of troops, and the Secretary-General has frequently appealed for more. One reason why the safe areas resolution has not been fully implemented is shortage of troops.

We are doing our bit; I think that the right hon. Gentleman would acknowledge that. There has been no request for extra British troops. I certainly hope that the Secretary-General will be able to find contingents of the quantity and quality required.

The right hon. Gentleman was right to draw attention to the problems outside Sarajevo. One of the difficulties in the civil war has been the tendency to concentrate on Sarajevo. That is why the British troops are in action mainly in central Bosnia, relieving need, and it is the reason for the plan that the UN is now perfecting for opening up Tuzla airport. It is also why the Dutch are now in the process of moving into Srebrenica, and why it is so important not to forget the needs of places such as Mostar.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we have now reached the sombre moment when all the remaining choices open to us in this affair are fraught with the most enormous dangers? Many of us appreciate the heavy burden on the shoulders of my right hon. Friend, who has to make difficult and agonising choices. In the circumstances, the present attempt to demilitarise Sarajevo, with the backing of the ultimatum from the NATO powers, is probably the least worst choice.

Nevertheless, will my right hon. Friend continue to impress firmly upon our NATO allies three factors? The first is that this should be a very limited operation, and must not open the way to a vast operation trying to solve all the problems. The second requirement is for both the troops and the relief workers on the ground to be protected in the most thorough, systematic and sustained way possible. Thirdly, and above all, peace will come only through the combatants themselves, in a balanced situation, reaching peace and agreeing to stop the killing. They alone can end the war.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with all my right hon. Friend's points. Yesterday's decision, which I have summarised for the House, is specific to Sarajevo, and to heavy weapons in and around Sarajevo. It is addressed to all parties, not to one party alone. As I have said, the NATO countries will review its implementation in three weeks' time. That is the nature of the decision. We do not and will not pretend that by armed force we can impose a settlement. Those in any of the warring parties who wish to draw outside Governments and armed forces into the conflict to resolve it will find themselves disappointed.

My right hon. Friend and the right hon. Member for Copeland asked about the safety of our forces. For my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and for the Government as a whole, that must be a paramount concern. Of course there are plans, and have been for some time, for their protection or reinforcement if necessary.

My right hon. and learned Friend has told the House of those plans in the past. He announced last year that other

[Mr. Hurd]

capabilities would be available as a contingency to draw on as necessary. That specifically includes NATO close air support. I do not think that the House would expect me to give more details of those plans.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Whatever differences of opinion there may have been in the past, is it not now right that the British forces who may be called upon to implement NATO's decisions should know and understand that they have the support of the whole House?

With regard to close air support, can the Secretary of State confirm that there are immediately available to NATO adequate resources to provide proper protection of forces on the ground if they come under attack? I welcome the continued commitment to the opening of Tuzla airport. Can the Secretary of State tell us whether, at yesterday's meeting, there was any discussion of the means by which, and the time scale within which, that might be achieved?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for his comments. Yes, I can certainly undertake that the resources are clearly available to NATO to carry out air support and air strikes if need be, as decided yesterday. They are deployed and ready, and plans have been in place for some time as to how they may be used.

At Tuzla airport, there are three airstrips, as the hon. and learned Gentleman knows. The outline scheme is that two of them should be closed and one of them should be open for humanitarian supplies. There should be monitors to ensure that those supplies are humanitarian and that the airport is not used for the entry of arms for any of the warring parties.

The United Nations is preparing that scheme. Mr. Akashi has drawn up a scheme, as I have outlined. He is now seeking to find ways in which to put it into effect.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Given the importance of the NATO alliance and of our European alliances to our defence, it must be right that my hon. Friend has agreed with our allies to take the steps which have been announced. My right hon. Friend will be aware of the deep concern in the House and in the country over the consequences of those actions, if they are allowed to get out of hand.

May I reiterate what has already been said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) on the importance of keeping it a limited action, which clearly defined objectives and an exit path that is well known, so that we do not slip down the path to open war?

Will my right hon. Friend reassure the House of the possible reaction of the Russians? I saw a press announcement today that said that the Russians had called for a United Nations Security Council meeting. I would welcome anything that my right hon. Friend may be able to tell the House to reassure us that the Russians will not take any overt action on behalf of the Serbs and against the NATO allies.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the way in which he phrased his questions. He rightly placed a heavy accent on the importance to this country and its defence policy of the strength and solidarity of NATO, as I said in my statement. Anyone who has followed the discussions with our allies or is in the allied countries will know how many of them believe, especially the United States, that the action agreed yesterday was a crucial test for the Atlantic allies. That consideration could not by itself have led us to support a scheme which was fatally flawed. My hon. Friend is perfectly right to stress that that must be in the scale of the balance of judgment.

I agree with him about the paramount need for the security of our forces, which includes their ability, if need be, to withdraw in good order. As I said, the plans are there. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made plans and has to some degree announced them for that purpose. As my hon. Friend knows, we are reviewing, together with the other countries which have troops on the ground, the future of that effort. We were doing that before the past weekend. That review, which needs to be completed by the end of March, is continuing, and we are in close touch with other troop contributors.

My hon. Friend is perfectly right about the Russians. As I said in answer to the right hon. Member for Copeland it is our advice, and the view of the Secretary-General, that a new Security Council resolution is not needed for that purpose. The Secretary-General keeps in close touch with the Russian Government, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is going to Moscow on Monday. That will provide a good, unique opportunity not only to listen to President Yeltsin's view on that subject, but to impress on him the limited nature and the importance for the peace process of the decision taken by NATO yesterday.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): To take up that point, it is essential that the Foreign Secretary can assure the House that the new determination by the North Atlantic Council and by those involved will be pursued to its objective if necessary. Therefore, the views of the Russians are essential.

Is it not proper that we should know, and that the Foreign Secretary should know, exactly what the Russians are saying, because we have all seen those reports? We have also seen the reaction of Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs. He has made it clear that, as far as he is concerned, NATO does not have any role. How does the Secretary of State react to that. It is important that the House knows exactly what steps the Foreign Secretary has taken to ensure that the Russians understand that we mean to move ahead.

Mr. Hurd: We have indeed taken steps, as have our allies and the Secretary-General, to ensure that the Russians understand what is proposed. They have criticised it from outside in general terms. That is all that can accurately be said at the moment. There is no legal provision that requires their consent before NATO acts on this decision.

The House and anyone who follows this matter have been accustomed to hearing from Mr. Karadzic, possibly several times a day, for a long time now. We know how to assess the validity of each pronouncement. What counts is not so much Mr. Karadzic's pronouncements as what now happens—whether the Bosnian Serb military honour the agreement reached orally by General Rose yesterday, and whether the Bosnian Serbs comply with the requirements of the NATO decision. They have more powerful incentives to do so now than have ever existed before. That is the test.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): Following the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), does my right hon. Friend agree that, just

as it is true that the NATO alliance has provided the cornerstone of our defence and security for the past 40 years, it is equally true that it has shown more suppleness and intelligence in adapting to the new world order than has any other alliance or international organisation to which we belong?

It would have been inconceivable to us that a difficult decision of this kind, discussed in close concert with our allies, which involves perhaps the most important out-of-area action that NATO has taken, should not be supported by the British Government. It is crucial to us and to the future security of our country that NATO should continue to play the kind of role for world peace and security in the new order that it played in the old order.

Mr. Hurd: I agree entirely with my right hon. Friend. We had a successful NATO summit, which the Prime Minister attended, in January. It was successful because it defined for the first time—more clearly than before—the role of NATO in the post-war world. At that summit, it was very clear that our main allies—and certainly the United States—felt passionately about the Bosnian issue.

If we had frustrated yesterday's decision, I do not doubt that we would have administered to ourselves—to our own defence policy—a severe shock. However, as I have said, that would not have been a conclusive argument if we had felt, on listening to our own military advice, that the proposal was unsustainable and untenable.

The point of deciding it in NATO, the point of going through the planning procedures, and the point of having the NATO council with the chairman of the Military Committee there present was precisely that the proposal could be adapted, as it was, and modified, as it was in discussion yesterday, to make it as workmanlike and professional as possible.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Secretary of State aware that the responsibility for global peace rests with the United Nations and not with NATO, which is not the policeman of the world? The danger of the Secretary-General organising air strikes against the opposition of Russia, a permament member of the Security Council, poses far greater threats for the future of the United Nations.

Is the right hon. Gentleman also aware that any action of this kind must necessarily involve the commitment of far greater numbers of British forces? Is he aware that the question will arise, if the Royal Air Force bombs Serbia, whether we are at war with Serbia in law? Have any contingency plans been made to consider the political implications that may follow if the intervention in the Balkan war escalates, as clearly it could do, with very grave consequences for peace in Europe and in the world as a whole?

Mr. Hurd: The United Nations is governed by its charter. Its charter is very precise about the role of the Security Council and Secretary-General. Within the charter, the Security Council passes resolutions. They require unanimity.

Everyone concerned knows the balance of authority within the United Nations. I have seen no serious challenge to the view that I have expressed, on which the Secretary-General has acted, that he was acting perfectly properly under the resolutions already passed in writing his letter to the Secretary-General of NATO, and he would be acting perfectly properly if—and it is still an "if"—he were asked by NATO to authorise our action for the first time. Those are the rules; that is the charter; and every member state knows about it.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about escalation and bombing Serbia. Nothing in the decision has anything to do with bombing Serbia. I told my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) that the decision is limited to Sarajevo and heavy weapons, and is addressed to both parties, so the right hon. Gentleman is flying away in fancy on that. What was the right hon. Gentleman's final point?

Mr. Benn: What contingency plans have been made in the event that the initial bombing leads to an escalation that spreads to war?

Mr. Hurd: He had a further point which I have forgotten and which he also seems to have forgotten.

Mr. Benn: War with Serbia.

Mr. Hurd: No, I have dealt with that point. There is nothing in this decision which opens that possibility.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to pay a tribute to the incredible bravery and dignity of the civilian population of Sarajevo? Does he agree that their hopes must not be dashed by another brief respite; what is on the line now is the whole credibility of NATO and the United Nations; and while accepting the heavy responsibility that my right hon. Friend bears, we need more talk of resolution and less of difficulties.

Mr. Hurd: Bosnia is full of civilians who are suffering. Some of them are Bosnian Serbs, some of them are Bosnian Croats and some of them are Bosnian Muslims. Essentially, it is a civil war that originated from Belgrade and the Bosnian Serbs, which is why they carry the heaviest responsibility, sustained to some extent by the old JNA—the Yugoslav national army—sustained now to some extent by Croat regular units, and sustained to a smaller extent by people who have come in from the middle east to help the Bosnian Muslims.

Through all this fighting, the civilians are the main sufferers, most visibly and most horribly in Sarajevo, but in many other cities and towns as well. That is why our initial effort on this has been designed to help to bring about peace and relieve the suffering of those civilians, to whatever community in Bosnia they belong.

As regards the spread of the war—I now remember the last question of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—we have so far succeeded in preventing the spread of war, although this was widely predicted by our critics all through this time. Of course, the situation in Croatia remains uneasy, but it is confined to a Bosnian war at present. I listed among our main British objectives limiting, preventing, the spread of the war. I believe that the decision taken yesterday, like the other decisions that have been taken, will help in that direction.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): As one who firmly supported the Government's position on Bosnia over the past 18 months, I was alarmed by their change of direction yesterday—an alarming decision that can only lead the United Kingdom further into the morass of the tragedy in Bosnia. Can the Secretary of State tell me whether it is true, as has been suggested, that Russia has demanded a meeting of the Security Council, that the Bosnian Serbs have now

[Mr. John D. Taylor]

left the talks with the other parties involved in the conflict in Bosnia, and that those two developments have taken place within 12 hours of the NATO decision?

As NATO was originally an organisation to come to the defence of its member countries, and now that it has extended its powers to get involved in non-member countries, albeit at the invitation of the United Nations, can the Secretary of State assure us that NATO will not be hijacked by some members who might wish to create a successor to the former Austro-Hungarian empire?

Mr. Hurd: The Russians suggested a meeting of the Security Council some time ago, but that does not affect the legal position which I have defined. I cannot comment —indeed, it would be stupid to do so—on passing reports of the statements of the Bosnian Serbs, because, as I have said, their statements are always all over the place. What counts is not what they say, but what happens.

The future of NATO is a crucial point which was tackled at the previous NATO summit, following almost two years of work. The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that the essence and the core of NATO—this is too often forgotten—is the collective defence of its existing members. There is also now opening to the east a welcome partnership which has been offered to countries in central and eastern Europe. That also is crucial to the credibility of NATO in many member states.

There was agreement and a strong feeling that NATO should be ready and equipped out of area to handle situations which the member states thought NATO could contribute to helping to resolve. That is limited in the case of Bosnia, because no one suggests that NATO can impose a peace. Anyone on the ground or any member of the warring parties who believes that is deluded. Within the limitations which were laid down first by NATO in August last year, and which were reaffirmed in January, we believe that the decision is a proper use of the authority of NATO.

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): I welcome and strongly support my right hon. Friend's statement. Is it not the case that positive action should have been taken 18 months ago? Is it not also the case that, by threatening repeatedly to take action and then doing nothing, the credibility of the international community has been undermined? Hopefully, my right hon. Friend's statement this afternoon will do something to restore that position.

On a more fundamental level, how can it be right to take no international action to defend a sovereign state while seeking to deny that state means of defending itself?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend and I differ on the history, but that will be resolved by an historian. When an historian looks at the archives, he will find over and over again that the possibilities of military action were considered, not just by us but by the allies. He will find the advice which we received.

My right hon. Friend has been in government, and he knows how these matters work. He will know how advice is proffered, and he will know the responsibility which falls on those who neglect that advice and who set off on enterprises to gain applause without a proper judgment of the consequences. That is why, in all our discussions in different places—particularly during the past few days—we have put the emphasis on the need for military advice. That is why the decision was taken in NATO and not anywhere else.

Although it is common currency at the moment, I do not believe that history will find that opportunities in the past were neglected. That is a matter for the past. The balance of judgment for the interests of Britain and of the alliance as a whole now fall in favour of the decision which was taken yesterday.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that he is engaged in another Government U-turn, and that he has done it with a look on his face which suggests that his heart is not in it? The right hon. Gentleman has told us precisely what the new rules of engagement are—they are contrary to those which he has mentioned previously—and he has explained how the British troops and NATO are to get deeper into this morass.

Surely it is incumbent upon the Foreign Secretary to be able to tell us exactly what the rules of disengagement are? We want to know precisely what will happen if the plan does not work. Can he tell us? Is it not certain that the television pundits and chattering classes who have guided him towards his decision will not be there to give him advice when he needs it?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's last point, but I do not accept his role as the protector of either my conscience or my intelligence. I will not accept him in that role.

Since May, and certainly in public since August, we have accepted the possibility of the use of air power. As I said earlier, and have said often, if we had believed all through this time that, by some simple military action, the tragedy could have been brought to an end, any Government, and certainly this Government, would have taken it. But that has not been the position.

I have spoken often of the possible use of air power. What Governments have to do is test and re-test the practical possibilities: whether a particular operation would bring more benefit than risk. That is the process which has occurred again this week. It did not come as a U-turn or a surprise. The texts and decisions which the House has heard about and discussed before now have been brought into practical operation because it seemed to NATO as a whole, and certainly to the British Government, that the benefits of the decision outweighed the risks.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the NATO members consider the war in Bosnia to be a civil war, an international conflict, or both? Will the exclusion zone apply to all the belligerents, and in particular the invading Serbian army?

Mr. Hurd: We know this to be a civil war, but as I think I said earlier, it is a civil war which originated in the ambitions of Serbia and the encouragement of the Bosnian Serbs. It is sustained to some extent by Croat regular forces and, to a much smaller extent, by people—commonly called mujaheddin—who have come in to help the Muslims. But it is essentially a war between Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs. The NATO decision does not talk about the origin of the fighting. It

talks about the two main forces involved in the Sarajevo area—not the Croats in this case, but the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Government Muslim forces.

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): As someone said, this is deja vu all over again. We have issued threats to the Bosnian Serbs on several occasions and not implemented them. Can the Secretary of State give us a guarantee that, if the United Nations resolutions are not complied with, we will not do as we have done many times before and back away? Secondly, can he offer guarantees that, if the Bosnian Serbs comply—their masters have known when to bend—the enthusiasm will not subside when the heat is off, perhaps in a couple of weeks, and the Serbs return to their usual task of bombing innocent civilians?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman mistakes the position. We have said several times, notably in August last year, that NATO would be ready to use air power to defend UNPROFOR forces if attacked. They have not been attacked. We said that we would be ready to consider using NATO air power to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo. That was the phrase that NATO used.

Yesterday it was decided to use air power for that purpose, in the detail that I described to the House. I do not think that the Bosnian Serbs, or anyone, is in any doubt that, unless the ultimatum and the requirements are met, force will be used within the limitations—they are very clear—which the NATO decision set out yesterday.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on.

Health Service (London)

4.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a detailed statement to update the House on changes to strengthen the health service in London.

We set out the direction of policy last February. We have followed that policy through with the determination which we promised. I pay tribute to all those who have played a part. My announcements today take us a further significant step along the road that we charted then.

The heart of our policy is to improve primary and community care. That will relieve pressure on hospitals, thus helping to reduce waiting times and give Londoners the high-quality services common elsewhere. To this end we have committed substantial investment of £170 million over the next six years.

Within the areas of greatest need, well over 100 schemes are going ahead this year. That means improvements to general practitioners' premises, new health centres, more community nurses, and better services for the mentally ill. Those schemes will assist the dedicated doctors, nurses and support staff working in often difficult circumstances. In addition, we are exploring with the professions ways further to improve the numbers and skills of primary care staff working in the capital.

We are determined to build on that. I can therefore tell the House that the Government will double new investment in London's primary and community care next year to £85 million. We have also agreed with the medical profession two new arrangements for financing general practice premises in the London initiative zone.

I have today laid before Parliament regulations giving family health services authorities—FHSAs—a new power to acquire, develop and dispose of land and property within the London intiative zone for the provision of general practice premises. That new arrangement will enable FHSAs to play a greater part in initiating and co-ordinating developments with their local practices, to act as an engine of change and to promote joint ventures with the independent sector.

We are also increasing FHSA discretion within the initiative zone over the level of improvement grants payable to GPs to develop existing practice premises. From today, the current ceiling for improvement grant reimbursement is being raised from 66 per cent to 90 per cent. That will offer greater flexibility to support projects which could not be achieved through other means. Both new powers will be available until 31 March 1996 and will be subject to review before then. Further details are being published separately today.

Investing in primary care means that we must unlock the resources tied up in the high overhead costs of London hospitals. Subsidising those costs year in, year out is not right in London and is not fair to the rest of the country. We have to invest in modern care, in London as elsewhere, not sustain a pattern of services which no longer meets current and future patient needs. That is why there must be change to London hospitals.

I begin with those hospitals which have applied to become national health service trusts. We have agreed a new central funding mechanism with the eight research-oriented postgraduate special health authorities, to be effective from April. Those arrangements are sensible and

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fair. They put the SHAs on a more equitable footing with other hospitals and will sustain high quality research and development.

Against that background, the Moorfields eye hospital, the Bethlem Royal and the Maudsley hospitals and the Royal Brompton national heart and lung hospital will all become NHS trusts from 1 April.

There has been much speculation about the future of the Royal Marsden. I am pleased to announce that it too will become an NHS trust from April. Together with the generous initial funding which, as a former SHA, the Marsden will receive, that decision gives it every opportunity to shape its own future, responding to patient choice.

I have not been able to approve the trust application from the national hospital for neurology and neurosurgery because it could not meet the financial requirements for a stand-alone trust. The hospital will continue as an SHA, while it explores options for safeguarding its highly valued teaching and research work.

Similarly, the Eastman dental hospital has not been approved because of concerns about financial viability. It too will continue as an SHA while options for its future are explored. The Chelsea and Westminster hospital has applied to be a trust in its own right. Consultation on that will conclude in March.

The Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's SHA, together with the Charing Cross hospital, recently applied to become a joint trust. I shall take a decision on that, following statutory public consultation which ends in March.

Discussions are taking place between the Hammersmith and Charing Cross hospitals to bring together their considerable service, academic and teaching strengths. Both recognise the benefits from merging their facilities on to a single site. Sir David Phillips, former chairman of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, and Sir Rex Richards, a former vice-chancellor of Oxford university, are undertaking a special study to identify measures which would be needed to maintain that research excellence in the event of services being consolidated on one site. We welcome those developments.

I have agreed to establish a new trust incorporating the Royal London, St. Bartholomew's and the London chest hospitals. Bringing together these three hospitals, which encompass major accident and emergency provision, local acute specialist services and teaching and research, offers a great opportunity to establish a first-class institution serving the City and east London. The new trust will take forward decisions about the future location of services across the three sites.

University college London hospitals originally submitted a joint trust application with the Royal National throat, nose and ear hospital trust. In response to public consultation, the region is now exploring the option of UCLH going forward as a trust in its own right, with the RNTNE trust continuing separately. I shall make a final decision in March following consultation on the revised application.

At present the UCLH group is scattered across several sites. It needs to consolidate services into fewer buildings. A number of options are currently being explored. Any proposals need to safeguard and strengthen UCLH's position as an international centre of excellence in service, teaching and medical research.

The Great Ormond Street hospital for sick children will remain where it is. It too will become a trust from April. This decision provides it with an opportunity to build on its worldwide reputation. Separate management arrangements will be made for the Queen Elizabeth hospital, Hackney, within its local community.

Sir Bernard Tomlinson's analysis that current and future patient demand cannot sustain four major hospitals in south London is widely supported. Both Lewisham hospital and King's are securely established, each serving its own local population, and both are benefiting from new capital investment.

By establishing Guy's and St. Thomas's as a single trust last April, the Government signalled their determination to bring to an end the duplication of services between the two sites. This is not just a necessary response to the gradual withdrawal of patients that the trust faces. The trust's clinicians at both Guy's and St. Thomas's have argued strongly that patient care will be improved by concentrating clinical services one one site. This view is storngly endorsed by the main purchasers.

Strong arguments were put forward in favour of each site. After careful consideration, our judgment was that, overall, the St. Thomas's site offers a better location and environment for a hospital and serves a bigger local population. The need to safeguard what is the largest and one of the busiest accident and emergency departments in London was also crucial to the decision. We therefore intend to ask the trust to pursue proposals that, over time, will concentrate acute and specialist hospital services at the St. Thomas's site. As well as clinical teaching accommodation, a strong research presence, in conjunction with acute clinical services, will be retained on the St. Thomas's site.

Under these proposals, the Guy's site would offer a wide range of modern hospital and health services focused on the needs of the local community. As we have undertaken elsewhere, an accident and emergency department would remain at the site until alternative facilities were developed and were working satisfactorily, particularly at King's College hospital and Lewisham.

We also intend to build on the considerable academic and research strengths at Guy's. We strongly support moves to integrate the united medical and dental schools with King's college. Bringing these elements together builds up to an attractive vision for the future of the Guy's site. State-of-the-art local health services would exist alongside a major new centre of teaching and research. This proposal offers the oportunity for Guy's to evolve along new and imaginative lines. It would become a high-quality health and academic campus, serving local patient needs, training tomorrow's doctors, dentists and nurses and exploring the boundaries of medicine.

I have asked Sir Tim Chessells, chairman of the London Implementation Group, to take forward this work. He will bring together the key parties, including the main purchaser, the trust board, UMDS, King's College London and the special trustees of both hospitals.

It is also proposed to develop both the Guy's/St. Thomas's trust and King's college hospital as specialist cardiac centres for south-east London and Kent. For neurosciences, a strong new centre would be developed, based around King's, building on the links with the

institute of psychiatry at the Maudsley. In order to strengthen both these proposed new specialist centres, cardiac and neurosciences would be transferred from the Brook hospital, which is in very poor condition. Statutory consultation will now go ahead on these proposals.

In the light of this, discussions between my Department and the Ministry of Defence are well advanced about the possible sale of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital, Woolwich to the Greenwich Healthcare trust. The aim would be for this hospital to replace the Brook and, eventually, most of Greenwich district general hospital. Subject to settling some outstanding issues, I hope that the matter can be put out for consultation in the spring or early summer.

In south-west London, the regional health authority has completed some work on the distribution of services, the results of which have been made available to local health authorities and hospitals. It will now be for those locally charged with assessing and meeting health needs to take into consideration the effects, over time, of proposed changes in central London and the views of those living in the area served before deciding whether local service changes should be proposed for public consultation. Subject to that process, I do not anticipate significant change to the current pattern of hospital services in the near future.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that I have approved two further trusts in London whose applications were referred last year: Newham acute hospital, and the Tavistock and Portman clinics. Both will become trusts on 1 April.

Today's announcements represent considerable further progress toward reshaping London's health services. Of course, much remains to be done. We will maintain the pressure for change and improvement.

Most of London's hospitals are now NHS trusts. Together with local health authorities, they will take change forward at a local level. Their decisions must reflect the needs of patients, the importance of consolidating London's excellence in specialist services, teaching and research, and essential strategic issues such as maintaining comprehensive accident and emergency cover.

We shall also continue to pay attention to the needs of staff, particularly the arrangements for helping displaced staff find new jobs within the NHS, which are working well.

I have announced today further measures to enable London's hospitals to respond to the changing demands of their patients. I have announced eight new NHS trusts for the capital. I have announced a doubling in new investment in primary care and a substantial programme to improve the local health services which Londoners need. We recognise, as others recognise, that change in London is needed and long overdue. My statement today is proof of our commitment to shape London's health service to match London's needs, now and into the 21st century.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): If anyone needed justification for supporting the proposals in our document "Health 2000", the Secretary of State has just given it. Does she agree with Sir Bernard Tomlinson's comment that

"planning and the internal market are incompatible"?

The announcement of eight new trusts this afternoon spells not a new way forward for London but a disaster in terms of further rationalisation and closure.

Over the past 12 months, since the Secretary of State responded to the Tomlinson inquiry, has there not been uncertainty and demoralisation throughout the capital? Does the Secretary of State agree that neither local and national representatives nor the people of London have played a part in the proposals put before the House this afternoon? Just a few weeks ago the Secretary of State announced outside the House that she had saved University College hospital from the effects of the internal market. She also announced the effective demise of Bart's. This afternoon, she has made an announcement along similar lines about proposals for trusts and rationalisation that will inevitably lead to less service and less provision for people in the capital.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will tell us this afternoon what happened to the promises that were made a year ago about improvements in primary and community care in London. Will she tell us why there has been a 2 per cent. drop in the number of GPs employed in the London Implementation Group zone since the reorganisation started in London; why there has been a 5 per cent. drop in the number of health visitors; why 319,500 people are on the waiting lists of the four Thames regions; and why in the past quarter alone the number of people waiting for more than a year has increased by 13,340—a 12 per cent. increase? Is there room for closure and rationalisation with such figures?

Perhaps the Secretary of State will tell us about the planned changes to Guy's. Did not the Government parade Guy's hospital as the flagship trust of the Tory party? Has not that flagship trust been holed below the water line this afternoon by the Secretary of State? Was not the captain of the flagship trust thrown a lifebelt with a £130,000 golden handshake while 2,000 people working at those hospitals are threatened with redundancy and redeployment? Is not it a fact that the £140 million that was spent on the unit at Philip Harris house will now be set aside and used in a completely different way from that in the proposals? Will the Secretary of State tell us whether £44 million of the £214 million that it will cost to reconfigure the two hospitals will have to be repaid to the charities that raised money for the hospital?

Is it not a fact that the Secretary of State's announcement this afternoon of a trust for the Royal Marsden hospital is not a lifeline but a hangman's noose? Is it not a fact that that great teaching and research hospital, with its world-renowned cancer unit, will be finished not by any announcement by the Secretary of State, but by the impact of the internal market? Will she make a statement this afternoon to clarify that she will order the two major purchasing authorities to continue buying the services of the Royal Marsden hospital? If she does not, the Royal Marsden will gradually be strangled, as will other hospitals, by the operation of the system.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that it is not the good news announced by her but the bad news implemented by the market that really matters? It is similar to the announcement on pit closures that was made by the President of the Board of Trade: announcements are made that give the impression of saving services, while the reality gradually strangles them on the ground. Rather than a transfer of resources, a pulling forward of money to pretend that new money has been announced this afternoon for next year's primary care investment, would not planned change and rational investment in primary care be a real improvement in primary services?

[Mr. David Blunkett]

Should it not be for a London regional health authority to plan that development and care? Would not the involvement of local people bring accountability? Would not a fresh start for London bring clarity for the years ahead, not uncertainty and demoralisation? Should not it be the Secretary of State's duty this afternoon to announce that things will not once again be put off until the end of March, and lift the threat from those who receive the services and those who deliver them, to give London the world-class services that it deserves?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The House might like to know that the Prime Minister has just received a message saying that the two Members of Parliament in Somalia are now out of the hands of the people who were holding them, are back with their Action Aid team and will be flying back tomorrow.

Mrs. Bottomley: As ever, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) is long on discussion papers, but cannot face a decision. London needs decisions.

Tomlinson set out a programme for change; we have followed that programme carefully, and have been involved in a probably unprecedented consultation and discussion, not only with the purchasing authorities which are charged with seeking the best interests of local patients —local people—but with the universities and research institutes. According to Paddy Ross, head of the Joint Consultants Committee,

"As a result of meaningful consultations they"—

that is Ministers—

"have produced a Government response the broad thrust of which is supported by the medical profession at national level."

I pay tribute to all the distinguished members of the medical and research community who have participated in the effort to draw together the evidence necessary for the taking of some extremely difficult and sensitive decisions —decisions which, however, had to be made. That is the difference between being in government and being a permanent Opposition party.

According to the further policy document produced by the hon. Member for Brightside, the policy for London should be

"a vision of a new health service built from the bottom, with primary and community care as the focus of our thinking."

Those are the hon. Gentleman's words; they are also the words that describe the commitment that we have demonstrated today.

Like other Members of Parliament, the hon. Gentleman will receive in his postbag details of the 127 primary care schemes that are already under way. There are 350 additional nurses, 81 new paramedic and counselling staff and 23 new "hospital at home" schemes in the London area; £7·5 million is being spent through the voluntary sector—quite apart from the extra money that I have announced today.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the difficult decision concerning the Guy's/St. Thomas's trust. It is agreed that those hospital services must be concentrated on a single site. The purpose of the new building on the Guy's site was to provide health services, research and teaching; those services will continue to be provided. The special trustees, the dean of the medical school and representatives of King's College will be involved with Sir Tim Chessells in deciding on the details of how that balance can best be achieved to serve the needs of the future. Our vision, however, is of a campus concentrating on learning, research and health services, which will play an important part in training future generations to work with and for the health service.

My announcement sets the strategic direction for the future. I well understand the difficulties of the staff involved; but, if we spend 20 per cent. of the money on 15 per cent. of the people—if London has one doctor to 500 people, while the rest of the country has one doctor to 1,100—that is evidence that no Government can responsibly refuse to address. My announcement has set the direction for the future: it means better health services for Londoners.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must strike a balance between this very important statement, another statement and the equally important debate that follows. I therefore seek the co-operation of all hon. Members—including Government Front Benchers—when I ask for brisk questions and brisk answers. That will enable me to call as many hon. Members as possible.

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): Along with millions of Londoners, I welcome the decisions that my right hon. Friend has announced to remove uncertainty from the future of London's health services—especially the decision to invest £85 million of new money in local health services in areas of need next year. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the lack of proper primary and community care puts additional strain on hospital services, and increases waiting times?

Mrs. Bottomley: I entirely endorse what my hon. Friend has said. One of London's dilemmas is caused by the fact that nearly 50 per cent. of those who use accident and emergency departments in hospitals are people who, in other parts of the country, would have used the services provided by their family doctors. That is one of the difficulties involving discharging patients from hospitals. If we can improve primary care, it will be better for patients to be seen by their family doctors and the practised teams who know and have stewardship of families for a lifetime.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Does the Secretary of State agree that, on the same day that UNISON announced the demoralisation of staff within the NHS, her announcement and the way in which she has handled London hospitals will increase that demoralisation? What weight does she give to the advice from the independent reviews on specialist services for London, given that she seems to have ignored that advice and the views of Londoners about Guy's hospital?

Finally, I welcome the money that she has put into primary care. It is a great service for London, but I should like to know where it will come from. Is it new money, and will it really help people who need acute beds when primary services cannot help them?

Mrs. Bottomley: There is no doubt that UNISON staff feel demoralised because they have seen the Labour party's documents. The hon. Lady referred to the specialty reviews. There were research views and specialty reviews

and the interests of purchasers were taken into account. The decision on Guy's and St. Thomas's was finely balanced, but there was strong agreement among the clinicians on both sites.

When my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health visited both hospitals, it was clear that they wanted services to be concentrated on one site. It is a difficult judgment. The strong view of the purchasers was that it should be the St. Thomas's site, and the London ambulance service advocated the important part played by that accident and emergency department. I shall not conceal from the hon. Lady the judgment and balance in that decision, but a decision had to be taken.

As for the extra money, the hon. Lady will know that, unlike the Opposition, who had to edit the price tag out of their policy document—after a row with the shadow Chancellor the £6 billion price tag disappeared up the chimney—we were able to—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I have asked that hon. Members refer only to the statement and that they get brisk answers.

Mrs. Bottomley: The Opposition do not want to hear about the £1·6 billion extra for the national health service this year, or £83 per household.

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, which strikes a good balance between central direction and letting the internal market decide the pattern of provision in London. Many Londoners recognise that there is an inequitable distribution of resources between London and the rest of the country. In implementing the changes, will she not lose sight of the fact that resources are also inequitable between inner and outer London and that outer London must get its share of resources?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am well aware of the pressure from those in outer London and the concern that decisions on inner London should be brought to a conclusion. We have to move as fast as we reasonably can, taking all views into account.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will the Secretary of State confirm that her close friend and colleague Lord McAlpine, the president of St. Bartholomew's medical college, has persistently and savagely criticised her mad proposal to close the accident and emergency unit at Bart's? Is she aware that leading counsel has advised that the decision was improper and unlawful and such that no reasonable person could take it, and that she is about to be brought before the courts?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am well aware that each of the great hospitals in London has supporters and those who would champion its cause, but I am also aware that it is necessary to take decisions. No change is no option, and I would urge the hon. Gentleman to read the speech on the subject by the Opposition spokesman in the House of Lords before Christmas. She said then that when the changes to Bart's and the Royal London hospital were implemented, could we please make sure that they were properly funded. Those changes needed to be taken across London? I can also report—*[Interruption.]* I add my own words at the end. It is a point of record. The point was made about the need to move to the Royal London hospital, but the changes are necessary. I urge the hon. Gentleman to speak to some of those at St. Bartholomew's whose vision for the future includes working with a stronger university hospital treating the needs of future patients.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): My right hon. Friend will know that Charing Cross hospital in my constituency has strong local support. Although the merger with Hammersmith hospital is popular, Charing Cross hospital has modern buildings, a superb location and the convenience of a heavily used accident and emergency department. It is also well supported by purchasers and local GPs. When the decision is taken about putting the hospitals on to a single site, will my right hon. Friend ensure that patients' needs are put first in deciding the location of hospital facilities in west London?

Mrs. Bottomley: Indeed. My hon. Friend is a great champion of Charing Cross hospital. It is an extremely popular hospital that was favourably reported on in the specialty reviews. He will know that work is under way to examine the configuration of services and the possibility of Charing Cross and Hammersmith hospitals coming together as a trust.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Secretary of State made a long statement, but she omitted several important facts. What is her estimate of the loss of beds in London hospitals during the implementation period? How many skilled doctors and other medical professions will no longer be employed in London hospitals? What is her estimate of the size of the London hospital waiting list during the implementation period?

Mrs. Bottomley: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that London has about 3·9 acute beds per thousand compared with about 2·5 elsewhere. The change of use of London hospitals and the increasing use of day surgery rather than in-patient admission mean that the need for beds in London is changing fast. Tomlinson estimated a loss of about 2,000 beds over a longer period, but I would not want to put a figure to the precise numbers because we have to match provision to the needs of services. Similarly, we envisage an increase in the number of people employed in the community and primary care sectors.

We anticipate having fewer health staff in London. That is why we set up the London clearing house to help people to find jobs elsewhere in the country if they are no longer necessary in the London health service.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): It is good to have a boost for primary care services. People in Eltham want to have staff at the Brook hospital working on the other side of Shooter's hill, if the Queen Elizabeth hospital can be brought into national health service use. There are still some who are unhappy that the neurosciences should go to Denmark hill rather than coming into the Guy's/St. Thomas's collection of surgery specialties.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am aware of my close and hon. Friend's constituency interest and the need for the uncertainty to be brought to an end. I also understand his point about neurosciences. Tomlinson's report and the research reviews strongly commended the establishment of a world centre of neurosciences at Denmark hill, with the neurosciences going to King's hospital, working closely with the Maudsley in the same location.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Is the Secretary of State aware that, although there is strong support for the

[Mr. Clive Soley]

combination of Hammersmith and Charing Cross hospitals, there is severe doubt that we can squeeze a quart into a pint pot by closing down one of the sites and transferring all the services to the other site? Will she give an undertaking that, if there is a decline in patient care, she will ensure that the services are available on the two sites if that is appropriate? When will she take that decision? Frankly, the effects on staff morale at Charing Cross and Hammersmith are severe.

Mrs. Bottomley: The purpose of change in London is to improve services for patients and to establish a better balance between the specialty services, the routine hospital services and primary care. Change will not take place unless and until it leads to improvements for patients in London—decreasing waiting times and overall improvements in health care.

The trust application is out to consultation. I am not able to make a decision about that until March, when the consultation finishes.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): My right hon. Friend will recognise that there will be disappointment in south-east London and north-west Kent at the decision to concentrate the specialist and acute hospital services on the St. Thomas's rather than the Guy's site, but it was inevitable, when the trust was unable to reach a conclusion, that she would have to make the ultimate decision. I accept that the arguments were finely balanced, and I congratulate her on having the courage to take that decision and remove the uncertainty, which has prevailed for too long.

Can my right hon. Friend confirm that there is no possibility of those changes being effected overnight—that they will be gradual, and that they will take account of the understandable worries of the staff, many of whom are highly qualified people?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can confirm that those changes will take place gradually over a number of years. They are highly complex; a great number of organisations will be involved, but there is a need for a strategic direction. I refer my hon. Friend to the comments of the South East London health authority, which said today that the decision to centralise in-patient services at St. Thomas's hospital is the right one. It said that it

"reduces the amount . . . spent on costly overheads and allows more to be spent on direct patient care."

Similarly, the London ambulance service says:

"The department at St. Thomas's is an essential link in the network of Accident and Emergency Services in London. Both its strategic position and its accessibility argued strongly for its retention."

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): In respect of Newham general hospital, which is to become a so-called trust, does the Secretary of State agree that the quality of its care in future and its very existence depend on its success in commercial competition? Therefore, the "working for patients", in the words of the White Paper, will not take place—or indeed for the people of Newham, because the staff there will be working for cash and perhaps for their very jobs. Is not such a situation incompatible with the principles of Christianity? Will the right hon. Lady come to Newham and debate that principle before an audience of representatives of the people and of people who work in the health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: Newham's becoming a trust means that it is more able to behave more flexibly to solve its problems to be committed to local patients. NHS trusts are, and remain, part of the national health service, delivering health care to all on the basis of clinical need, not ability to pay. The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the nature of NHS trusts, and does so wilfully. Throughout the country, NHS trusts are delivering more care, reducing waiting times, improving the quality of care.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I welcome my right hon. Friend's——

Mr. Spearing: See your vicar.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I welcome my right hon. Friend's resolve to bring uncertainty to an end; as we have heard, she has been travelling through a political and a medical minefield. Although I recognise that provincial hospitals are developing an ever-increasing standard of care, will she give the House an assurance that the speed of rationalisation of hospitals in London will not put at risk their excellence and their worldwide reputation?

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes, Madam Speaker. The hospitals, the universities and the research institutes need to know the direction of strategic change. It is not right to move with undue haste. The intention is to consolidate and strengthen, to improve services for Londoners and to improve the centres of research expertise.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Is the Secretary of State aware that the cost of her failure, in her own words, to provide high standards of primary care for Londoners that are "common elsewhere" is being paid by Londoners? I give as an example one of my constituents, a homeless man, who is suffering from gangrene. Can the right hon. Lady give here today a firm guarantee to all Londoners that the already limited primary health facilities for their needs will not be reduced by what seems to me a quite scandalous scythe through such existing health care as is provided for them by London's hospitals?

Mrs. Bottomley: I give an unequivocal guarantee, and the hon. Lady will find in her mail a list of the 127 new primary care schemes that exist in London already. There will be more next year, as we have announced that an extra £85 million will be spent on primary care in London. As a result, there will be more doctors, more practice nurses, more hospital-at-home schemes, and more community psychiatric nurses, and better primary and family care services will be delivered in practice.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. Friend accept that her courageous statement today shows that she understands the changes that are coming over the national health service—for example, the enormous numbers of the population who have moved out of London into constituencies such as mine and the shift from acute care to primary care, showing that the Opposition's concentration on such matters as the number of beds is merely a further indication of the backward-looking attitude that they have adopted towards her reforms?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend. The Labour party counts anything other than patients, patient needs and the improvement in the quality of their care.

My hon. Friend is right about people leaving London. When the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)

said, "See your vicar," I thought that he wanted me to discuss the Templeman report with my vicar, because I noticed that the Templeman report, only the other day, suggested that two thirds of the churches in the City should close because the population has left.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): In view of the fact that Newham is almost a Tory-free zone, will the right hon. Lady give an assurance that she will not pack the new trust at Newham with Tory stooges? Will she also answer the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) about how much of the £44 million from charities that went to Guy's will have to be handed back?

Mrs. Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman has the names of people who he wants to be considered for the new trust, I know that my right hon. Friend will consider them. The Labour party has given many names with great success. Helene Hayman, for example, is chairman of the trust at Whittington hospital; Julia Neuberger, a member of the Liberal Democrat party, is an excellent trust chairman. We want, as ever, people who are committed to the national health service, who are prepared to take difficult decisions and who are determined to improve patient care. We appreciate them on the trusts.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if implemented, the Labour party proposals to abolish the private sector for health will cost a great deal of money, which will come from the remainder of the health service?

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Yes, £90 million.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend says about £90 million. Would not that proposal, if implemented, slow down her success in getting people off trolleys in hospitals such as Ealing hospital? May I have her assurance that hospitals will not be closed while there is any chance of people having to be put on to trolleys or into emergency situations?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that the memories of Barbara Castle echo around with the policy document today. The vendetta against the private sector is something that people are used to hearing about from the Labour party. Private patients actually benefit the national health service. My hon. Friend is right. No decisions will be made unless and until it is safe to make them.

My hon. Friend rightly referred to the unacceptable situation of patients being left for too long on trolleys. That cannot be tolerated. The chief executive has written to make that quite clear. There is a major investment programme in a great number of accident and emergency units across London and we are determined to ensure, not only that they are better organised within the hospital, but that some of the left-wing Labour authorities co-operate better with the discharge arrangements.

Mr. Banks: Name one.

Ms Harriet Harman (Peckham): Would the right hon. Lady not insult my constituents by implying that the reason that they oppose her plans is that they have some old-fashioned and irrational attachment to the idea of measuring the success of the national health service by the number of hospital beds? Does she not realise that people in south-east London are worried about the plans that will result in reduced numbers of hospital beds because they are worried that she will cut the hospital beds before the GP services and the social services improve and, therefore, people such as my constituent, an elderly woman who was on a trolley for 18 hours in King's College hospital last week, will continue to wait in unsatisfactory conditions?

Mrs. Bottomley: This is like the old days. As ever, the hon. Lady fails to welcome the good news. I should have thought that she would welcome the fact that neurosciences are to be moved to King's, which will be a world class centre of excellence. The hon. Lady has never been able to do anything other than talk down the health service, which is a tragedy for King's and for the service itself. The only good news is that she is no longer the shadow spokesman on health.

The hon. Lady should check her facts more carefully. The reason that the lady was left on a trolley at King's, which was unacceptable, was that 40 to 50 patients were waiting to be discharged into the community. The social services in London have received a 75 per cent. increase in the money given to them for community care, and part of it is for them to arrange with hospitals for the discharge of patients. We look to them to deliver.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that critics of trust hospitals should examine the record of hospitals such as the Royal Free, which has dramatically increased the number of patients treated and substantially reduced waiting lists? Does not that provide hope for the people of Newham?

Mrs. Bottomley: It certainly does. The Royal Free has done a magnificent job and the chairman deserves great credit. My hon. Friend will know that the chairman of the Royal Free is about to become the regional health authority chairman for the south Thames area. That bodes well for all of South Thames.

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): May I welcome the part of the statement which continues to allow an accident and emergency unit at St. Thomas's and thus permits the hospital to operate most effectively? Does the Secretary of State agree that the people who are making the nasty point that the only reason St. Thomas's will retain its accident and emergency unit is that it is near the House of Commons are doing a great disservice to the thousands of people in my area who have signed petitions, campaigned and worked with dignity to ensure that their hospital would remain open? Will she confirm that 80 per cent. of the Philip Harris unit will still be used for the purpose for which it was originally planned?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank the hon. Lady for her comments. It was an extremely difficult judgment because the arguments are balanced. I well understand the disappointment of some people at the Guy's site that the decision did not go their way. I can say only that I have been completely direct about the basis on which the decision was made. I believe that there is a great vision for the future at the Guy's site. Indeed, only today the principal of King's College, London said how he welcomed the announcement. He said that it would

"enable a merger between UMDS and King's College to go ahead with a . . . commitment to the location at the Guy's site not only of basic medical and dental and life sciences teaching and research, but eventually of the whole of the merged multi faculty College."

That is a very exciting vision for the Guy's/Thomas's trust.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Will she confirm that it can be interpreted as very good news for people in the west country and those who use provincial hospitals because there will be a switch of resources away from London to meet the greater need of the provinces and, in particular, of the west country?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can indeed confirm that, over time, it will be possible to have a fairer distribution of resources across the country. At the moment, 20 per cent. of the money is spent on 15 per cent. of the people. Areas outside London support London services to the tune of more than £100 million, a situation that cannot continue indefinitely. We are bringing it to an end.

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Will the Secretary of State make available to the House the papers and documentation which informed her recommendations? Are the recommendations supported by the London Implementation Group, the four Thames regions and inner-London purchasers?

Mrs. Bottomley: In due course, the programme will go out to consultation before final decisions are made. Management documents were available. There has been a great deal of discussion and debate, not only about the cost, the service configuration and the need to preserve specialties. All the information that is necessary for public consultation will be available before the final decisions are made because we are bound by public consultation. What is important is that a decision is made.

Initially, the trust board provided a number of options. One that had seemed persuasive was to take no decision. At present, the subsidy to the Guy's/Thomas's trust runs at £18 million every year and is rising. The clinicians made it quite clear to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State when he visited each site that they wished for a single-site option, so further work was needed to ensure that we faced the decision—difficult though it was—to set the strategic direction for the future.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must make it clear that hon. Members who have not heard the entire statement but have come in late will not be called. That is not an innovation. The House will recall that I have made that statement several times, and I intend to hold to it.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Will the Secretary of State desist from her shabby trick of playing London off against the rest of the country? It is singularly unconvincing in view of the havoc also being wreaked in cities other than London. Will she clarify her bland statement that the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Hackney is to be incorporated in local services? Does not she mean that provision for sick children in London will be weakened? Was not the Queen Elizabeth part of the Great Ormond street hospital for sick children?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady is right in the sense that because of medical advance it is no longer necessary to have the great number of hospitals and beds that were appropriate in many city centres in the past. There has been a dramatic investment in primary care as care increasingly moves into the community. That change is common, in London and elsewhere. London is especially complicated because of the input of a number of colleges, universities and research institutes.

As for the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Hackney, the best way to organise services for children in a local community is with the other hospitals in that local community. Great Ormond street will continue as a specialty hospital of very high renown and the Queen Elizabeth hospital will continue its tradition of serving the local community. It is a hospital I know well.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the Secretary of State accept that the people at Guy's feel not disappointment but anger and a sense of betrayal about the biggest U-turn in the history of this Administration's health policy? The Administration launched a flagship and constructed a state-of-the-art building but a couple of years later they evacuate the flagship and say that the building can be kept but with hardly any beds. The figures do not justify the Secretary of State's conclusion and she has not shown them to anyone. They are secret, but will she now reveal them?

She knows as well as I do that the reality of today's decision is that it was made because of pressure from the establishment. She would not take on people here or in Whitehall who would allow St. Thomas's to be closed. She is once again allowing the people in the south-east of London—the people, not the establishment—to suffer so that she can come to a brave decision while those people receive a worse service. That is unacceptable and disgraceful, and the anger that she is hearing this afternoon is only the beginning.

Mrs. Bottomley: I have made it clear that I understand that there will be disappointment at the Guy's site but a decision has to be made. I set out clearly the basis on which the judgment was made, which included the fact that there was a larger local population, the London ambulance service's strong views and the overall ability of the two sites to provide for alternative needs. There is a vision at the Guy's site for a research campus, a campus of learning, and the vast majority of the new building at the Guy's site will be used for the purpose for which it was intended.

There now need to be detailed consultations with the head of the medical school, the clinicians, the trust board and the special trustees about how to maximise the use of the building for the purposes of research and teaching, precisely the purposes for which it was established, in order to make it a great centre for the 21st century. I am confident that the trust's vision will deliver a first-rate university hospital, not only serving patients, but training future dentists, doctors, nurses and other health professionals.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I always take points of order after statements.

Business of the House

5.10 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week, which will be as follows:

MONDAY 14 FEBRUARY—Until Seven o'clock, Motion on the Airports (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Return of Cultural Objects Regulations.

Motion on the Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order.

TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY—Motion on the European Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) Order.

Motion on the European Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order.

Motion on the European Parliamentary elections (Changes to the Franchise and Qualifications of Representatives) Regulations.

Motion on the Auditors (Financial Services Act 1986) Rules.

Motion on the Accountants (Banking Act 1987) Regulations.

Motion on the Building Societies (Auditors) Order.

Motion on the Auditors (Insurance Companies Act 1982) Regulations.

Motions on the Welsh Revenue Support Grant Reports. Details will be given in the *Official Report.*

WEDNESDAY 16 FEBRUARY—Motion on the Channel Tunnel (Security) Order.

Motion on the Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order.

Motion on the Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order.

Motion on the Statutory Sick Pay (Small Employers' Relief) Amendment Regulations.

Motion on the Social Security (Contributions) (Rerating and National Insurance Fund Payments) Order.

Motion on the Statutory Sick Pay (Rate of Payment) Order.

THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on the Royal Navy on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 18 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 21 FEBRUARY—Consideration in Committee of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I thank the Lord President for the comprehensive statement on next week's business.

Does the Lord President realise that the fact that there have been so many statements today before the Opposition debate on the Child Support Agency reinforces the impression already created by the Government that they are running away from a debate on that subject? I suspect that by the end of the business statement the time left for that debate will have been reduced from one day to half a day.

Before Christmas the Government wrongly and needlessly guillotined the Statutory Sick Pay Bill. As I recall, the right hon. Gentleman told the House that it need not be debated as it was so beneficial. Has the Leader of the House noted that that measure has been amended in another place? That should have been the business of this House, which highlights the need for reasonable scrutiny. It is as a result of the handling of that business that we are now taking so many motions on the Floor of the House. Is not that another example of the Government shooting themselves in the foot?

We sought a debate last week, in Government time, on the report of the Public Accounts Committee on standards in public life, and the waste, incompetence and mismanagement that we are seeing under the Government. Has the right hon. Gentleman seen today's report of yet further losses of £48 million, which has been squandered on computer provision by the Department of Employment? Does the right hon. Gentleman think that that is of significance, or does he agree with the Chief Secretary, who is reported as saying:

"It happens in British business all the time"?

Mr. Newton: On the hon. Lady's last point, she will know that the Department of Employment will study the report of the Public Accounts Committee carefully. The Department has already issued a statement of initial comment making it clear that it does not accept all that Committee's criticisms, which appear to go beyond those made in the report of the National Audit Office.

The hon. Lady's earlier comments simply confirmed what I thought at the time—that she had not understood what was being said about the Statutory Sick Pay Bill. We did not say that it was not important enough to deserve debate. We said that, if the changes were to be brought into effect in an orderly way to allow industry proper time for implementation and for computer reprogramming, the Bill had to pass through the House before Christmas. Our view has been amply confirmed. One of the sets of regulations that I announced for next week follows on from the passage of that Bill. That will only just leave time for the proper implementation of the measure from the beginning of April. Those are the facts and I hope that the right hon. Lady will reflect on what she said.

I must tell the hon. Lady bluntly that her suggestion about today's statements was nonsense. Clearly, we had no reason for knowing that there would have to be a statement on Bosnia today. The House rightly expected a statement on Bosnia, but by the time we knew that there would be one, it would have been wrong to change the timing of the statement on the national health service. We had to have that statement to ensure that people outside the House were fully aware of the picture.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many politicians on the continent are puzzled at the lack of support—indeed, non-existent support—for European institutions that has come from this Parliament since the turn of the year? Those are important institutions, which cut across party boundaries and are germane to the interests of this country. Will my right hon. Friend do something about it? If he cannot, will he consider, in the longer term, providing time for a debate so that we can consider temporarily suspending our membership of those organisations?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend underlines a point which I have sought to make on several occasions and which was echoed in the debate on the motion to guillotine the Finance Bill by a number of right hon. and hon. Members from both sides of the House. I hope that the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) will reflect on the fact that it is increasingly clear that the Opposition's action is not so much damaging the Government as damaging Parliament and the interests of this country.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Leader of the House will be aware that today the Secretary of State for Scotland placed in the Library proposed amendments to the Standing Orders of the House. They involve the way in which Scottish business is handled. Will the Leader of the House state when the amendments will be tabled in the House and debated? Does he accept that people in Scotland will not believe it if the Government try to pretend that Labour party disruption is holding us back? They will not believe that as long as the Government are able to ram through measures such as the Sheriff Court Fees Amendment (No. 2) Order using their majority? Is there any hope that people can operate in a mature manner when introducing those modest improvements in the way in which Scottish business is handled?

Mr. Newton: I can confirm that my right hon. Friend has laid his proposals in the Library as the hon. Gentleman described. The proposals reflect the substantial discussions that were held before the usual channels were disrupted. We would obviously like to make progress as soon as possible, but I cannot give a date now.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend find an early opportunity next week to debate early-day motion 550?

[That this House notes that Labour-controlled Camden Council, which currently sets the highest council tax in Inner London, continues to waste vast sums of local taxpayers' money on inefficient services and ideologically-driven projects; is dismayed by the sense of priorities of a Council which spends nearly £150,000 per annum on six full-time trade union officials whilst, at the same time, closes down 16 play centres and junior clubs; is appalled to learn that the Council's HIV/AIDS housing project, involving the purchase and adaption of one property into five flats (four one-bedroomed and one two-bedroomed), cost a colossal £1·2 million and took two years to complete, and was then let to a Housing Association rent-free; points out that the £1·2 million could have helped far more HIV/AIDS sufferers if the money had been more thoughtfully spent; is not surprised that a report last year by the Local Government Ombudsman accused the Labour Camden Council of being guilty of "maladministration", a charge regularly levelled against Labour-run councils; and thinks it is about time the Labour Party censured Labour councils for spending taxpayers' money on politically-correct causes at the expense of vital local services, and encouraged them instead to follow the example of Conservative-run councils, which respond to the needs of the local community and provide them with an efficient and high quality service.]

That motion gives details of how the district auditors discovered that Labour-controlled Camden council had produced accounts showing a £20 million surplus, when there was, in fact, a £50 million deficit. Does my right hon. Friend know of any input that those Camden Labour councillors may have had into Labour's plan for business, as that would explain a lot to Conservative Members?

Mr. Newton: I doubt whether the people involved had any input into Labour's plan for business as the error was much too small for that.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for a debate on the steel industry? There is anger and apprehension at the Government's unilateral decision to get rid of the European iron and steel employees readaptation benefits scheme, known as ISERBS. Does he realise that there is grave apprehension in the steel industry in Europe that there may be further cuts? Britain has made her contribution and we would like a debate so that we can tell the nation of our concern for the future of steel in Britain.

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Gentleman will know that that decision was taken after a careful evaluation of the scheme, which showed that it was not very effective in helping redundant steelworkers to re-enter the labour market. If the hon. Gentleman has not already done so, I hope that he will study a copy of the evaluation report which was placed in the Library of the House last October.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Does my right hon. Friend realise that the Select Committee system is currently under pressure because of the number of pressure groups that are concentrating on individual Select Committees, making it difficult for them to carry out their work beyond small, identified investigations? In view of the fact that the Government introduced a deregulation Bill earlier this week, does my right hon. Friend agree that it might be appropriate to set up a new Select Committee on deregulation, encompassing all Government Departments and monitoring how deregulation is progressing?

Mr. Newton: I understand why my hon. Friend, with his interest in such matters, makes that suggestion, but he will know that since Select Committees were established the practice and feeling of the House has been that they should mirror the structure of Government Departments. What is most important to the deregulation initiative is that each Select Committee should be alert to the need and the possibilities in its own field.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Is the Leader of the House becoming as weary of answering questions on the Jopling report and its fate as many hon. Members are of asking questions about it? Will he reflect on the fact that, in the past, substantial reform of this place, which is desperately needed now, has only ever come from energetic Leaders of the House, such as Richard Crossman and Lord St. John of Fawsley? Has he considered that the job of the Leader of the House is to lead the House, and when is he going to do it?

Mr. Newton: The first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is astonishing, in the circumstances precipitated by the Opposition Front Bench. The answer to it is a straightforward yes—but the second part of his question was addressed to the wrong person. It should have been addressed to his own Front-Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): May I ask for a debate on the structure of local government next week, so that hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, can emphasise how much importance we attach to the valuable work now being carried out by the Local Government Commission? It is important that, especially in my area, there is overwhelming support for a unitary authority. There has recently been all-party support for the devolution of powers within local government to town councils such as Kidderminster, which only the local government commission review could bring about.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will know that, as part of the basis of the commission's operations, it is expected to

take account of the views of people in an area. Of course I hope that it will take account of the views that he reports in his area.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): As it is now nearly 12 months since the consultation document was issued and comments were received, will the Leader of the House give time next week for a debate on the curse of wheel clamping? The cowboy clampers are still hard at work extorting large sums, as much as £75 a time, from motorists who have left their cars not so much in awkward places as on what is obstensibly waste land. The clampers leap out, often in the dark, and hold people to ransom, keeping women away from their homes late at night. The practice is a real menace and should be brought to a halt. The Government should introduce legislation to bring England and Wales in to line with the Scottish courts, which have sensibly described clamping as theft and ransom.

Mr. Newton: I am of course aware of the concern felt on that subject by hon. Members on both sides of the House and I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, as the world's population is growing by about 10,000 every 55 minutes, many people believe that that is the root cause of most of the world's problems—health problems, famine, poverty, migration and shortages of fuel and water? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the United Nations conference on population development will take place in Cairo in September and that the recent G7 summit placed great emphasis on the importance of that conference? The Government will now be formulating their policy for the conference, so would not it be appropriate to have a debate on the subject sooner rather than later?

Mr. Newton: I certainly accept the importance of the subject. I cannot promise an early debate, but I shall certainly bear my hon. Friend's question in mind.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): As there are difficulties in getting the business of the House through, I ask the Lord President of the Council whether it would be possible to have an early debate on global security, bearing in mind the fact that today we have heard at least two references to NATO acting out of area. It seems to me that the House should be given an opportunity to say where we think we should go on the whole concept of global security.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has raised another important point, which I shall bear in mind, in the broad terms in which he expressed it. Subject to your judgment, Madam Speaker, I may suggest in return that some observations on that subject might conceivably be in order in the debate on the Navy on a motion for the Adjournment of the House next week.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): The question asked by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) clearly showed the frustration of Opposition Members at the fact that the Leader of the House has not provided time for a debate on the Jopling report. Over the past week I have asked Opposition Members at random their views on the subject. To a man, and to a woman, they said that they could not get through to their own Front-Bench spokesmen. Will my right hon. Friend hold discussions with individual Opposition Members, decide what we should do, and bring the matter forward at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Newton: There is much force in what my hon. Friend says. I, too, am in a sense grateful to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood, because he has said publicly on the Floor of the House what many of his colleagues are saying in the Corridors.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Building on what the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood and my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) have said, may I remind my right hon. Friend that early-day motion 9, advocating the introduction of the Jopling report, has been signed by more than one third of the Members of the House of Commons? As there is no co-operation, between the Front Benches on the business of the House, and as we cannot scrutinise Bills properly, because we are having to stay up so late, does my right hon. Friend think that he, as the protector of Back-Bench interests, has a duty to bring the report before the House to be debated forthwith?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Newton: Again, the concern of hon. Members on both sides of the House has been made clear and I undertake to keep it very much in mind. However, I must tell my hon. Friend that he was in danger of confusing me, because according to my list, early day motion 9 is concerned with the Warwickshire police and has been signed by only seven people.

Mr. Harry Barnes: (Derbyshire, North-East): Next Tuesday we shall deal with rather a lot of orders and some people may find that rather tedious. However, our business will have been enlivened earlier by a ten-minute Bill that I intend to introduce to improve electoral registration and access for disabled people to polling stations. That will be a rerun of a Bill that we dealt with last year, when the former Home Secretary said that although he was not against the principle, the Bill was premature. As a year has now passed, may we have a statement from the present Home Secretary on whether it is now time for the measure to be introduced?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman always enlivens our business, although not always in ways of which I approve. At this stage I cannot promise that my right hon. and learned Friend will join the enlivenment on Tuesday.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Will my right hon. Friend now yield to overwhelming public and parliamentary pressure, as reflected in early-day motions 459 and 559, and make room next week for a debate on the behaviour of the Liberal Democrat party in local government?

[That this House notes that the latest official Activists Handbook of the Liberal Democratic Party addresses the problems of delivering Liberal Democratic leaflets to "unintelligible inhabitants who appear to speak only in Punjabi, broad Cockney or Scouse or, worst of all, Glaswegian"; notes that this is only the latest example of the Liberal Democratic Party using racially offensive language or language that mocks regional accents; notes that it follows the publication by the Liberal Democratic Party of overtly racist literature in a local government election in Tower Hamlets, together with racist remarks by the Liberal

[Mr. Gary Streeter]

Democratic Councillor Tom Dommett in Somerset; and calls on the Right honourable Member for Yeovil yet again to expel Councillor Dommett from the Liberal Democratic Party and to withdraw the Activists Handbook forthwith.]

If we had a debate the scurrilous conduct now being swept under the carpet would be exposed to the full light of day.

Mr. Newton: That is another request that I shall bear in mind, because I believe that the whole House is becoming almost as frustrated with its failure to get action from the leader of the Liberal Democrats as some of the comments have revealed that it is over the Jopling report.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Why shall we not debate "taking stock" next week? Does the Leader of the House remember that a year ago the Government said that, just occasionally, some Scottish business might be decided by Scottish Members of Parliament? Since then Scottish local government has been gerrymandered by English Tory Members and last night the Government did not even allow a former Tory Solicitor-General for Scotland to speak on an issue of Scottish law, which was then decided by English Tories. Are the Government totally incapable of practising what they preach on any matter, and will "taking stock" descend into the same kind of farce as "back to basics"?

Mr. Newton: The very fact that the proposals following on from "taking stock" have now been brought further forward by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is a sign that we take such matters seriously. I wish that I could have a similar assurance from the hon. Gentleman that he acknowledges that this is the United Kingdom Parliament.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I wonder whether my right hon. Friend will have words with those people who have been pressing him for debates during next week? If Standing Orders allowed the motions that have been laid before the House to be debated in Committee, we would have a three-day week next week in which many of the debates that have been requested could take place on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He adverts to the suggestion which was contained in the Jopling report and therefore embraces the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick).

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): Given the ever-increasing importance of the regional dimension to our national life, and given the repeated statements of the Leader of the House that he will consider the matter, will the right hon. Gentleman now reconstitute under Standing Order No. 100 the Standing Committee on Regional Affairs?

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so at present. However, I always consider with care the suggestions which are made by the hon. Gentleman and others.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate next week on personal pensions? It is many weeks since figures were released which showed that 2·5 million people who transferred from state earnings-related pension schemes were putting too little into personal pensions to avoid being worse off in the future. The Select Committee on Social Security is looking into the matter, but the Government's silence is deafening. With every day that passes, those people are seeing a reduction in their future pensions. The House must have an opportunity to discuss their plight and what action should be taken to secure those pensions.

Mr. Newton: With his interest in such matters, the hon. gentleman will know of the current work of the Securities and Investments Board. He will also know that its new rules on disclosures of charges and commission on life insurance, including personal pensions, in response to directions from my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will be a further solid step towards improving the marketing of those products and to helping investors make well-informed decisions.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the Leader of the House consider the questions that I have been asking the Treasury for the past three weeks, which concern the amount of public money that has been put into Unicorn plc? The only reply that I have received from the Treasury is that such information is confidential. Surely that cannot be correct. Will he persuade the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) to give a personal statement of how much taxpayers' money went into that failed company?

Mr. Newton: I have commented on that matter on earlier occasions, but I shall bring the matter to the attention of my hon. Friend.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): When are we to debate the calamity engulfing the civil service, and especially the Accounts Services Agency? The press has been informed that, tomorrow, a written answer will be given by a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry on the possible management-employee buy-out of that agency. In a secret ballot among the staff, only one member voted in favour. How on earth can we debate that issue if information is given via a written answer on a Saturday? When will we have the chance to debate what is happening in the civil service? A fortnight ago, the Leader of the House told me that it was codswallop to think that the standards of the civil service were on the slide because of the base business ethics which have been introduced. Since then, three major scandals have emerged in Wales.

Mr. Newton: I am having some difficulty recognising the fact that a written answer is being given on a Saturday. Leaving that aside and the fact that I do not accept the comments of the hon. Gentleman, not by a mile, I shall bring his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend who is responsible for such matters.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Is the Leader of the House aware of the decision of Mr. Justice Laws, which, bizarrely, has stopped Somerset county council preventing the barbaric activity of stag hunting on its land? He said that it was a matter for Parliament, an excuse also used by the National Trust council, in defiance of its own members who also sought a ban on stag hunting. Given those circumstances, will the Leader of the House find some time for a free vote so that once and for all we may decide whether there is a future for such barbaric activity in a civilised society?

Mr. Newton: Certainly, I shall not comment on judgments in court. However, on the point which I can consider, the hon. Gentleman will know that for a long time such matters have been regarded as those for private Members' proposals and the practice has been to have a free vote.

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for the Secretary of State for Health to explain why she has still not answered a question which I tabled on 13 January? The question sought information about the number of press and public relations officers employed by the national health service. Perhaps there were too many to count.

Mr. Newton: I shall bring the request for an accelerated reply to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Points of Order

5.27 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would you give urgent instructions to the authorities of the House to provide monitors in the Central Lobby and in the Lower Waiting Hall? I did not arrive in the Chamber for the beginning of the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health because I was snatching a few moments to collect some work from my secretary. I might as easily have been held up by a constituent. As a result of your decision not to call me, although I would not seek to question it and it seemed a shame that one person only was not called, my constituents were deprived of reassurance that they might have received from my right hon. Friend on the future of their health services.

Madam Speaker: If I may correct the hon. Member, there were two Members who did not hear the entire statement. Therefore, I could not call them. However, I know that the hon. Member is not challenging my decision on that point. The annunciator has clearly shown from about 1 o'clock onwards that the statements were to take place. The onus is on all Members to keep an eye on the annunciator and to be in their place if they are keen, as I know they are, to put questions.

I am sorry that in this case I could not call the hon. Member, but I shall certainly look his way on another occasion in the near future.

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 98(5) (Matter relating exclusively to Wales).

EDUCATION STANDARDS

That the Matter of education standards in Wales, being a Matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Social Security (Contributions) 1994.
2. Statutory Sick Pay Act 1994.

Orders of the Day

OPPOSITION DAY

[3rd ALLOTTED DAY]

Child Support Agency

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister. As Members would expect, I have had to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches between the hours of 7 and 9. I seek co-operation outside those hours as there is a great deal of interest in the subject.

5.39 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move,

That this House believes a parent has a duty to contribute to the maintenance of his or her child, and that duty must lie at the heart of any system of child support; recognises the widespread anger and dismay felt by thousands of families whose lives have been affected by the introduction of the Child Support Agency and calls for a further urgent review of its operation; welcomes the changes announced by the Government and now approved by the House; but believes these do not amount to the fundamental review that is required and fail to tackle key areas of concern such as the lack of an independent review procedure to deal with special circumstances to be defined in statute, which must be addressed if perceived injustice is to be eliminated and public confidence restored.

The House will be aware that about a week ago we discussed the Child Support Agency in the context of the new Government regulations. Some people may have been surprised that we have decided to return to it so quickly. By any standard, the decision is justified by the anger, dismay and sometimes the fear which have resulted from the change in the system of child support. People all over the country are worried about how they are to manage the unexpected consequences of the system. Arguably, they should have anticipated those consequences, but in many cases they did not and they have been left facing major problems.

Few hon. Members have not been startled by the strength of feeling which they have encountered in their constituencies and have not been left with the uncomfortable impression that the complaint which has been put to them so forcefully has some justification, yet redress is impossible.

It is important to stress that there are many more problems to come. It is difficult to get up-to-date figures in an organisation of such a size, but figures for 31 December 1993 show that 710,000 maintenance applications forms had been issued, of which only 210,000 cases had been cleared. In other words, there are at present about 500,000 cases in the pipeline on which final assessments are to be made. I fear that there is room for a great deal of heartbreak and anger in the figures.

Last week, we discussed the regulations—the Government's changes. It is not unfair to say that the view that was taken overwhelmingly on both sides was that the provisions did not go far enough and that more was required. I do not deride what was on offer. I made that clear on that occasion and I am pleased to say so again. I especially do not deride the increase in protected income. I recognise that the whole package, when fully implemented in 1996-97, will mean that about £95 million less will be ingathered by the Child Support Agency than would otherwise have been the case.

I have learnt from a parliamentary answer that I received only a few minutes ago that, from the Government's point of view, about £50 million will be offset because of the reduction in the tax allowance to 15p on maintenance payments from 1995-96. However, all that will be little consolation for those who are paying maintenance because they will feel that they are in double jeopardy. They are paying their increased requisitions to the agency and they will get less tax relief to set against that. That will do nothing to improve the atmosphere.

Ministers must face the fact that, the other week, speaker after speaker rose to say that there was a need for further action. The Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), apologetically defiant, but totally isolated—that is often his role these days—did his best, but he did not satisfy anyone. There is an urgent need to persuade Ministers to believe that they cannot close the file and tough it out.

I make it clear that I am certainly with the majority on this issue. Today, we should concentrate on positive proposals, some of which I listed last week when I did not have the time or the opportunity to argue in any detail. I make one general point which may command a good deal of agreement although it is, in a sense, a little academic now. Looking back—I accept that hindsight is a fine thing—it is unfortunate that we made the system retrospective.

I have talked to a number of people with experience of Australia. Australia will certainly crop up in my speech and I suspect that it will crop up in the deliberations of the House. In Australia, as many hon. Members will know, the Child Support Agency system applied to couples who separated on or after the introductory date of 1 October 1989 and to partnerships in which the youngest child was born on or after that date. It meant that there was a far longer transitional period as settlements made under court orders faded away. It also meant that there was not the pain and difficulty associated with our system in which long-standing arrangements and court settlements were torn up and in which settled arrangements were disrupted.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Gentleman is saying with the benefit of hindsight that the system should not be retrospective. Does that explain why his party is making a U-turn on the issue? Labour Members were in favour of the CSA in principle; when they found that there were difficulties, they wanted to run away. All they want to do is to throw the burden back on the taxpayer.

Mr. Dewar: I hope that I am not making a partisan speech. I am interested in the problem and I do not think that the intervention by the hon. Gentleman is helpful or typical of someone who takes these matters seriously. I make it clear that our support is for the general principle, which commands everyone's support, that a parent has a duty to contribute to the maintenance of his or her child. As the hon. Gentleman knows, if he was present at or has read the debates, there was a reasoned amendment dealing with the practicalities, on which we divided, which with remarkable perception identified and pointed to many of the difficulties that now haunt the system.

It is a little remiss of hon. Members—I am sure that the Minister will not do this—to say that because we approve of the principle that lies behind the Child Support Act 1991

and will have no compromise on it, we are therefore bound to everything that has happened and to every detail of the way in which the CSA operates. That is not the case. We should now concentrate on looking for solutions and at ways in which we can rebuild public confidence in the system, which has been greatly shaken.

There is nothing dishonourable in adjustment and change. The present system is not graven in tablets of stone. There were doubts in high places—I hope that this point is not thought to be partisan—from the very beginning. I draw the attention of the House to page 630 of "The Downing Stree Years" in which Lady Thatcher talks about her feelings. She writes:

"I was also appalled by the way in which men fathered a child and then absconded, leaving the single mother—and the taxpayer—to foot the bill for their irresponsibility . . . So—against considerable opposition from Tony Newton, the Social Security Secretary, and from the Lord Chancellor's Department—I insisted that a new Child Support Agency be set up".

I do not say that to make a cheap point, but to illustrate the fact that there have been doubts on both sides of the House about what was happening and about how the new policy was implemented. Unusually, I advance Lady Thatcher as evidence of that—*[Interruption.]* It may not be the only time that the Leader of the House has been right and Lady Thatcher has been wrong. That is a more general political point.

I have been urging for some time the possibility of a review procedure. Hon. Members who attended our previous debate will remember that I briefly described it. An independent review officer would have the power to consider exceptional circumstances, to test the representations made to him against criteria defined in statute and, when the test was passed, to order a departure from the standard formula. I suggest that because of the fundamental concern, shared by both sides of the House, there is a great lack of flexibility in the system.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment, which shows a certain charity.

The lack of flexibility has led to perceived injustice and on occasions, to real injustice, which has been embittering. The introduction of a review officer, a proposal that unashamedly leans heavily on the Australian experience, is well worth considering. I am convinced that there is a strong case to answer.

Mr. Shaw: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, thus allowing us to continue the debate we have had on previous occasions. If he feels that there should be an independent review procedure for child support cases, does he feel that the Inland Revenue tax system should have a similar independent review procedure in which independent officers could assess cases in which taxpayers felt that they were paying tax unfairly and wrongly? How would such a procedure be administered?

Mr. Dewar: I understand the point made by the hon. Gentleman; he is arguing by analogy. I have not considered that proposition. I have considered the difficulties that we face with the CSA and especially the breakdown of confidence in the system. I recognise that no one likes paying tax and that the Inland Revenue is unpopular when one gets a tax demand. Fortunately, I do not detect as yet the growing crisis of confidence that exists in the CSA system. That is why I want to speak briefly about the system in Australia and its relevance to this country.

As hon. Members may know, the Child Support Agency system was introduced in Australia in October 1989. It progressed until 1 July 1992 without the review officer system. It was then decided that a review officer system was an advantage. The Australians made the change because they were running into problems not dissimilar to, although not on the same scale as, the problems that we face now. They built on their experience and they moved into the review officer system because they felt that it would defuse the situation and would help people who had a perception of injustice. The system changed successfully to accommodate those aims.

I have inquired into the Australian system and I have been told that the review officer system is seen as speedy and effective. There is no legal representation, although the parties can meet the review officer and make their representations. The system is used sensibly and has not led to some of the practical difficulties that we have been invited to contemplate when such a system is suggested. I am not saying that we should adopt the Australian system with every dot and comma; it is not a lift and take argument. We may want to alter and argue the grounds, for example, on which a referral may be made to the review officer, and the test that he applies. It is important that we take this seriously.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): The hon. Gentleman is making an important proposal, and we accept that he is making it in all sincerity. The crucial point about the Australian system is that the appeals have tended to raise the amount that is contributed by the absent parent, rather than reduce it. It is incumbent on the hon. Gentleman to explain to people outside the House exactly who and what proportion of absent parents will be entitled to appeal, and on what grounds. If we are talking about confidence in the system, it is the constant demands for review which will undermine that confidence more quickly than anything else.

Mr. Dewar: Certainly I am conscious, and cautious, of the points made by the hon. Gentleman. I tried to address them briefly in my previous speech on this subject, and I shall turn to them genuinely in a moment. I take what he says seriously.

All I shall say on the general point is that review within the present system is based largely on change of circumstance and error in calculation. There is no independent scrutiny; at the end of the day, people who are discontented find that they are imprisoned within the iron walls of the present system. That builds frustration, which is dangerous.

The Government have clearly and fairly stated their objections. The first is—the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Bury, North, has said this on many occasions—that the Australian system is different, and there is no parallel, it is a broad-brush approach and it is much cruder than the sophisticated and, by implication, comprehensive and effective assessment formula that we use. I do not accept that. The similarities are much more important than the differences.

The Australians were grappling—and I will not go into detail—with social problems, the growth in expenditure on

[Mr. Dewar]

single parents, an increase in the number of single parents and the same sort of social phenomena with which we are familiar in this country. They have developed a somewhat different method of calculating the maintenance assessment. I take the point that there is no equivalent to the protected income. I agree that the formula of gross taxable income less exempt income to produce the adjusted amount is different. The Australians produced a system that relies on a set percentage of that sum as the final arbiter of the money to be paid. It is simpler but it seems to be similar.

I have been told by people who are wiser in the ways of the system than I am, and who have spent a good deal of time on this, that if we apply the Australian formula and the United Kingdom formula to families with exactly the same circumstances, we end up with comparable results. I do not accept, therefore, that we have no parallels and no common identity of interest or that the experi nce in Australia cannot at least be seen as relevant to our experience.

The second argument that was advanced can be put most crisply by quoting Viscount Astor speaking in another place yesterday:

"The plain truth is that there are two options: discretion or a formula. These options are mutually exclusive; you may have one or you may have the other, but there is no middle road."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 9 February 1994, Vol. 551, c. 1682.]

I do not accept that. It seems that the noble Lord, or the person advising him, has an over-tidy mind. There is a touch of absolutism about tht view which is not justified.

I shall turn from the theoretical position to the practical. This is where we come to the point made by the Under-Secretary of State and to what happened in Australia. The practical results of what happened in Australia are the best advertisement for the case that I am advancing. There are many people in the world of law who certainly would not agree with Viscount Astor. Perhaps I shall quote only one of them. Recently, Mr. Michael Clancy, the deputy secretary in charge of law reform at the Law Society of Scotland, wrote to me in these terms. I quote:

"I should mention that the Society considers that the Australian model of the Child Support Agency represents a more acceptable structure. It is unfortunate that the United Kingdom version did not adopt more of the flexible aspects of the Australian system."

I could quote that sort of opinion from sources who would be seen as having relevant expreience and expertise over a wide range.

I turn to the point made by the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin). I accept entirely that there is a danger that if we talk about a review procedure, people will see it as an open door—a court of second recourse rehearing the case from the beginning—and that that could lead to real problems. I give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that I will not represent it in that way, certainly not in any sophisticated argument or serious debate about this matter.

It is right that we should have some form of independent review that can look at situations where there are genuine facts that are relevant to the care of the children and the situation of the absent parent, which cannot be taken into account at present. I have a notice of determination by the review officer in Perth, Western Australia. He has before him all the grounds of application which are defined in statute. I quote:

"I have a duty to maintain another child or person has special needs.

I have necessary commitments in supporting myself . . . High costs of access to the child.

Special needs of the child",

and so on. How they are interpreted is a matter of argument.

One issue which has worried Tory Members from the south-east is commuting costs. Previously, the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) talked about being devastated by the impact of the Child Support Agency on his constituency, although he was a strong supporter of the system when the legislation reached the statute book. I will not say hard and fast—it will be a matter for further discussion—that commuting costs can be covered by those grounds.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): For the purposes of clarification, the Australian system does not take into account travel costs. We have confirmed that with the Australians.

Mr. Dewar: That is fair enough. Undoubtedly, it will be a matter for argument. Some people may think that it will have to be argued under the heading:

"I have necessary commitments in supporting myself."

The point is that there could be discussion about exactly how the grounds are interpreted. I am arguing the structural case—the need effectively to tackle the justice deficit that is perceived in the system.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North) *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: I want to finish this passage.

I have tried to make inquiries into the use of this system in Australia. I am grateful to Nicholas Mostyn—he is well known for his work in this field—for the facts and figures that I shall give the House. In steady state terms, there are about 120,000 assessments annually in Australia; 12,900 —about 11 per cent.—of them have got into the review system. Of that, 6 per cent. have been successful. It may be of interest to the hon. Member for Colchester, North that in 4 per cent. of the cases, the absent parent—normally the father—got a reduction in assessment. In 2 per cent. of the cases—this is significant—mothers managed to get increased assessments. Therefore, the system has not been overused, and it has not been abused since it settled down. It has been used by both parties—both sides of the equation.

Having talked to people who are familiar with the system, I have to say that it is seen as effective, speedy, sensible and a necessary safety valve. I have talked not just to academics and lawyers here; I have had the advantage of discussing the issue with one or two Australian lawyers who specialise in family law, who are in the United Kingdom for a number of reasons and have the practical experience that I value. All of them have repeated that message and underlined it. I hope that the House will not slough off the arguments in this area. If we do so, we will do a great disservice to the agency and what it is supposed to stand for—and, indeed, what it potentially still stands for.

The final argument—I shall deal with it quickly—used by the Under-Secretary is a reprise of what I mentioned before: the system is unfair because it raises false hope.

That cannot be right. Even if only a few people are suffering real injustice—I suspect that there will be a significant minority—we cannot erect a system that defies them and stops them from getting justice because it may lead to disappointment for others who do not have a good case. That is a dangerous—one might say pragmatic—argument and one that I hope will not find favour with the House.

Mr. Heald: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that what he is describing—the right of appeal in only exceptional cases—will not do anything for the people who are complaining? Those include people who would like existing debts and the fact that the divorce happened many years ago taken into account. The hon. Gentleman is offering a narrow right to a small number of people. Is not that a bit of a con on the public, who may think that the Labour party is battling today for most of the fathers, when he is just talking about a handful?

Mr. Dewar: I think that the hon. Gentleman is a lawyer.

Mr. Heald: A what?

Mr. Dewar: A lawyer. *[Interruption.]* I did not catch what the hon. Gentleman thought I said, if I may put it in that rather Irish way. I tremble to think what was in his mind, and I hope that it was not the result of a guilty conscience.

In any event, I understand that the hon. Gentleman is a lawyer. I quoted the figures from the rather controlled Australian situation, where 11 per cent. of cases went to a review officer and 6 per cent. succeeded. If one makes that 6 per cent. of the much larger figures in Britain, there is a significant constituency for the appeal procedure. Many of those involved would be the worst cases.

The hon. Gentleman may want to argue the opposite of what I suspect Ministers will argue, and say that the scheme ought to have wider scope. I am grateful for his intervention, because it shows that there is an area of debate as to how narrow the gate should be. The Minister and the hon. Gentleman may disagree about that if we get to that stage. The important thing, however, is to accept that there is a need for that safety valve. That is what I want to argue tonight.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: I must move on. It would not be fair to the many people who wish to speak.

Mr. Lilley *rose——*

Mr. Dewar: There are two other points on which I want to speak, but I will of course give way to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman must not leave the House in confusion. Is he proposing a narrowly prescribed system which would help few people? Does he want to open the system up for wider use by discretion, which would inevitably take us back to the system which failed before and transferred all of the burden on to the taxpayer?

Mr. Dewar: I do not want to leave the Secretary of State in confusion, and I am sorry if I have. The balance reached in Australia looks not unreasonable to me. I have made it clear that I would be open to argument from other hon. Members if we get to that stage of discussion.

The Under-Secretary said in a broadcast this morning that my motion was defective because it did not specify exactly what the grounds of appeal for the review procedure would be. I am not trying to argue that case arrogantly at the moment. As I have explained, I am trying to put a point of principle to the House, and I hope it is one to which people will respond.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will my hon. Friend put this point to the Minister? A constituent of mine who has never been in debt in his life and has always paid what the court told him to pay is now lumbered with more than £700 in debt. The agency has doubled the amount to £38 a week. The young man asked me how he was to get the money—should he rob a bank or disappear off the face of the earth? Is not that the situation into which the Government are putting people?

Mr. Dewar: Many people feel that they are in a cul de sac. I hope that my hon. Friend advised his constituent against both courses of action. I sympathise with the serious point that my hon. Friend makes.

I now turn to clean break settlements and to the situation in which a property or financial settlement has been made but cannot be taken into account. There is a great deal of anger over that, and a feeling of betrayal. The feeling very often is that good intentions are being ill-rewarded now that the system has been introduced. People have acted for the best, and have sometimes acted generously in difficult circumstances, and they are now being hit hard as a result.

There has been recent litigation with the Crozier case. I understand from those with whom I have talked that that was perhaps not the strongest case to take as a test to court. Be that as it may, I suspect that there may be more litigation before too long, with people suggesting that a reference to the CSA is a unilateral abrogation by one party of a contract between two parties. In any event, the Crozier case has decided the issue for now.

I again look to the Australian experience. There can be an agreement between the parties, and if there is a financial or property settlement which both parties agree will affect the maintenance award, they can specify how it is expected to affect that award. If it is lodged with the CSA for collection, that will be honoured. More important, if the parent with care ends up on benefit in the future and the CSA is making an assessment, it is possible to vary the assessment according to the recognition of the property transfer up to a maximum of 25 per cent.

There is always room for argument, but there is virtue in that and it is at least something which we ought to consider. I was interested—I know that the Secretary of State will remember this—to re-read the White Paper "Children Come First" which was published on 29 October 1990. Paragraph 4.12 states:

> "There remains the issue of whether there should be some reduction in the formula award of child maintenance to reflect the fact that the absent parent has foregone permanently some or all of his share in the family home. If such reduction in the formula amount were to be permitted, the value of the reduction would be calculated by using standard accounting techniques for converting a lump sum into an equivalent weekly amount over a number of years."

I draw attention to the fact that there is no suggestion in the White Paper that that was impractical or that there was some barrier which made it impossible. Clearly, it was an option in contemplation and the machinery, if it was to be implemented, was being outlined and defined.

[Mr. Dewar]

The then Secretary of State for Social Security and the Lord Chancellor jointly produced that White Paper. Two months later, for reasons to which I am not party, that was not incorporated when the Bill was published. I believe now that it would have been sensible so to do. I have been told that it is not necessary to do that. I find those arguments perhaps the most implausible in this whole range of exchanges.

The Minister says that if a parent has transferred a house or has settled a large financial sum on the parent with care, he is probably creating a situation in which he must buy another house. That is reflected in his housing costs, and therefore everything is all right and he has come out at least with justice and honour satisfied. I do not believe that is true in a financial or a property settlement. I need hardly say that an awful lot of people agree with that point of view.

I do not often get annoyed with the Government's documents, or at least not in the way in which I did on this occasion. *[Interruption.]* There are exceptions when the personal authorship of a document sometimes riles me. On this occasion, I was rather miffed by paragraph 7.31 of the discussion paper on divorce law reform which we have before us. The document says that the CSA formula

"takes account of each parent's income and essential outgoings at the time of assessment and, because it deals with the financial consequences of any property transfer, takes account of the practical outcome of 'clean break' settlements."

I do not think that that can be justified or held to be true when we look at the practical reality.

I cannot resist saying that I recommend that any hon. Member with an interest in the curious should read the Lord Chancellor's introduction. It must be the first time a Lord Chancellor has justified law reform by referring to what Jesus said to the Pharisees about Moses, as recorded by St. Mark. I cannot help thinking that the good Lord Mackay of Clashfern is remembering his roots.

Be that as it may, the quotation which I have given does not stand analysis. Therefore, it is wrong to say that it is not necessary to consider clean break settlements. There are thousands of cases which testify to that up and down the country.

My other argument—I will try to hurry this—is that the Minister commented on the Select Committee, and what it says in paragraph 74 of its report. The Committee has become the buckler and shield for the Minister in all the arguments and debates, and it is summoned twice to the aid of the party in the amendment to the motion. That is unfair, because it has been made clear that the Committee was making an interim report about the financial workings of the formula, and that it would return later to the matter in more depth. If we are praying in aid Select Committees, the Minister will certainly remember that, when the Bill was first published, the Select Committee on Social Security published two reports. Both argued that there must be a mechanism properly to reflect clean break settlements.

The Minister spouted paragraph 74 of the current report. Even it says:

"We can see no sensible way of attempting to place a current value on settlements made in the past in order to give some notional figure for current income which could be taken into account in the formula."

That may be so, but it does not rule out some formula or arrangement of the type that I have mentioned, even at its most modest, to deal with settlements in the future.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): The hon. Gentleman missed the little bit before, which states:

"Having examined the issue, we have to agree with the Minister."

Mr. Dewar: No. I am sorry. I did not mean to be unfair. In his eagerness to find a lone supporter somewhere—a prop on which to lean—the Minister is building too much on the words that I am quoting. The report said:

"Having examined the issue, we have to agree with the Minister."

The issue in question is the paragraph that I quoted beginning, "We can see no sensible way". The Select Committee was referring to the difficulty of dealing with the past. On any reasonable interpretation of the text, it did not necessarily rule out the future.

I leave the matter to the Minister. It is of great concern and one to which we should turn our minds, as I am sure the Select Committee will—collectively, I hope, not individually—at some future date.

Mr. Thurnham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I point out that the report from the Committee is not an interim report? It is a first report and the duty of the Committee is to report "from time to time".

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): That is a matter for argument, not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Dewar: I do not want to get into a barrack-room lawyers' argument with the hon. Gentleman. I fear that he would win that. If he wants some guidance on the matter, he should perhaps read the interesting speech made by the Chairman of the Committee in the Chamber last week. I hope that the hon. Gentleman would not obstruct a wish to have another look at the matter.

I recognise the difficulties with a disregard. However, I believe that a disregard of some benefit for the purposes of maintenance should be considered and should be on the agenda. I said it last week and I shall repeat it. There is one overwhelming reason for it. Ministers proudly introduced the system as being about getting more money from more parents for more children. In fact and in practice, it is not. One of the difficulties is the notorious estimate that, of the first £530 million that was expected to be gathered—we understand that the expected figure is lower now, because of the changes that are being introduced, if nothing else —£480 million would go to the Treasury and only £50 million would go to families and children.

Dr. Spink: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: As the hon. Gentleman gave a speech that was so much on my side during last week's debate, I will give way.

Dr. Spink: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that the cost of a £10 a week disregard would be £340 million? The hon. Gentleman is a genuine man. Will he tell us two things? First, which taxes would he raise to meet that £340 million? Secondly, is he happy with the impact that the disregard would have in breaking up families?

Mr. Dewar: I shall come to that in a moment. I was hoping that the hon. Gentleman would repeat his points about the difficulties in his constituency and the unfairness of the system, but I suppose we have to live with these disappointments.

The children who are most economically deprived—those in families living on benefit—are the least likely to gain any advantage from the operation of the Child Support Agency. I do not believe that that was the intention of the system. I recognise that it is a matter of balance and that the Government and the taxpayers have a legitimate interest in reducing bills. However, the balance is wrong and many people will see it as wrong.

The arguments are simple. One is that a disregard is unfair because it is something of a lottery whether the absent partner of Mrs. A is traced and pays. Mrs. B's partner may not be traced or, if traced, may not pay. So it is argued that it is unfair that one should be advantaged over the other. It seems an odd caricature of the position to argue for misery all round in order to preserve equality. If money is being paid, there is a strong moral case for saying that at least some advantage—however much goes to the Treasury and the taxpayer—should go to the children who are most economically at risk.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: I am sorry. I have given way to the hon. Lady on many occasions. I want to be fair and hurry on.

I do not accept the disincentive for work argument. I recognise that it is a factor, but although a small disregard might be important cumulatively over a year, it would be a poor job if people were stopped from taking up work by a £5 or £10 disregard.

The real argument is about cost. I do not believe that anyone has any doubt about the morality of helping the poorest families and children. I do not see the issue as a matter of tax, and the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) did. The Government make a decision about how the money gathered is split. They do not increase the total amount of money by refusing to allow a disregard. It is a matter of to what extent the Treasury is prepared to forgo some of the revenue collected to help children.

Surely no one in the House will say that, in a system that is about the care of children and is supposed to be child centred and child based, there is not a case for considering a disregard and putting it on the agenda, especially in view of the figures that are emerging. The figure to which the hon. Member for Castle Point referred came from a parliamentary answer to a question that I tabled. I do not believe in dealing in generalities if I can get the information.

The decision about a disregard depends on some difficult calculations and on the size of the disregard. The cost of a £5 disregard, which might still be of some importance, is £160 million or £170 million, according to the latest estimate. There are many variables. I am simply putting the issue on the table. The argument about a disregard is important and we should not sweep it aside in the way that Ministers could be tempted to do.

In its recently published ninth report, the Social Security Advisory Committee said that it had examined the possibility of a disregard several times and believed that there was a case for a disregard. I have received representations from a range of opinion in favour of a disregard. At the end of the day, it boils down to how we see the system, where the priorities lie and how we want to arrange these affairs. There is a strong case for putting children rather higher up the list of priorities than has been possible until now.

I regret what happened to the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Bury, North when he was closing the previous debate. Hon. Members who were present will remember that he was cut short dramatically. He had just come to the pregnant phrase, "And now for the future", when the lights went out—metaphorically, you understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not literally. We did not learn about the future on that occasion and we were left to wait and wonder. We cannot afford to wait and wonder much longer. The issue will not go away. There is a justice deficit, and it has to be tackled.

I have listened to what the Government have been saying. I have heard a selection of reassuring utterances, some of which offered a prospect of change. I draw one to the attention of the House because it is the most optimistic that I have heard, although it has not held the line. The *Yorkshire Post* of 27 January 1994 had a front-page story containing an interview with the Prime Minister, in which he said:

"Where the operation of it"—

the Child Support Agency—

"was inadequate—as people believed it to be—we have sought to make changes. I hope we have got it right now. I can only repeat that we can't be certain. If it turns out not, we will have to look at it."

That certainly suggested something of an opening and a softening of attitudes. I was particularly interested in the phrase

"Where the operation of it was inadequate—as people believed it to be".

It was as if there was now evidence that people no longer had that belief.

I fear that if that is the Prime Minister's position, he is being over-optimistic. Since then, I am afraid that the evidence has turned against us. At Prime Minister's Quesion Time last week he said:

"we stated that it would be kept under review. We are still true to that pledge—it still applies."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1994; Vol. 236, c. 1019.]

That is a ministerial form of words. I make no complaint about that, as every ministerial team uses it; it is a sort of placebo for worried Back Benchers. We are told that everything is under review—a good Government always keep their eye on developments. That is a way of putting off action, rather than promising early action or taking action that little bit earlier.

The debates in the Lords yesterday, the interviews given today by the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security and others and the amendment on the Order Paper hold out little hope for movement in the short term, but we need movement. We cannot wait and see. We do not have the time, nor has the system. If we do not act, consent—which is the foundation of the law—may be eroded. Without consent, the law becomes unenforceable. The problem is serious and Ministers have to recognise it as such.

One day, a Tory who was sitting below the Gangway said, with great simplicity:

"It has gone horribly wrong. We have got to put it right."

I do not dissent from that view, and if it takes primary legislation and there is broad agreement on the principle behind such legislation, we will do everything to expedite it in the minimum time.

Mr. Lilley: Is that a promise?

Mr. Dewar: I can give the Secretary of State that promise. If he introduces legislation that commands general support, I am happy to say that we will be helpful; I hope that he will take that offer seriously.

The motion is unashamedly narrow in focus; it does not have any general attack; and it is not decorated with political accusations of one sort or another. It states an important principle and restates what all hon. Members believe—that parents have a duty to maintain their children. The motion also welcomes the announced changes. I have repeatedly made it clear that I welcome them, despite my reservations about their scale. However, the motion also recognises that there is a problem, urges further reform and instances the need for an independent review procedure, which would go to the heart of the discontent—it is not the end of the list or the end of change, but it is a proper symbol of what we ought to be trying to do in the House and that is why it was included.

It is never easy for Conservative Members to vote for a Labour motion on a Supply day, but if the motion is approved it will be a strong sign—perhaps even a direction to Ministers—that the mood of the House is for further reform and change. It would not be dishonourable for Conservative Members to approve the motion because they would be reflecting the mood of the country and the troubles and anxieties in every Member's constituency.

The motion is fully justified and worthy of support. Many people will watch anxiously for a sign tonight that the House will not merely worry, agonise and do nothing. I hope that both sides of the House will support the motion, as it will have the support of people in every part of the country.

6.22 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the support of the all-party Select Committee on Social Security for the principles of the Child Support Act; reaffirms its own support for those principles, in particular that every parent has a duty to contribute to the maintenance of his or her child, that the amount of maintenance paid for children should be increased, and that the cost of bringing up children should fall on other taxpayers only if parents are unable to maintain their children themselves; recognises the inconsistency and arbitrariness of the previous court-based system, which gave insufficient priority to parental support of children and left many children on benefit; welcomes the important changes recently introduced by the Government in response to early experience of the new scheme and the Select Committee's report on its practical working; and approves the Government's intention to keep the arrangements under continuing close review as further experience is gained.'.

I apologise for the slightly groggy tone of my voice. I applied to the BBC for an actor's voice-over, but was told that I would have to join Sinn Fein.

I commend the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for resisting the temptation to abandon his support for the Child Support Agency, which I know that some hon. Members will have tried to persuade him to do, and for the essentially non-partisan tone of his remarks today and when he has handled the issue previously. Although I must take issue with some of his points, despite the fact that this is an Opposition Supply day I shall respond in an equally non-partisan vein.

This is too sensitive a matter for any of us to want to play politics. In any case, there is a wide measure of all-party agreement on the issue. The Act was passed with all-party support and all parties agree on three key points. The first is the basic principle that parents are responsible for their children, that that responsibility continues even if, sadly, they should split up, and that the taxpayer should be involved only if the parents lack means to support them themselves.

Secondly, none of us really wants to return to a system which failed—failed our children, failed the taxpayer and failed to uphold the principle of parental responsibility. There are about 1·3 million lone parents and 1 million of them depend on income support. Three in four receive not one penny of regular maintenance, many of the one in four with such an agreement are often paid late, irregularly, or not at all and the amounts are often inadequate and inconsistent.

Sue Slipman, of the National Council for One Parent Families, put it very well recently when she said:

"Before April last year, only 30 per cent. of lone parents got any maintenance for their children whatsoever in this country. Most of it was at derisory levels. And I will tell you what happened when you went to court to get someone to pay maintenance. Maybe he would turn up to the hearing. But maybe he wouldn't. And if he didn't it would be postponed for 6 months. You would then get a whole range of debts that would be presented and a whole range of other excuses for why maintenance could not be paid. You might then at the end of that get an order, and it might be paid for two to three weeks. No-one even enforced it, and no-one was ever interested. And as a result of that the experience of over 1.7 million children in this country was abandonment by one parent and a life in poverty with the other."

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The people who are contacting their Members of Parliament with detailed complaints are not the people whom the Minister is describing. They are respectable, responsible people who have always paid their maintenance, but who now find themselves in devastating circumstances because of the operation of the provision. What is to be done for them?

Mr. Lilley: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. We must distinguish between people who were not doing anything to meet their responsibilities and those who have been honourable throughout. We have tried to reflect that in our changes.

Mr. Graham *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: May I be allowed to make a little progress before I give way?

Thirdly, we are all agreed that we want to make the Child Support Act 1991 work as Parliament intended when it was passed unopposed. We want to make it work fairly. We want to be fair to parents who care and to absent parents, to first and to second families, and to parents and taxpayers. Surely that is a common objective on both sides of the House.

Mr. Graham: I have here all the letters that I have received from people who feel that they have been unfairly treated. They want an appeals procedure. Why does the Secretary of State not listen? He does not seem to understand that Opposition Members desperately want the right of appeal and review. We might then get some common sense.

Mr. Lilley: I shall come to that matter in due course. We have tried to respond to the obvious concerns that all hon. Members have experienced in their surgeries. Obviously, one of the healthy aspects of our political

system is that we all have contact with our constituencies. Ministers also have direct experience of what their constituents are saying.

We have said all along that we would keep the matter under review. We responded rapidly to the concerns voiced by Members of Parliament, which were considered by the Select Committee on Social Security and reflected in its well-thought-out recommendations. We rapidly introduced some important changes, which I shall come to shortly.

I assure the House and my hon. Friends that we will keep the system under review. We will monitor it closely, will study how our reforms work and will respond to any new problems which emerge as a result of those changes.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the overriding problem is the scale of the change that parents have suddenly found themselves facing, for a range of reasons? The solution must be some easing of those circumstances. We have already had some helpful changes, but surely the mood of the House is that the process should be taken a stage further so that the system is perceived to be fair. Action of that kind would, I think, carry the House.

Mr. Lilley: My analysis overlaps with that of my hon. Friend. We felt that we had to make some changes that would be reflected in the scale and speed of the impact. I shall be considering the changes—from which, of course, no one has yet benefited. Surely it is worth waiting to see how they work out and affect our constituents. That is what I shall spell out in a moment.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): My right hon. Friend has moved quickly to make some changes, and I accept that they ought to be given some time so that we may see how they work in practice. I hope that when my right hon. Friend discusses the further review that is mentioned in the Government amendment he will give some indication of the time scale involved. Indeed, he might even set a date. I hope that he will address also the question of the efficiency and responsiveness of the Child Support Agency bureaucracy, which is very unsatisfactory from the point of view of Members of Parliament and, a fortiori, much more unsatisfactory from the point of view of the clients.

Mr. Lilley: We have demonstrated willingness to respond in a timely fashion to the need for change. That must be the best assurance that I can give hon. Members. It is better than setting out a specific time scale.

With regard to the second point in my hon. Friend's intervention, I should say that it is clearly important that the agency be made to work effectively, efficiently and responsibly and that it be sensitive to the needs of those affected by it and take account of the concerns expressed, either directly or through Members of Parliament, by them. We have drafted in extra resources for the purpose of dealing with queries and complaints.

However, it will be helpful if we can get the changes bedded down and under way. Continual change and turmoil will not help. The changes that are currently being introduced involve a major effort. If the agency were to suspend its normal operations every few months for this purpose, that would not help in the provision of the sort of service that we all want.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I should like to make a little more progress. I have no doubt that I shall be dealing with some of the points that hon. Members have in mind. In any case, I shall give way in a little while.

I shall elaborate later on the changes that I have made. But it should be no surprise to anyone that the implementation of this legislation aroused opposition. Every similar agency in every other country—Australia, New Zealand, various states in the United States and Scandinavia—has met strong initial opposition from absent parents who have been asked to bear an increased share of the cost of supporting their children. But the fact that opposition is inevitable does not mean that it should be ignored—and we have not ignored it.

Our task is to distinguish the genuine grievances and unintended consequences of the Act from an understandable reluctance to pay or to pay more. That is what I have tried to do, and I think that it is what the Select Committee tried to do. To be fair to the hon. Member for Garscadden, I have to say that he too has distinguished between, on the one hand, genuine and remedial concerns and, on the other hand, what he described last week as the inevitable problems and difficulties from which there is no escape.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): The Secretary of State will realise that my experience in this field is different from that of many other hon. Members. Half the cases with which I dealt at the last interview session in my constituency related to problems arising from the Child Support Agency. Some of the men I interviewed were in a quite distressed state. I am approached also by young, unmarried women with one or two children. I ask, "Who is the father? Who should be financially responsible?", and I am told, "I don't know where he is." Surely the Child Support Agency should be paying more attention to irresponsible young people rather than concentrating on people who are trying to meet their responsibilities.

Mr. Lilley: That is a very good point. There is no doubt that the hostility towards the agency has been heightened by a number of misconceptions, concerning which I want to set the record right. There is a misconception about whether the agency is pursuing people who are not paying maintenance. We are certainly not pursuing only those who are already paying some. In a clear majority of all the cases that have been taken on so far, the absent parent is not paying a penny of regular maintenance and has not even agreed in principle to do so. In 96 per cent. of all cases so far, the child and the mother are living on benefit, yet the vast majority of absent fathers and any new family they may have are living significantly above that level, even after making any maintenance payment.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Secretary of Stae accept that if young unmarried mothers apply for a paternity suit in court the Child Support Agency holds up the process?

Mr. Lilley: I should like to receive evidence of particular cases. That is certainly not necessarily the case.

There is a third misconception. We are enjoying more success in tracking down absent fathers—men who have disappeared, leaving no address and making no contact. Indeed, the agency has been more successful than most people expected in tracing such people through national insurance numbers and information from Inland Revenue records. Indeed, in 90 per cent. of cases that we have

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pursued so far—15,000 cases, in which there was absolutely no indication of where the fathers had gone—we have managed to track down the individuals.

Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my right hon. Friend have discussions with the Treasury about the ex-husband who creates a one-man company or a sole-trader organisation, thereby pushing the weekly expenses of his household above the line for accounting purposes, reducing the assessable income and depriving the former wife of support for her children?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend raised that matter in an Adjournment debate, and it is still being considered by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. It is always difficult to ensure that one has a proper income assessment in the case of a sole trader, but we have to do our best in the interests of fairness.

There is a final misconception. It is that child support officers are paid a bonus related to the amount of money they secure from absent parents. Let me put the myth to rest. That is not true. Agency staff receive an element of performance-related pay in exactly the same way as do all other civil servants. That means that they are assessed by their line manager every year as to accuracy, adjudication, clearance times and service to customers. They are not assessed on the basis of how much money they have collected. There is no element of bounty-hunting. I hope that I have put the myth to rest.

But even without those misapprehensions, there have been genuine concerns about the impact of the system. I decided that the best way to address the concerns and ease the position was not to elaborate the formula to accommodate specific concerns but to try to leave parents with more of their own money with which to cope with specific needs. The Select Committee reached the same conclusion.

I have sought to tailor the easements that we are able to make to remove some of the roughest edges of the formula and to respond to some of the main areas in which there is a feeling of injustice with which one could sympathise. But it seemed that demands often fell too abruptly—particularly where people had second families and an existing maintenance agreement, which they expected, rightly or wrongly, to continue for the foreseeable future.

So we have extended to all such families a phase-in period of up to 18 months. On a preliminary estimate, that should help a many as 100,000 absent parents over the next three years. Letters will go out this week and next to all those who have already received assessments and may benefit from that phase-in, telling them how they should apply for it.

We have made three other permanent changes to the formula. They should help to reduce maintenance costs for 40 per cent. of absent parents who have so far received a maintenance assessment.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one problem of perception is that, so far, we are seeing only cases where the women concerned are still on benefit and therefore see no direct result of the fact that the fathers of their children are paying an enhanced contribution for their responsibilities? We may come to a time when women who are not on benefit but on the borderline find that their maintenance is increased. If we are not careful, we may then find that many people come to our surgeries asking why we are campaigning to reduce a formula that could have made all the difference to them and their children. If the change had been made in tandem with the benefit of hindsight, it might have been a different story.

Mr. Lilley: Already, many women on benefit value and look forward to receiving their maintenance. It may lift them off dependency directly; if not, it provides them with stilts with which to walk away from benefit, because it is a portable benefit which they carry with them into work. That is extremely important.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I shall come to that issue later, so hon. Members who wish to make points on it can do so then.

Mr. Frank Field (Berkenhead): Although it is important to think about how the reform will help hundreds of thousands of mothers in the long term, when their children are older and they can get work, the House and particularly the Secretary of State must deal with the short term. What the reform lacks is supporters.

When we discussed in the House the specific proposal which the Secretary of State has mentioned, I argued against mothers on benefit being able to keep any of the money. I said that it would lessen the incentive to return to work, it was unfair on those whose children's fathers could not be traced, and so on. My hon. Friends the Members for Eccles (Miss Lestor) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) argued against me.

The Government must accept the fact that most of the assessment forms to the millions of people affected have yet to be sent out. In the meantime, we must build up support for this reform in the country. The best way to do that would be to see whether mothers on benefit should keep a small part of the money paid. We must accept the fact that taxpayers have, primarily, been footing the bill, sometimes when they should not have been. We must be pragmatic about the matter. We shall be overwhelmed by fathers coming in to our surgeries. It will not be those who have never paid, because they will be too ashamed to turn up. It will be those who are paying and feel that they are getting a rough deal.

Against that, we must build up a band of people who can see the value of this Act. My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles was right from the word go and I was wrong. We should now seriously consider making that change.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman has admitted to changing his mind. I am afraid that he has not convinced me that I should do so, and I shall explain why. Many people already know that they are benefiting from this system. Although they have not been vocal, my fear is that, once they realise that the changes that we are making will reduce correspondingly their entitlement to maintenance just as it reduces the maintenance obligation of the absent father, they will become more vocal. There will then be a redressment in the public's perception of the matter.

That is already beginning to show in newspaper correspondence columns. A letter in the *Today* newspaper said:

"I have even experienced my ex-husband saying on TV how unfair the system is to him and his new wife. The maintenance he pays for this two teenage sons is only fractionally more than the hire purchase repayments on his new hi-fi equipment."

The woman values that maintenance because she is on income support.

Mr. Dewar: This is an important aspect. Will the Secretary of State consider the statistic that he gave? Although it will change to an extent, he said that 96 per cent. of parents with care are currently on income support. That will not change dramatically because we know that 70 per cent. of lone parents are on income support. There is a strong case for saying that we do not want to unbalance the argument by listening only to the absent parent lobby, but it would help the majority of people in the system—parents with care—if we included a modest disregard. For many absent parents, it would also give more point to the process of paying if they knew that some benefit would go to the families in whose name the system was introduced.

Mr. Lilley: The 96 per cent. includes some mothers and parents with care who are on family credit rather than income support. There, a disregard exists because it acts as an incentive to work. It has the perverse effect of a disregard given to those on income support, as well as substantially reducing the benefits to the other beneficiaries from the system, whose interests should not be ignored —the taxpayers. They may be bringing up their families on incomes far less than those whose second families they are contributing to through the tax system.

After phasing in, my next priority was to ensure that people on modest income should not feel that it was barely worth their while working once they had paid maintenance. That is why I have sharply increased the level of protected income. We have quadrupled the margin above income support level at which the floor is set. That means an extra £22 a week for many absent parents. We are allowing them to keep 15 per cent. of income above that level before paying maintenance. That goes beyond anything requested in the Select Committee's report.

At the other end of the spectrum, I was concerned about some of the large maintenance payments sometimes demanded. Those can come about only as a result of the additional payment element. That is the share of assessable income over and above what is necessary and sufficient to pay enough maintenance to lift the child off income support. I am reducing that from a flat rate of 25p in the pound to just 15p in the pound for people with only one previous child; 20p if they have two; and 25p for those with three or more.

The other major change is the reduction in the carer's cost once the youngest child reaches secondary school age. It will be reduced by a quarter at the age of 11; by half at the age of 14; and it disappears entirely at the age of 16. That could help 130,000 absent parents a year, and every absent parent will benefit in due course as his or her children get older.

Some people have said that the basic £44 a week carer element is too high when the children are very young. But when we offer a £40 disregard in family credit for the cost of looking after chidren, the same people say that the amount is far too low. They cannot have it both ways. It costs money to look after children and someone must pay for it. In the first instance, it should be the parents concerned.

I have included two other changes in the package. Henceforth, we shall include the entire cost of endowment mortgages up to £60,000, rather than trying to extract the with-profits element, which many people resented and which was also an administrative hassle that slowed up the process of assessment. We are also remitting the collection fee where the agency does not collect money it is paid direct.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): One of the more tragic aspects of this legislation is the fact that families are now arguing whereas previously they did not argue, which is causing many problems for children. Moreover, families are arguing and children are suffering as a result.

Another effect is this. I have talked to contract construction workers in my constituency. They talk about going on the black economy. We do not like that. We oppose it and do not want it to happen. Others talk about emigrating. Were all those factors considered when the legislation was introduced? If the overall impact at the end of the day is that families further deteriorate, surely there must come a point where Ministers begin to consider the whole legislation, and whether in principle it should be retained.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman, who is an assiduous legislator, for which I give him credit, will have to tell us whether he considered any of those matters when the Bill was proceeding through the House. As to the black economy, he may be interested to know that, since the legislation was introduced, early evidence suggests that one of the successful consequences is that a number of people who were claiming income support withdrew their claim for it once their case was taken up by the agency and maintenance sought for them. One must assume that some were perhaps living with the alleged absent father—we call such cases collusive desertion—were living with someone else or were working and claiming at the same time. It is a benefit that such cases have been exposed. There are fewer of them now.

The overall impact of the changes is far more significant than many people realise. No one has yet experienced that benefit, but large numbers will soon experience a welcome reduction in their maintenance obligation. Let me give an example of how it will help in one or two specific cases. Take a father who is on £15,000 a year gross income, which works out at about £200 a week net after he has paid tax, national insurance contributions and half his pension contribution.

Suppose that he has one 12-year-old child by his former marriage, to whom he was paying £5 under a court order. He has remarried, and has a stepchild and a child of his own. Under the CSA rules prior to the changes, he would ultimately have had to pay £39 a week. Now, because of the changes that we have made, his maximum payment will be just £18 a week. So the new regulations will save him £21 a week.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will the Secretary of State give way on a relevant point?

Mr. Lilley: I should like to finish this point.

If the same parent had twice the income—net weekly earnings of £400, or about £30,000 a year gross—and a £20 court order, he would have had to pay up to £111 a week before the changes. He will now benefit from phasing in and pay just £40 in the first six months, rising in £20 steps to a maximum of £87—a saving of nearly £24 a week. The agency is starting to implement those changes now. Last weekend it began the computer scan of all

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existing cases. Tens of thousands of people will receive lower assessments as a result of the formula changes in the next few days. In addition, those who may benefit from phasing will receive a letter shortly about the new arrangements. I believe that there will be a significant shift in the atmosphere as the changes filter through.

I shall now deal with the specific proposals of the hon. Member for Garscadden. He called particularly for a discretionary appeal mechanism. That was considered as the original proposals went through Parliament. I believe that the Select Committee considered it, too. It decided against, because it would lead us back to precisely the problems that we experienced before under a discretionary system.

Of course, we have given parents the right to opt for a second tier review, by another officer, to ensure that their case has been properly handled. But that officer does not have discretion to override the formula. The trouble is that if anybody—be it a court or administrator—is given the discretion to transfer the cost of child maintenance to the taxpayer, people will increasingly resort to that. That is what happened under the court-based system. Any open-ended review will amount to a return to the system that clearly failed us as a whole.

The list of items that can be given priority over the parents' duty to their children will be progressively lengthened. I recall a case that was in the newspapers a little while ago of a lady whose case was taken under the court system. The court gave priority over the cost of maintaining the children that she was looking after—those of her former husband—and gave precedence to the cost of his holiday in Bermuda and the cost of his pet food. I believe that children are more important. Indeed, they are the top priority.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsorth) *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I shall make a little more progress, as I have been rather slow.

New Zealand has allowed appeal to the court to override the formula—albeit on what they thought would be restricted grounds. Huge numbers have resorted to it. The courts have been swamped, and the system seems to have become unworkable and is having to be reviewed. The hon. Member for Garscadden holds up the Australian system as a model. That is very far from allowing a review body discretion to override the formula in the light of circumstances that the rules might not have foreseen.

On the contrary, the Australian system allows adjustments in only a few highly specific and foreseen circumstances. Indeed, the Australian Government have made it clear that the whole purpose is to limit the use of discretion and to uphold the integrity of the formula.

In a recent report that they gave to their Select Committee, the Australian Government said:

"The child support legislation provides certain specified grounds for departure from formula assessment. These grounds are based on certain costs and are deliberately and closely prescribed. This is to ensure that the integrity of the formula is preserved and that there is not a reversion to a highly discretionary process for determining child support amounts based on the views and values of an individual judge, or an individual child support officer. That is important in protecing fiscal savings and the taxpayers' interests."

Mr. Heald: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the system and the formula in Australia is far cruder than the system in this country, and that one of the reasons why they have a right of appeal is to deal with that problem? In this country we have a much more sophisticated approach through the CSA.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The formula in Australia is based on the gross income of two years ago. It makes no specific allownace for tax, national insurance, pension or housing costs. Nor does it set a floor of protected income for second families, let alone stepchildren. The main task of the Australian system of overrides is to adapt their formula to take account of many of the features that are automatically assessed by our formula. Their overrides can be more limited than what we provide for automatically.

For example, in Australia, an absent parent will have to ask to have his child support reduced to take account of his housing costs. He may well not succeed. We provide automatically for housing costs in our formula. Nor does the Australian system allow any appeal for travel-to-work costs, any more than ours does.

Another factor that the hon. Member for Garscadden failed to mention about the Australian system is that, on balance, it increases the burden on absent parents, raising maintenance awarded to the mother with care. Fewer than half of fathers' appeals are upheld, but nearly 90 per cent. of mothers' appeals are granted. Moreover, reductions in maintenance costs awarded to absent fathers result in only a £5 a week diminution. Yet increases awarded to the mother average three times as much.

It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to say that he wants an appeal system, but would strictly limit the grounds of entry. He thereby holds out to everybody the hope that their special circumstances would be taken into account. Yet in his fine print he admits that most would be excluded. Until he is forthcoming about the grounds on which the formula could be overridden, he is trying to sell us a pig in a poke.

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Australian system is not retrospective? That question goes to the root of most of the problems that we encounter in our surgeries.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is quite right, and the Opposition have no proposals to change the current arrangements in that regard.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Few hon. Members want an open-ended appeal system; but we have all encountered several cases that no formula would fit. People on both sides of such cases are unhappy, and they desperately need to be catered for. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that such difficult cases will be dealt with sympathetically? Will he also assure me—I know that such an assurance has already been given, but it is worth asking for it again—that the entire process will be kept under review continually? The current system has been operating for only six months; it will take a long time for it to settle down, and for the rough edges to be smoothed.

Mr. Lilley: I hope very much that many of the cases that have caused us most concern will benefit from the changes. I repeat that we will keep the system under review, and examine cases brought to us by hon. Members to ensure that we have got it right.

Mr. Enright: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lilley: I have given way a few times already; this is not Question Time.

The hon. Member for Garscadden mentioned the clean break principle. He rightly reaffirmed that there cannot be, never has been and should not be a clean break between parents and children: the courts have never accepted that, and the Crozier case confirmed the point. It was stated at the time of that case that, precisely because it had always been possible for both parents and the Department of Social Security to seek changes in maintenance orders, no fundamental change had been made in that respect; the only alteration had been in the mechanism whereby maintenance assessments were updated, in connection with recipients on income support.

The asessment relating to the applicant in the Crozier case, in fact, had been increased as a result of a DSS application under the old system. It happened then, and it can happen now. *[Interruption.]* The statement did not apply solely to that case; its import was that, because the possibility existed, the position was as the judge decided it had to be.

The hon. Member for Garscadden suggested that we should adopt the Australian system, because it would allow a reduction of up to 25 per cent. in maintenance assessments to take account of the impact of property transfers between husband and wife as part of a clean break settlement. Under our system, it is possible to secure a larger reduction: if an absent father earning, say £20,000 a year transfers his £40,000 equity in the jointly owned house, and must therefore take out a further £40,000 mortgage to house himself subsequently, our formula—taking account of the effect on his housing costs—may reduce his maintenance assessment by more than 25 per cent. I agree with the findings of the Select Committee, which specifically stated that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State was right: our formula could not take account of the impact clean break settlements in a better way.

I have already dealt, essentially, with the hon. Gentleman's proposal for a disregard. According to him, a £10-a-week disregard would cost the taxpayer £340 million. Every penny would come from the taxpayer, and not a penny would go towards helping the absent parents who are responsible for the problems that we now encounter in our surgeries; perversely, such a move would create an incentive for parents to split up by increasing the amount that they would receive as a result of such action, relative to the amount received by parents who stayed together, and would also create a disincentive to work.

Maintenance is valuable to mothers: even when it does not directly remove their dependence on benefit, it provides them with the stepping stone back to work that many of them want. We have responded rapidly to problems that the whole House has recognised, having considered the well-thought-out proposals of the Select Committee. I believe that the impact of the changes that we have made will be far greater than many hon. Members perceive; but we need to let those changes take effect. We must be careful to ensure that we do not empty our surgeries of angry absent fathers, and fill them with angry mothers who have been left to care for their children.

We have shown our willingness to respond to problems. We will fulfil the promise that the Prime Minister and I have made and will continue to keep the system under close review. I believe, however, that the changes should be allowed to bed down. We will keep the system under review, having given a gauge of our good intentions and our willingness to respond when difficulties emerge. I hope that the House will take this opportunity to reaffirm its support for the underlying principles of an Act that passed through the House unopposed, and—I believe—retains the support of the majority of British people.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Hon. Members will be aware that the 10-minute rule is now operating. I urge them to speak even more concisely, to earn the gratitude of others.

7 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): Of course I accept the underlying principles of the Child Support Act 1991; but Liberal Democrats welcome the chance to debate the issue again, especially in view of the Minister of State's wholly inadequate response last week.

Like many other hon. Members, since last summer I have received what has seemed to be a never-ending stream of visitors to my weekly surgeries—people complaining of the workings of the Child Support Agency. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux regards 1,000 evidence forms a year on any one subject as a sign that something is pretty seriously wrong; on this subject, it received 290 evidence forms in October, and 430 in November. That suggests that something is indeed seriously wrong, and that the Act requires a fundamental review.

Mr. Heald: During last week's debate on the new regulations, the Liberal Democrat spokesman said that his party would support the Government. When it came to the vote, that did not happen. What is the party's position today? What changes should be made? Tell us.

Mr. Jones: I shall come to that later. As for my party's reason for opposing the Government, the Minister of State had given a totally inadequate response: when asked about the future, he did not reply, so we decided to register our protest.

The spell-checker on my word processor rejects the initials "CSA", suggesting an alternative. It must be American, because its proposed alternative is "CIA". Some of those affected by the workings of the Child Support Agency have thought up some interesting names of their own, including some not very polite ones—for instance, "Complete Shambles Agency" and one that I particularly deplore, "Lilley's Gestapo".

When the issue was first debated in 1991, my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said that he considered the concept that parents should be responsible for their children's maintenance "entirely unexceptionable". That is still the case; we support the principles behind the Act. My hon. Friend, however, was worried by the possibility that the DSS had adopted what he described as a "somewhat knee-jerk approach", pointing out:

> "Civil servants will always look for a quick administrative fix, but in doing so they may create difficulties for the child support officers for which the Bill provides".—[*Official Report*, 4 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 211.]

How right he was. It is symptomatic of recent legislation that we are constantly debating, and the Government are

[Mr. Jones]

constantly amending legislation that was enacted only in the past few years, or, in the case of the Child Support Act, the past few months.

Much of the debate on the Child Support Act in the House and outside has focused on the problems of fathers faced with high demands for maintenance.

There is a fundamental problem with the modern Conservative party: it underrates the amount that people can pay in taxation, and overrates with equal consistency the amount that people can afford out of the other pocket, which is labelled private.

The alleged Labour tax bombshell in the 1992 general election was £1,250 a year. My noble Friend Earl Russell has an interesting formula: when he hears of someone's maintenance assessment being increased by £2,800 a year, he says that his assessment has been increased by 2·3 bombshells. When the Leader of the Opposition was shadow Chancellor, had he proposed to increase people's taxes by £2,800 a year, the Conservative party would have gone apoplectic and used the term "tax holocaust".

At the last general election, the Liberal Democrats proposed increasing tax by 1p to pay for better education. One of my constituents has had his maintenance increased to 150 per cent. of his income tax. I cannot imagine what Conservative Central Office would have said if the Liberal Democrats had proposed a tax rate of 37·5 per cent.

The amounts being demanded by the Child Support Agency will have to come down. No one should be expected to pay more maintenance than income tax. There are many worthy causes for complaint and we have heard some examples today, but we cannot escape the fact that having families is an expensive business. I have three demanding children so I know about that. Maintaining two families is even more expensive. Because of or perhaps despite that, the difficult obligations of fathers must not become more important than the rights of children. We must not lose sight of the fact that children must come first.

The Government must act once and for all to bring about a fundamental review to clear up the problems surrounding the Child Support Agency. They must make clear tonight exactly what they plan to do. Shilly-shallying and saying that they plan to keep it closely under review are just weasel words. Too many families are suffering.

Last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire warned that the Government risk losing all-party support not for the fundamental principles of the Act but for the operation of the Act if they refuse to take prompt action. The Liberal Democrats are one step away from calling for the Act to be scrapped and for a fresh start.

The Government can save money in other ways. They should make a serious attempt to help marriages survive. It is a staggering fact that at some time in their lives, 50 per cent. of children under 16 will live in a home without both biological parents.

Last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, in one of the bluntest speeches I have ever heard from him—he is normally a mild-mannered man of the Clark Kent newspaper reporter variety—said that there would have to be a properly funded conciliation service. Organisations such as Relate are scratching around for money to provide counsellors for those whose relationships are in difficulty.

Proper child care services and nursery education might help to save marriages and remove the need for the CSA to step in. Research in the United States shows that every dollar spent on nursery education is worth seven dollars later.

The Social Security Select Committee has already suggested several changes to the Act and the Government have implemented 3·5 out of 13. The Government must allow greater flexibility in the formula. It is simply not possible to put people in the straitjacket of a formula and expect the right results every time. We are dealing with human beings, and all individuals are different. We have all heard of ludicrous demands being made on absent parents who do not have sufficient disposable income.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No. I have given way before and as there is a 10-minute limit on speeches, I shall not give way again.

Absent parents who have made a commitment to their children in non-pecuniary ways, risk losing touch with their children because the cost of travel is not taken into account.

What will happen to the clean break settlements entered into in good faith by both parties. Since the Child Support Act, clean break settlements are effectively dead, yet when relationships break down, it is often in the interests of children that they can remain in the same home and school and keep the same friends. The Government should compare the system with that in Australia.

What about travel-to-work costs? Surely the formula has to include an assessment of disposable not gross income. Travel-to-work costs bite deeply into people's available income. The Government must make a choice either to treat as allowable expenses certain activities they do not wish to stop—and I suggest that they should encourage people to go to work—or they must accept that some people will give up such activities.

Each case is different and the effect on second partners cannot be overstated. There is bound to be animosity between first and subsequent partners. Why does not the Department of Social Security talk to the Inland Revenue? It would be another way of saving money. Most of the information about the income and outgoings of a household is held by the Inland Revenue and computers are clever enough to avoid the unnecessary duplication of form filling demanded by the CSA. Why should taxpayers pay for the CSA to investigate absent parents who are on income support?

The Child Support Act was and remains right in principle, but it is turning out to be a disaster in practice. Tonight the Minister must promise fundamental reform, or he will damage families and children alike. I know of a six-year-old child in my constituency——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.11 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Like the majority of my parliamentary colleagues who were Members of Parliament in 1991, I supported the legislation. We all knew about unfortunate cases involving women who were desperate because they could get no satisfaction or payment of maintenance through existing court procedures. They were unhappy about the previous arrangements, and understandably so. As a consequence

the Government were right to introduce measures designed to correct a social injustice about which we all agree, irrespective of where we sit in the Chamber.

I accept the principles underlying the new system. Both parents should be responsible for maintaining their children and the state should be involved only when parents do not have the means to support those children. Having supported the legislation and the creation of the Child Support Agency, I am disappointed by the adverse practical effects.

All Members of Parliament receive scores of representations—*[Interruption.]* Some of my hon. Friends say, "No." I can speak only for the south-west. During the past six months, the volume of representations to me has been almost as high as those on animal welfare. That may not be significant outside, but it certainly is among my parliamentary colleagues.

There is no doubt that people are anxious and annoyed. To be as fair and objective as possible, I should add that, although the majority of those representations come from constituents who feel aggrieved at the new financial arrangements, they are not alone. I have also received complaints from single mothers about the response, or the lack of response, from the CSA in chasing up errant fathers. That is the very set of circumstances that we were led to believe, when the legislation passed through the House in 1991, would be the prime target of the CSA.

It is also relevant, on the basis of my constituency experience, that some of the alleged errant fathers are employed by organisations such as Her Majesty's armed forces, so the CSA should have no problems associated with identification and location in those situations.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hicks: No; I have only 10 minutes.

It would be fair to conclude that far too many people feel aggrieved. What is more—I have to agree with the sentiments that were expressed by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar)—regrettably, people are experiencing an increasing loss of confidence in the operation of the CSA as a result of the way in which it has treated people whom all of us would regard as responsible and mature members of society.

Ministers must accept that the majority of complaints that I have received are genuine ones from individuals who not only pay their first wives on the basis of a court decision or mutually agreed private arrangement, but are attempting, in many instances, to establish a second relationship—a new life—with a second wife. Many of them have children of that second union. Of course, many of them, when breaking up with their first wife or partner, agreed a clean break solution, or what was perceived to be a clean break solution, between partners. We recognise, attempting to be objective about that situation, that there was always recourse to the courts in respect of the level of child maintenance payments.

The sad fact is that in certain instances the second permanent relationship, which may include children of that union, is placed in jeopardy, not only in financial terms but in personal terms.

Mrs. Gorman *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hicks: My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) says from a sedentary position that that is not true. If she sits with me next Saturday week in my surgery in Callington, she will have tangible evidence to the contrary.

The danger to the second relationship must be avoided. I believe, therefore—to return to the sentiments of the hon. Member for Garscadden—that it is incumbent on all hon. Members, since we are all in this together, to find a satisfactory way forward.

How do we do that? First, we should change the formula for assessing child maintenance levels. Whatever may have been said by Ministers hitherto, it is evident to me that in its application it is too rigid and restrictive. The protected income element should be widened in some way. It should be remembered that in many instances the previous settlement was acceptable to both parents. We have all been told about the situation in which basic household costs—items such as travel-to-work costs and certain arrears and debts—are not included in the present assessment. There is therefore a strong case for extending the application of the assessment formula by including other regular financial commitments.

Secondly, in order to restore confidence in the whole system—whatever Ministers may say tonight—the Government's amendment says that they will continue to monitor the situation carefully; they must not dismiss now all possibilities for amending the existing arrangements, whether it be widening the formula or considering the question of some reference or appeal procedure. I hope that, when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State winds up, he will confirm that that is the Government's intention.

We must not rule out the possibility of introducing some type of review procedure. Any review officer, in my judgment, would also have to have some powers of discretion to bring a more human and sensitive dimenstion to the existing formula. Whatever may be said by some of my Conservative colleagues, in my judgment the present system is too mechanistic. I look to the Minister to introduce at some stage modifications that bring a greater sensitivity and understanding to what are delicate, and often sad, human situations.

7.20 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I wish to reflect the indignation, resentment and anger of many of my constituents at the Child Support Agency adn the legislation that begat it. One could mention many arguments, but in 10 minutes they could not all be included, so I will mention merely a few.

First, the fathers who have come to my surgeries and whom I have also met at meetings are not absent fathers. They resent being described as "absent fathers". They have legal access to their children. They exercise their rights of access; they love their children; they pay their maintenance payments, whether they are voluntary or court-imposed agreements; they take their children out, usually at weekends; they buy them presents and clothes; and they try to do their best, in difficult circumstances, for their children.

It may seem an insignificant point, but I hope that Ministers will stop referring to my constituents—the people I have met—as "absent fathers". They are not absent fathers. They try to look after their children. Let us

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

not draw any moral conclusions as to the reasons why there are two families. We have learnt enough about that during the past few weeks not to moralise on those matters.

Secondly, this is not a men versus women issue, as a writer in *The Guardian* tried to imply the other day—*The Guardian*, as we know, is out of touch about those matters. Most of the men who visit me are accompanied by their second wife. Most of the meetings that I have attended have been represented almost 50:50 by men and women. The second wife is often deeply resentful because she is a human being and a person in her own right.

As a result of the patterns of employment in the country, often she not only works but also earns more money than her husband. In constituencies such as mine, many are professional women. They therefore resent being hounded, as they see it, by the Child Support Agency. They also resent finding that up to one third of their income can be taken into account in making the assessment.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): The Secretary of State quoted the example of a man with an income of £15,000 who would be helped by the changes in the review. However, if he had a new wife who had part-time earnings of £60 a week, he would be no better off.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I must continue. I have only 10 minutes.

Such women resent the fact that apparently up to one third of their income can be taken into account and, in effect, aggregated. They have been brought up under successive Conservative Chancellors who, in the taxation system, have made it clear that women should be taxed independently; that there should be disaggregation of income.

They understand their income as being their own, yet they find now that their income, or some of it, has to be taken into account. They resent the intrusion into their privacy when the Child Support Agency asks them for their income.

Several Hon. Members *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davies: It is no good Conservative Members shaking their heads. If they will not give their income, a deemed income is estimated in order to get to the one third. Those are independent women, who work for their family and who resent the intrusion into their privacy that the legislation imposes on them.

My third worry is the element of retrospection. I am old-fashioned and I remember debates in the House when all parties agonised over retrospective legislation, not only in the case of the liberty of the subject but in property arrangements, taxation and other spheres. The modern Conservative party has thrown the rule of law out of the window. Such issues are no longer matters of concern to modern Conservatives. It is extraordinary that I should have to remind Conservative Ministers that retrospective legislation that overthrows property arrangements and agreements is apparently acceptable.

Proudhon would have been proud of the Secretary of State, who is apparently a right-wing Member of the Government. He understands property matters, but he stood at the Dispatch Box to defend retrospective legislation that overturns not only private property arrangements but arrangements imposed by and pronounced in a court of law.

One of my constituents understands the situation very well. He told me that, at the end of the day, he did not mind having to pay what a judge told him to pay. He had been to court and sat through an inquiry which cost him £4,000. It was a traumatic experience for him and his ex-wife, but the judge pronounced. He resented the fact that a civil servant, in accordance with a mere formula, could overturn the arrangement and tell him what he should pay.

Does the Secretary of State know of any other administrative agency that transfers money from one private citizen to another?

Mr. David Shaw: The Inland Revenue.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman has been making stupid comments from a sedentary position for a while, and he is getting even more stupid. The Inland Revenue does not transfer money from one private citizen to another; it transfers money to an individual or takes money from an individual.

I repeat my question: do the Secretary of State or the Minister know of any administrative agency—not a court of law—that orders one private citizen to transfer his money to another private citizen?

Mr. Burt *rose*——

Mr. Shaw: I have only 10 minutes. I am sure that the Minister will get a note from a civil servant; he can reply then.

The Government have imposed a monster——

Mr. Burt *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I am not giving way.

Mr. Burt *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I am not giving way. The Minister of State will have half an hour in which to wind up the debate but I have only 10 minutes.

Mr. Burt: I am not a Minister of State.

Mr. Davies: No, and I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman ever will be, after today's debate.

Fourthly, I deal with travel to work, which is not a problem only in the south-east. A constituent of mine who is a lorry driver came to see me. At 4 am every day, he has to drive to a lorry park to pick up his lorry. His travel-to-work costs are 50 per cent. of his net take-home pay. There is no way he can afford what he is supposed to pay under the new child support arrangements, and pay to get to work to earn the money in the first place. It is ridiculous to suggest that the problem applies only to the south-east.

The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), who mentioned the Inland Revenue, is knowledgeable about tax matters. If an individual can prove that his expenditure is fully justified, I do not understand why it cannot be allowed against his assessment, as happens with the Inland Revenue's calculations.

I end by referring again to my constituent, who resented being told by civil servants how much he would have to pay. He is not a professional person, but an ordinary working man. He queried whether the system—the

intrusion on his privacy, the overthrowing of arrangements, the spying on people, the overturning of court agreements and the lack of an appeal or hearing—were very British. I am sorry but I had to say that, after 14 years of arrogant government under the Tories, it seems to have become a very British system. It is a system that flies in the face of the rule of law.

Mr. Heald: The Opposition voted for it.

Mr. Davies: But the Conservative party is the party of government, and it has to do something about it.

If the Secretary of State thinks that this issue will go away, he is making a big mistake. The system is fundamentally flawed and will have to be changed. If it is not, it will probably bring down the Government and the Tory party.

7.34 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): The Child Support Act 1991 has benefited some people—for example, lone mothers whose male partners have not supported them in the past, but have deserted them and been traced, and are now being made to pay proper maintenance for their child or children. However, for others the Act has become a bureaucratic nightmare, with which hon. Members, legal advisers and others are unable to deal. Unless something is done, I fear that the beneficial aspects of the Act will be far outweighed by the hardship that it is inducing in many people.

Legal advisers are telling their clients that they cannot understand the elaborate formulae that have been devised. They can tell them, however, that there is no appeal against the CSA's findings—only a review conducted by the very civil servants who made the assessment in the first place. It is not in accordance with natural justice that the assessment of child maintenance should be completely removed from the courts and applied by civil servants in accordance with ever-changing rules. Nor does it seem fair that CSA decisions can be retrospective.

I am aware that the clean break settlements between the parties can never be clean breaks for the children. I am also aware that too many fathers were leaving their children dependent on income support. I do not resile from that. However, when civilised arrangements have been made between parties to a former marriage, often sanctioned by the courts, it is wrong and unfair that those arrangements should be wholly ignored when calculating what is proper for a parent to pay for the maintenance of a child.

Civil servants now substitute their judgments for those of the parties and the courts—not for future cases, which would be understandable, but for past cases, in which parties have lived for many years under the arrangements. Those arrangements have been made within the law and often have the sanction of the law.

I have had to deal with many cases relating to the CSA. There have been many such cases in my constituency, but perhaps not so many in the constituencies of colleagues who are happier with the way in which the Act is working. No one has questioned the need for the Act, but, in every case with which I have dealt, the couple—it is usually a couple, not only a father—have said that the pendulum has swung too far against so-called absent fathers, and that there is very little fairness in the way the system operates.

As the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said, it is often unfair to describe these fathers as "absent" fathers. They try to maintain close relationships with their children, but those relationships are being made more difficult by the demands of the CSA.

I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) to accept that we have to allow second families to live decently. It is not only the children of first marriages whom we must look after—second families must live decently, too. We must be more compassionate in calculating a father's protected income.

These days, the mobility of labour means that travel-to-work costs must be taken into account. Certainly in my constituency it is often difficult to find work without travelling away from home. Travel-to-work costs, the costs of travelling to see one's children who are often in distant parts, the insurance on a second home, the council tax and water rates are all essentials in a second marriage. They are not luxuries. Because the assessment is so high, many parents also believe that the costs even of employing a child minder should be taken into account as essential.

I have been dismayed to be told by fathers about the way in which they have been treated by the CSA. They have reported indifference, rudeness and smart alick answers. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that civil servants are encouraged to show more humanity than they have hitherto shown to many of my constituents? Unless we tackle the way in which people are dealt with, we shall have produced a system that is inhumane and builds up resentment, which will not be easily forgotten. It is often the decent parent who is penalised under the regulations. Violent partners often escape, as women whose former partners were violent are not obliged to name them.

Parents have said that the Child Support Act 1991 is squeezing them, even when they have usually done everything to maintain their financial and emotional links with their children. The result is an enormous strain on second marriages. I urge hon. Members and the Minister not to be blind to the unacceptable pressure that swingeing, unfair demands place on second marriages. Taking any of the second wife's income into account penalises someone with no responsibility for the children of the first marriage.

I support the Government's proper concern for the children of the first marriage, but I doubt their lack of obvious care and compassion for the effects on children of the second marriage. I am anxious that my right hon. Friend should be aware of that. We can all accept the broad aims of the Act—there has been little dispute about that across the Chamber—but it will not save money for the taxpayer if its operation breaks second unions and encourages fathers to give up their work and their family responsibilities.

Many of those who have been to see me say that that is what they will probably have to do—and that is not an empty threat. We must not create clear financial advantages for people to be feckless and unemployed, and stay single rather than marry, if there are children from a first marriage.

I support the ideas and aims of the Act, but my charge relates to its unfairness, unpredictability, retrospection and lack of an appeal mechanism. Another serious charge is that it may discourage many men from marrying for a second time, and thus increase the number of never-married single parents. I urge my right hon. Friend to give greater thought to many of those implications, and to do so soon.

7.43 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): The Act imposes punitive assessments on non-resident parents and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, resolutely refrains from passing on any maintenance to the parent with care. It causes turbulence in the lives of countless children of first and second families. Families who have come through bitter times to reach an uneasy peace are thrown back into the melting pot, causing turbulence.

If the Act were really about children, first and foremost it would consider the roof over the head of the child. The Act does no such thing; it endangers the roof over the head of the child. The Minister cast much scorn on clean break settlements, but they were proposed and, indeed, encouraged by courts and by the Government in 1984 to preserve homes. That was a worthy objective.

The Secretary of State said that that objective was still taken into account because the parent's next mortgage would be taken into account. But not all non-resident parents have another mortgage. Some of them rent and some live with relations. The housing costs of those who live with relations are not even counted. The housing benefit of their relation, however, is deducted. The Government try to have it both ways.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) that the retrospective element should be removed. In the future, it should be possible to make a notional calculation of equivalent income if a capital settlement is made to preserve the children's home. That is particularly important in view of the ferocious attacks made on the housing rights of lone parents by the Government. Under the Act, children may lose their homes, but not even have the rights of homeless families.

The punitive assessments do not count travel-to-work costs. Much has been said by Conservative Members about that and I agree with their comments. There is one danger; I would not like the Secretary of State to say that arrangements will be made if the travel-to-work cost is very high, as it may be if one commutes many miles to and from London. Some travel-to-work costs may not seem high to hon. Members, but they will seem high to many of my constituents on low wages.

Travel-to-work costs of £10 a week are common and they take a big slice out of the wages of many of my constituents. Those costs should be exempt, whatever their level. I agree with the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) that council tax and water rates should also be exempt. If parents defined such expenses as non-essential and refused to pay them, the courts would soon have something to say about that. Council tax and water rates are clearly essential expenses.

There should be a right of appeal and it should be widespread. It is normal to have an appeal system that is open to everyone who has a complaint. That system should allow special circumstances to be taken into account—not everybody lives a straightforward life. Some people have the "temerity" to take on responsibility for aged relatives. Is the cost of looking after such relatives taken into account? No, it is not. The appeal system and some discretion would allow such expenses to be taken into account. There should be a recognition of other responsibilities, as well as the cost of parenting and access.

Parents with care can also be worse off. It is often said that the great advantage of the maintenance benefit over income support is that it can be continued after one finds a job. That theory is based on the assumption that there is a job to be found. The jobs of most women in my constituency pay low wages, which are getting lower as a result of Government policy. If those constituents claim family credit, they are allowed to keep the magnificent sum of £15; yet the absent or non-resident parent might be paying £100 a week. That is unsatisfactory. There should be a substantial disregard to provide an incentive and to put children first.

I tell the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State that, when the first statement was made on the proposal, I asked a critical question. My gut reaction was that nothing good would come of it. Unfortunately the Opposition were misled, because we actually believed the title of the White Paper—"Children Come First". In reality, children come last. Conservative Members talk about children as a burden on the taxpayer, which they want to transfer to parents. Only people such as they can think of children as a burden.

Last Wednesday one of the principles of the Act was enunciated by the Under-Secretary of State:

> "The principle that a natural child should have first call on a parent's income".

Just before that, he had said:

> "one of the principles of the Act was that parents should, as a priority, be responsible for their own natural children."—[*Official Report*, 2 February 1994; Vol. 236, c. 945.]

So if someone is trying to build a second family, in which there are stepchildren, and trying not to make the same mistakes that he made with his first family, that is just tough. The stepchildren are regarded as "unnatural" children. The Under-Secretary of State talked about "natural" childen and refused to take the cost of parenting stepchildren into account. The concept of deserving and undeserving children is disgusting; yet that is what the Conservative party is introducing into family life, and it will cause more family breakdowns.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli that this is not a matter of men against women. A woman spoke to me this week who has been driven to such despair that she is threatening suicide, because the Child Support Agency is threatening to deduct at source. She says that she will have no money left to live on. I have her budget here, and it is frugal in the extreme. That woman works six days a week and manages to bring home an income of £146 a week after tax and national insurance. She has been driven to threatening to commit suicide; she may not actually do that, but she will have a breakdown, and that will be a cost to the state. No wonder there is a big public sector deficit if that is the way affairs of state are managed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) talked about people being driven into a cul-de-sac, but it is worse than that; it is a trap, which is driving them to desperation—men, women and especially children. Children will see the disturbance and bitterness and they will feel responsible. Any calm that may have been achieved will be disturbed and if no calm has yet been achieved, the Act makes sure that it never will be. It is a disgraceful Act; indeed, its effect on family life makes it a wicked Act.

I speak as a Member of the House who believes in stable relationships and has a moral appreciation and a stable marriage. Conservative Members, with all their moralising, which is not in any way backed up by their personal

behaviour, are causing unlimited harm to countless children and other people who simply want to be able to live peaceful lives——

Mr. David Shaw: At the taxpayer's expense.

Mrs. Wise: There we hear it. There is the truth of it. They will not be able to sustain the tax cuts——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.53 pm

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): I thank Ministers and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar)—Ministers for the way in which they have looked after my constituency cases, and the hon. Member for Garscadden for having remained calm, sensible and reasonable.

There is no doubt in my mind that children should be the responsibility of their own parents. Everyone with whom I have spoken agrees with that—although I am not sure what the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) really believes. My speech will necessarily be brief, so people will have to read the rest of the debate and take the arguments about travel-to-work costs, absent fathers being consulted, and so on, from what other people have said.

There is a general acceptance of the Child Support Agency, but it cannot continue as it is. It must be continually reviewed, or it will ultimately damage the young women whom it is meant to help. Make no mistake; we must realise that there are thousands of women whom it can help. I went to a meeting about child support recently and before I set off a young lady rang me to say, "Don't let them bully you. There are a lot of us who are very glad that the Child Support Agency has turned up."

My three main concerns are flexibility, the clean break, and the mistakes that the CSA has made. The agency sometimes rolls on despite the wishes of the people likely to benefit from it. A lady in my constituency, whom I have known for some time and have helped with other problems, has two children by one marriage and now has another young child. She heard about family credit and applied for it by filling in the forms, but then she found that her former husband was immediately dunned by the CSA. The woman is appalled. She does not want to fall out with her former husband and is willing to give up the family credit. She and her new husband are willing to manage without it, but there is no retrospection and no unpicking the situation. The good relationship that the sons have with their father, who does not live with them any more but sees them every weekend, is now in jeopardy.

Flexibility must be the watchword of any new legislation and any changes that we make to it. But inflexibility is revealed in the following letter written by the CSA in Merseyside to a constituent of mine:

"Further to my telephone conversation today, I am writing to confirm the information that you requested:

(i) Payments that are made monthly, are made monthly in arrears.

(ii) I asked you to pay £335·75 today for your regular maintenance whilst I clarified the position regarding your arrears.

Also it appears that an error has been made by the Child Support Agency and that the information previously given was incorrect.

I am looking into this matter".

As a result, my constituent says that he is now £800 in arrears, and he is bitter. He wrote to me:

"I still find this very hard to believe that from the point of the CSA, that if things were left as originally planned, I would not be suffering with over £800 in arrears. So I have to suffer from somebody else's negligence. I await your comments".

I shall comment; I shall send him the *Official Report* of the debate, advise him to read it all and say that I have written to the Minister. As I have said, Ministers have been most courteous.

Finally, I shall deal with clean breaks. What are we to make of the following document from Keighley county court if it does not mean a clean break—not with the children but with the former wife—and that the money can be adjusted later? It is headed "By Consent", and continues by saying that one party is to get 75 per cent. and the other 25 per cent. of the goods and chattels when sold, and the house,

"upon the parties acknowledging that neither has any further claim in respect of the contents of the former matrimonial home."

Referring to the child of the family, the document also says that there will be

"periodical payments at the rate of £15·00 per week payable weekly until she shall atttain the age of 17 years . . . Upon compliance with Order 36 Rule 1 the Petitioner be at liberty to register the aforesaid periodical payments order in the appropriate Magistrates Court."

Finally, it says:

"This Order be in full and final satisfaction of all claims the parties hereto have against each other of a capital and/or income nature and the Petitioner's prayer in the Petition for periodical payments for herself be dismissed."

That is a clean break. Or at least, back in 1989 the recipients of that document would have thought that it was a clean break. I can understand that £15 a week. The rates set out in a typically good document from the Library state that payments are made of £15 for children aged under 11, £22 for ages 11 to 15, £26 for ages 16 to 17 and so on. I can understand why the periodic increases should be set by the Child Support Agency, but my constituent says that he has had a clean break from his wife, so he wonders why he should have to pay £44 a week to look after his children. I could continue, but I shall not.

I was appalled in the previous debate at the ways in which the Opposition sneered at my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) when she tried to convey women's point of view. It was a poor display from Opposition Members who have mostly been compassionate. The Government are rightly trying to correct many things which were wrong in the original Bill. Hon. Members have unanimously accepted those elements.

Without being partisan, I feel that there is growing feeling among young women and in the country that the male-dominated unions are urging the Opposition to push the Government to return support for the child from the natural father or the parents to the taxpayer. The union lads are feeling disgruntled. Many of the constituents whom I have met are rightly fed up with the rough justice. If that pressure grows from the male-dominated unions, it will rebound on the Opposition and on the House.

I shall finish as I began. Parents are responsible for their children. To make that possible, the CSA will have to be continually reviewed in a flexible manner in ways in which we have heard already. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his hon. Friends will continue along that path.

8.1 pm

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): The Secretary of State said that there are 1·3 million lone parents in the country and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that 70 per cent. of those are on income support. Of that figure, 53 per cent. are women who were married to the fathers of their children and who were separated or divorced and 32 per cent. were never married to the father. Considering those lone mothers, the fathers and the children together, one can see that the lives of a large percentage of the population will be affected by the Child Support Agency and by the Act. It was absolutely important that the Government got it right and, tragically, they got it so wrong.

The courts had a lot to answer for when they made maintenance assessments which were often low and which varied in different parts of the country. The system for pursuing defaulters was imperfect to say the least and there could have been a time lag if the father refused to appear in court. The system needed altering, but one important aspect that that system had in its favour was that the courts had discretion and they could assess all the valid factors when making a maintenance order.

The CSA has a rigid formula which has caused misery and fear and has wrecked relationships. The more people that it pursues, the more the turbulence, as my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) termed it, will increase. Groups throughout the country are mushrooming in opposition to the agency and the Act, which is unusual.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Gordon: I have only 10 minutes, so I shall not give way.

There is a clear divide in the House between Members who are worried about the enhancement of their electoral chances if the Government are not in a position to give another round of tax cuts and Members who think that the interests of children should come first. I am pleased to say that there are Members on both sides of the House who support the latter. The Act's purpose to facilitate tax cuts is clear because it has been said that only £1 in every £10 will go to the family and that the rest will go to the Treasury.

That tax-cutting angle is certainly clear when one takes into account the benefit penalty. I asked the Minister the other day if he would abolish that penalty. He answered that only 160 cases have been referred to the Benefits Agency for reduced benefit and that 20,500 cases where good cause was pleaded had been accepted. The Minister said that that was about 57 per cent. Therefore 43 per cent. of such cases have not been accepted.

Are they to be directed to suffer a benefit penalty? What about all the other mothers who have the threat of a benefit penalty hanging over their heads? No Government who care about children would have a benefit penalty for people on income support who are already below the poverty line so that £8·80 of their income is taken away—leaving less money for food, clothes and all the things that children need. That cannot be right. It is evil.

The collection fee should also be abolished. Mothers who feel that contact with absent fathers is threatening ask the agency to collect the maintenance. Those very fathers threaten the mothers when they are asked to pay the collection fee. That fee will engender violence and should be abolished.

Another sore point is that of absent parents who are on income support and who are being pursued by the agency for a measly £2·20 a week. A constituent of mine is a father with care. His ex-wife is mentally ill and has been sectioned innumerable times. He has begged the agency not to force him to sign the form to pursue his wife because he says that it would drive her into hospital from where, drugged up to the hilt, she would phone and upset their child. Even if she receives the order, she would not be able to manage her affairs properly and would never regularly pay that £2·20, but he and the child would lose it. There are many such cases and the section should be abolished.

The Government will not have an income disregard for parents on income support because they think that that would be a disincentive to taking a job. However, they say that a £15 disregard for caring mothers will

"enable them to take a job with considerably lower take-home pay than if there had been no disregard."

Those lucky women will be able to take a low-paid job in addition to looking after their family and doing the housework and can claim £15 a week disregard plus family credit.

Many, perhaps most, will be worse off, because they will get no help with the mortgage interest payments and no more free school meals—with a number of children that is significant. They will lose other passported benefits such as for glasses and for dental treatment and they may get £28, as the Government have promised, for child care. That may pay for looking after an older child after school until the mother comes home, but in my constituency, I believe that the standard rate for having a young child looked after all day is £90 to £100 a week. Mothers who need such care will be in trouble. In addition, on family credit, it takes six months to review a change in circumstances, whereas on income support, changes can be reviewed at once. Many of those mothers will be far worse off.

Fathers who have previously paid the mortgage payments on the home of their first families will have to choose whether to meet their CSA assessments or stop paying the mortgage, and repossessions will result. The Labour party will be monitoring carefully how many mothers and children will be thrown out of their homes because of that dreadful law.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) rightly said, separated fathers object to being called absent parents. One such father came to my surgery and told me that his former wife had moved to the north of England. Once a month, because he wants to keep close contact with his children, he pays a high fare to travel north. He has to rent a hotel room, pay for looking after the children for the weekend and take them out. It is expensive. After the assessment, he will not be able to afford that. He will become an absent father and he does not want to be one. He, his ex-wife and their children will all suffer. That cannot be right.

Separated fathers need a discretionary body, but the Government do not want one. What factors need to be taken into account? What factors require discretion? Travel to work is one. A commuter may pay £2,000 to £3,000 a year, and even when the cost is less, it is a significant part of a person's income, as my hon. Friend the Member for Preston said. No account is taken of the cost of travel to see children, the cost of keeping them, the cost of taking them

out and the cost of providing treats and all the extras that children need, such as sports gear. There is no discretion about that. There is no discretion about the cost of looking after elderly parents. There is no discretion about paying the mortgage for the first family. Voluntary payments are ignored.

When an assessment is made, it applies from the date that the maintenance inquiry form has been sent out. That can create huge arrears. The courts used to take past maintenance paid into account and they gave credit for it. All those matters require a discretionary body which could take them into account. This is real life; we cannot use an abstract formula to rule people's lives and drive them to despair.

A constituent who was deeply in debt came to see me. He had been honourably paying off his debts, which he had incurred because of illness. He has now been assessed and he will not be able to continue to pay off his debts. He does not know what to do. He said, "Shall I give up my job? What shall I do? I cannot pay my debts and pay the assessments." He was already making voluntary payments and buying equipment and clothes for his child.

Another factor that has not been taken into account is that of families abroad. There are immigrant fathers in my constituency who have children abroad and who send money to them. No discretion is allowed there.

The case for a discretionary body is irrefutable. Such a body could take a family's whole situation into account. In our debate last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said that the Government had got it wrong, that the agency should be wound up and that they should start again. I fully agree. We need a system that is responsible and workable and which puts the interests of children first.

8.11 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): It is clear that the Opposition are speaking with many different voices in the debate. They would have been better advised not to press the matter to a Division tonight. I do not believe that they foresaw the current situation any more than the rest of us did. The reasoned amendment moved by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on Second Reading of the Child Support Bill contained not a hint of the problems that might arise for absent parents.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haselhurst: No.

Miss Lestor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haselhurst: No.

Opposition criticism then centred mainly on the welfare of the children and on the needs of the caring parent. For most of the time, they looked in the opposite direction. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) seems to be getting quite excited about what I am saying. She came nearer than any other Opposition Member to recognising that there might be some problems of the type with which we have been preoccupied in this debate. By and large, it is clear from the reports of the Committee and Report stages that the Labour party was looking in completely the opposite direction and cannot claim now to have foreseen the present problems. I find it faintly odd that Labour Members now seek to present themselves as leading the pack in defence of the absent parent. Although I am critical of the status quo, I shall not be tempted into the Labour Lobby this evening.

I am content to rely on the continuing close review offered by the Government. I note, however, the words in the Government's amendment:

"as further experience is gained".

Considerable evidence is accumulating and I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will take good note of it and learn some of the lessons from it.

It would be preferable for this debate to be approached not in a spirit of partisanship, but in a shared acceptance that our scrutiny process at the time of the Child Support Bill was defective. Many of us simply did not anticipate what was to follow the implementation of a reform that we were all happy to support in principle. We may have accepted that it would change people's lives, but we did not realise how drastic the change would be in may cases. If we are honest—one or two of us have been very honest in this debate—some of us thought that the legislation was directed mainly at absconding rather than merely absent parents.

The main problem has been the dramatic nature of the change that we have wrought. Fairly or not, divorced parents have lived their lives on certain assumptions. New marriages have been made and new families have been created. It may be right for Parliament to impose suddenly on those people the judgment that they must bear a heavier responsibility for their natural children, but we must at the same time appreciate the impact that that can have on the life they are now leading and on the people who are part of that life. The CSA has seemed, in many cases, to have no appreciation of the effect that swingeing increases in maintenance payments will have.

The affected people feel that they are being retrospectively censured for doing something that was not in itself wrong—separating from an unhappy marriage and starting all over again. The new demands have been the cause of worry and despair which, in some cases, has turned to tragic extremes. When society's judgment about what parents in this position should pay is being delivered with seemingly impervious bureaucratic zeal by the Child Support Agency, their despair turns to deep resentment. Many of us have felt that deep resentment in our mail bags and through our surgeries over the past few months.

Like many of my hon. Friends, I am very unimpressed by the performance of the CSA. It has been bad in responding to the anxious queries of the clients whom it has contacted. Its response to letters from Members of Parliament has, for the most part, been extremely wooden. If the explanation for the poor performance of the CSA is that it is overwhelmed with work, that is surely a reason for implementing the new requirements more gradually and on a phased basis. Ministers seemed to be under pressure from the Opposition throughout our proceedings on the Child Support Bill to promise that everything would be done with all possible speed. The Opposition are the last to have the right to criticise the Government for some of the consequences.

We have been told that 50 per cent.—I think that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State suggested that the figure might be more than 50 per cent.—of the cases so far tackled by the agency are those in which no maintenance at all has been paid. If that is the case, why did not the agency confine itself exclusively to such cases to start with? Why did it not get those out of the way before

[Mr. Haselhurst]

moving on to people who had already made settlements, as my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) has recently described?

The trouble with the formula is that it gives insufficient regard to the current circumstances of the client. I welcomed very much the changes that we approved last week. They may make life bearable in a number of cases. It is perfectly fair for the Government to say that not until those changes have been implemented can we see the effect on assessments. The mists may then clear, allowing us to gauge the degree of injustice that may remain. On that count, it is right for the Government to say in retaliation to the Opposition that their motion is premature as well as presumptuous.

However, I contend that the formula is not right. Mention has been made of clean breaks, and I emphasise that too. It may be difficult to quantify, but the plain fact is that a property settlement, heavily biased in favour of the parent with care at the expense of ongoing maintenance and accepted as a reasonable deal by a court, affects the resources available to the person who becomes the absent parent. A greater allowance in the formula for housing costs is simply not adequate compensation for some of the housing and financial settlements that were made. My right hon. Friend should not rely on generalities in dismissing that factor altogether from the equation.

I also add emphasis to what has been said about travel-to-work costs. It may be easy from an administrative point of view to want to ignore those costs, but they are creating genuine difficulty in many cases. On the clean break factor and the travel to work factor, I ask my hon. Friends to look at the consequences of making such sweeping exclusions from the formula. In some cases, it is having a devastating and totally unfair effect.

In conclusion, the figures contained in the formula still need some moderation, even if it takes longer to reduce the burden on taxpayers. Taxpayers have borne the burden for many years. We now have arrangements in sight which are intended to reduce that burden, and I do not disagree with that. Surely, the speed with which we reduce the burden must be governed with an eye on the effect on those who will be affected.

There needs to be some further degree of phasing. I want to hear less about administrative convenience in any future discussions of this matter, and more about fairness to all the parties concerned. It cannot be right to have swung the pendulum so violently that we have shifted the misery and deprivation across the spectrum from the parent with care to the absent parent.

All I say to the Government is that we must recognise that this is not yet a closed chapter. We must have a guarantee of more attention to the details which many hon. Members have raised tonight, and a promise of further action if equity so dictates. Surely, all of us want to ensure that we get the balance right in determining how the burden should lie between the various parties involved in these matters.

8.20 pm

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): I think that all hon. Members agree with the principle that parents have the responsibility of looking after their children, certainly in my territory of west Belfast, where there is great poverty and deprivation and, for many reasons, there are many lone parents.

I shall start by making a point about poverty and the lone parent and her children. The majority of lone parents, certainly in my constituency and in other parts of Northern Ireland and elsewhere, experience various degrees of poverty. Their children require a coherent strategy of family support covering social security and child care and a positive employment strategy, rather than an approach that is characterised by a single Act solution, as in the Child Support Act 1991.

Punitive measures have been referred to a number of times. Such measures for achieving compliance with the operations of the Child Support Agency will risk further disadvantaging children in lone-parent families who rely on benefit, as well as the second families of absent parents. As to family violence, it is important to appreciate that the emphasis placed on parents to provide information about the identification and tracing of liable parents fails to recognise that some mothers have good reasons for refusing to name an absent father.

I make no apology for referring directly to my constituency of west Belfast where, no matter what indications of deprivation are used—whether it is the Jarman index of social deprivation or social class distribution—there is more deprivation per 1,000 of the population than anywhere else on these islands. I should point out that in, west Belfast, there are more people in prison per 1,000 of the population than anywhere else on these islands. Taking those points together, one realises that the question of the lone parent is a major one.

As I said, the emphasis on parental responsibility is welcome. Many hon. Members have put great emphasis on that. Unfortunately, most fathers are not responsible for the children when parents separate. The people who must be looked after are the children. The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) made many of those points earlier and I congratulate her on an excellent speech.

Family breakdowns, terms of maintenance and related child care disputes are complex and stressful. Families in that position need a co-ordinated package of support services. It must therefore be clear that detailed monitoring of the implementation of the Act is fundamental in assessing whether the objectives of decreasing child poverty and increasing parental responsibility are achieved.

Inclusion of the personal allowance for the caring parent in the maintenance bill conflicts with the recent adoption of divorce legislation which promotes a clean break between partners, and may be strongly resented by caring parents and absent parents alike. I appreciate the fact that that point has been covered by a number of hon. Members.

Another point is that the provision for children with disabilities and special needs requires additional costs. I am not convinced that that aspect was covered adequately in the legislation. What we need is a comprehensive child care policy—that is what should be developed. The Child Support Agency should not undertake any child support activities on behalf of a family without the formal authorisation of at least one of the parents. Parents should also have the right to appeal against a proposed maintenance assessment before its implementation. Finally, there should be a continuing review of child care and child support.

8.25 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I oppose the Opposition's motion because I believe that they are morally wrong. They are supporting the continuance of anti-social behaviour and seeking to undermine the position of 1 million single mothers. They are arguing that pensioners and others on low incomes should pay more for the children of absent fathers. That is wrong.

During Prime Minister's questions today, the Leader of the Opposition showed his skills as a lawyer. Three years ago, he used his skills as a lawyer to support the Child Support Bill and the Child Support Agency. Today, he used his skills to undermine the Act and the 5,000 staff in the Child Support Agency. Having made a tough decision, he now finds that he cannot live with it and seeks to run away from it. That is not acceptable.

The Child Support Act is, first and foremost, about children. It is concerned with the priority of parents in relation to their children. If people have children, they must make up their minds whether they will be responsible for them, or try to pass them over to other people. It is surprising and sad that the low priority some absent parents give the first family is often seen in our constituency surgeries. It is sad that not enough attention is paid to the first family by absent parents in their second family.

Recently, I was extremely saddened by one case that came to my office whereby the second family showed in their budget that they put a higher priority on dog food than on the child in the first family. I was staggered that dog food appeared in the long list of items of expenditure that were deemed to be a higher priority than the child in the first family. That is not acceptable. We cannot expect the child in the first family to go without so that the dog in the second family can be properly fed.

The old system was totally unfair. It was inconsistent and the administration often broke down. In our constituency surgeries, we saw many cases where that happened. I have seen court assessments for £15 a week or less. They are totally unacceptable. Such assessments meant that pensioners and others on low incomes had to pay for the children, and the absent fathers were simply not paying.

We are concerned not just with taxpayers but with the children of taxpayers. We must make sure that they have equality of treatment and that those children in a one-family situation do not suffer so that absent fathers can have two or more families. Priority must be given to those families who are united and who intend to stay together, otherwise many more families will break up.

The work of the CSA and what is contained in the Act should be supported. I wish to make a few comments about the CSA's work. I have met the local staff in my constituency, and they are courteous, knowledgeable, and well trained. They deserve the support of hon. Members, and it is sad that not enough has been said in their support today.

I should also like to pay tribute to those who work in the Hastings regional office. I took up a case on Christmas eve with the Hastings regional office on behalf of a constituent who was concerned about his assessment. The office staff devoted considerable time to the case. They were helpful and efficient, and they wanted to ensure that they were correct in dealing with the case. I believe that that was very much in their favour.

Dr. Spink: I have had exactly the same experience with the Hastings office and the staff were very helpful.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend confirms the hard work which is put in by the CSA. With colleagues on the Social Security Select Committee, I interviewed Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the CSA. I was left with the impression that she was knowledgeable and sincere, and that she was an effective and capable manager who was concerned with doing a good job. She and her colleagues should be congratulated on the good job that they are doing on behalf of the nation's children and on behalf of the many women who are benefiting by receiving maintenance in proper amounts for the first time.

There was all-party support on the Committee for the principle of the Act, and also for the vast bulk of the operations of the CSA. There was support for the way in which the Government had implemented the Act. It has been a difficult Act to bring into being because it requires people to pay, including many people who have not being paying enough and many who have beeen been evading payments. Consequently, the Act was never likely to be popular with everybody.

It is the duty of hon. Members to be prepared to stand up and explain to people why they have to pay more. We have had to do that to many taxpayers and to absent fathers. We cannot single absent fathers out and give them special protection from paying more, and then say to our taxpayers that they have to pay more in VAT or more in taxation generally. The Committee's investigations showed that the Act was operating in a fair and balanced manner, but the problem unquestionably was that it was tough on some fathers who had not planned their budgets. Those fathers had married for the second time and had not properly worked out their finances.

Clearly, that is not something for which either Parliament or the Government can take the blame. If an absent father does not budget properly for his second household, that father somehow has to re-budget, as everybody else does. All our pensioners will suffer if they have to receive less in their pensions to support absent fathers.

The Government have adopted many of the Committee's recommendations, and they have shown that they are capable of being flexible in relation to the Act. They have also shown courage in realising that there is a point where one must stand up and be counted. The Opposition will not do that. They have gone weak at the knees at the thought of having to stand up for something. That shows that they will be unfit to govern this country, if they are ever in a position to do so.

Clean breaks do not adequately take into account the distribution of capital. Clean breaks do not look at deferred pensions, which some absent fathers have, and wives often come off second best in them. Such settlements are about capital and its distribution, but I do not believe—nor did the Committee—that capital in a marriage can be worked out to the extent that is necessary to get a fair settlement. Consequently, there would be enormously complicated calculations if the Government adopted any arrangements to take into account clean breaks on capital. The CSA would not be qualified to work out those calculations. Even the Inland Revenue finds it difficult to assess capital and valuation, and the CSA is not in a position to take on that job.

[Mr. Shaw]

The appeals procedure for which the Opposition ask would be unique because it would be based, so they say, on fairness. I am aware of no other appeals procedure in government or in administration which is based on fairness. The Inland Revenue appeals procedure is based on the law, not on fairness. The social security appeals procedure is based on law, not on fairness. We have to accept that the law sometimes operates unfairly and, until Parliament has the opportunity of reviewing and changing the law, all appeals procedures must be based on law. It is not possible to have an appeals procedure in any other way.

Hon. Members have a chance in the Lobby tonight to show whether they support fair payments——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order.

8.35 pm

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) made a characteristically robust speech, but he was somewhat unfair about the motion and the opening speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). Given the hon. Gentleman's small majority in Dover, it might also be regarded as a somewhat reckless speech.

As a member of the Select Committee, I welcomed the Government's decision to accept the recommendations which allowed absent parents to keep more of their income. I believe that that addresses the real problems which absent parents have been experiencing.

The Government could have gone further in their response to other issues—particularly asking absent parents to pay retrospectively from the moment that the assessment form is sent to them. The Government should carefully consider the recommendations by the Committee that the payment should be made from the time the assessment is made after the form is sent back to the CSA.

The CSA has been criticised by hon. Members today, and the Committee did so previously, for the way in which it has been working. It has been suggested that the CSA is swamped with work. Hopefully, further changes might be made to the formula which will affect the targets the CSA has been set and the way in which it manages its work. We need information about how the CSA has been affected, and what assistance will be given to the staff to meet the changes.

I turn to one area which has not been mentioned in the debate. In the letters which I have received from constituents, and from people from all over the country —as a Committee member, I have been sent letters from different groups—what has come across to me is the bitterness, hurt and anger which people are feeling about the work of the CSA.

I have been somewhat surprised to hear hon. Members say today that they have been surprised at that reaction. Surely, if the Government set out with the task of requiring parents to take financial responsibility for their children, there is bound to be such a reaction. We should have known that that was going to happen and been prepared for it. Perhaps we should have taken more seriously the idea of phasing in. We should have thought about it.

What has happened demonstrates to me a certain myopia in the way that we have dealt with families and family issues in social policy. We have sought to make divorce easier and more civilised by making it easier to arrive at. We have enabled couples to divorce in a way that allows them to maintain a relationship with their children and, necessarily, with their former partner. We have not sufficiently taken into account the effects of all that on children.

Anyone who saw the "Panorama" programme on Monday night could not fail to be impressed by the anguish that had been caused to children. Parents believed that they were doing the right thing and helping their children by separating and ending an unhappy marriage. But they caused anguish to their children which the children did not express because they were unable to do so, given their relationship with their parents.

Perhaps the Government should take some of the taxpayers' money that we have been talking about—the rights of the taxpayer are recognised by Opposition Members, too—and use it to help families to stay together. If they used it to fund research into the effects on children of the child support policy, other policies, long-term unemployment, divorce, separation and becoming members of new families, we could start to see a real return from the work of the Child Support Agency.

We would not simply be in defensive mode, trying to justify the work of the agency. The agency is hurting people. There is real hurt out there. Genuine hurt is being expressed to all of us, if we are honest about what people are saying to us. If we used some of the money in the way that I have suggested, we could make something positive come out of the experiences of the past few months.

8.41 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I agreed with the tone and substance of the speech of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy). The problem that we are grappling with today is how we frame arrangements for divorce. We are rightly asking parents to take responsibility for their children. Often, those parents have entered into financial arrangements or commitments to a second family on the basis of ground rules that Parliament has now altered dramatically.

My concern is not so much for families who divorce now, after the Child Support Agency has come into operation. My concern is the extent to which we can and should mitigate the dramatic effects that the legislation is having on families who, under previous arrangements, made commitments in good faith for themselves, their second partner and their second family.

I found it difficult to take seriously some of the comments made by some Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon), who is no longer in her place, wanted to see the whole system swept away. She condemned any idea that there was merit in using revenue from the Child Support Agency to offset benefit payments provided by taxpayers.

The point about tax was well made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, when he pointed out that maintenance provides the parent with care with a portable income. It enables the parent with care to take employment, without the risk of benefit automatically being withdrawn, leaving her no better off than before. Certainly, women have come to my surgery since the general election to complain to me that, under the previous

arrangements, it was impossible for them to take a job, because they would have been no better off in employment than remaining on income support.

Nor should we dismiss the idea that it is important to put money back into the Treasury. I believe that about £4·9 billion is spent by the taxpayer on income-related benefits for single-parent families. That is roughly equivalent to half the total annual spending of the Department for Education. It is not a small sum.

To be fair to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), to his credit he has never shied away from the fact that any arrangements that we may make to mitigate the impact of the Child Support Act 1991 on the absent parent will mean either that less money goes to the parent with care or less accrues to the Treasury, with consequences for Government spending or taxation in the broader sense.

Some Opposition Back-Bench Members have neglected the extent to which the old system was inadequate. It was arbitrary. Decisions were inconsistent. Far too many parents with care of children were left without any support.

My right hon. Friend gave the statistics. He said that 90 per cent. of CSA cases involved children whose parents were so poor that they were on benefit. In two thirds of cases in the first year, no maintenance whatever had been paid. Three quarters of lone parents receive no regular maintenance whatever. That is evidence that reform was urgently needed.

I am afraid that I am unpersuaded by the notion that a review process is the way in which to address the matter. If an independent review body is to meet the expectations of the people who complain about the impact of the CSA, it will have to go further than the four or five constituency cases to which my hon. Friend for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) referred in an intervention. Then we will be into a discussion of what should be the criteria for a review. Either we would risk returning to a system of pure discretion, with arbitrary and inconsistent decisions, or we would have to list the criteria very clearly.

The hon. Member for Garscadden gave us some illustrations of the type of rules that might apply in such a review procedure. I am afraid that they sounded as if they were couched in general terms that would give rise to demand for an additional tier of appeal beyond appeal at first instance, or to attempts to seek judicial review of a decision on the grounds that the independent reviewer had failed to interpret the rules properly in the specific case before him.

An area in which we could take further action, following the welcome changes announced by my hon. Friend the Minister last week, is in some of the details of the formula. The arguments about stepchildren have been well aired in the Chamber. I simply refer my hon. Friend the Minister to the case of one couple in my constituency who are both now in their second marriage.

The man is being asked by the CSA to make a much higher maintenance payment for the children of his first marriage, who live with his ex-wife. His stepchildren—the children of his second wife—receive virtually nothing from his second wife's ex-husband, because he is unemployed and receiving benefit. When there is that discrepancy in payments, it makes for neither trust and support for the arrangements that Parliament has put in place nor for healthy family relationships for any of the couples or parents.

Travel-to-work costs have been mentioned by several of my hon. Friends. Certainly the cost of travelling from Aylesbury to London is not small. I would not expect the Government to enter an open-ended commitment to pay any amount of travel-to-work costs of an absent parent for all time, but I wonder whether they should consider a time-limited or cash-limited arrangement to enable people to make the transition.

Even with the 18-month transitional period announced last week, there is no doubt that the new arrangements put in place by the CSA can make life extremely difficult for absent parents who have entered into financial and family commitments on the basis of previous rules.

On the operation of the Child Support Agency, when I have phoned the parliamentary desk at the Dudley regional office my queries have been answered courteously and efficiently. However, I am concerned for those of my constituents who have not had such a fortunate experience. I have been told of forms lost, letters going without response and telephones left apparently permanently engaged.

However, the hon. Member for Broadgreen alluded to the worst problem—the great gap in time which so often elapses between a request for a new assessment being made to the CSA and that assessment being served on the absent parent. As a result, the parent is faced all at once with arrears, which may run into many hundreds of pounds, with no opportunity to make provision for the payment.

My right hon. and hon. Friends should therefore consult the chief executive of the Child Support Agency to find out how those administrative and managerial problems can be overcome. That task, as well as possible further changes to the formula, needs to be tackled, if the agency and the principles that underlie the Child Support Act 1991 are to win the public support that they deserve.

8.50 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Although it is tempting, because of the time factor I will not respond to some of the remarks made by Conservative Members. Suffice it to say that I find that the arrogance of some of their remarks—especially those of the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw)—does little to enhance the democratic processes. We are trying to resolve a difficult problem which, as constituency Members of Parliament, we all face.

It is also easy to think that we are debating the abolition of the Child Support Agency, when we are trying to resolve the problems that have confronted certain people and to consider how they affect children. Sometimes, one would think from hon. Members' comments—especially those of Conservative Members—that children are inanimate objects, who can be moved around like pieces of furniture. We are talking about children—the children of first marriages, second marriages and stepchildren. We are also talking about the hurt and concern that has been caused not only to children but to all the other family members.

There has been an element of hypocrisy in the debate. Conservative Members say that they care about children, when in reality they are talking about saving money. They talk about the rights and responsibilities of taxpayers, but as a taxpayer who does not have children I am happy to pay my taxes for their benefit. I think that they are a greater

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

priority than spending money on Trident. Those are the sort of political priorities that we are here to decide, and hon. Members would be well advised to heed them.

My colleagues and I on the nationalist Benches will support the Opposition motion. The Minister and the Secretary of State should realise that we are being asked to absorb a series of complex changes in the working of the agency. Announcements were made before Christmas, and the officers with whom I have had to deal were not sure how and when they were supposed to implement the changes.

Another series of changes was announced last week and today, and the Secretary of State said in his opening speech that thousands of reassessment letters would be sent out during the next two or three weeks. That will place the agencies and their representatives under a huge amount of stress and it also places continuing stress on the parents involved. Whenever a new letter arrives, they do not know whether it is good, bad or indifferent news, or whether they will face yet another problematic form, which they have to fill in to resolve the situation. There should be a clear time scale for implementation of the changes. Our constituents should be given that reassurance.

I have had to deal with a substantial number of cases in my area. Other hon. Members have referred to the fact that they represent constituencies where armed forces personnel live. There are two Royal Air Forces bases in Moray—RAF Lossie and RAF Kinloss—which are well recognised and respected. The bulk of the cases that I have had to deal with have involved people from the bases. They seem to be readily identifiable, and have already been paying maintenance for their children from a first marriage or previous relationship, yet they seem to be the first people to be landed with a reassessment. They are also not allowed to get into debt.

At my surgery on Friday, I learned of a flight lieutenant who has taken early retirement from the Air Force because of debts that he could not meet, caused by his reassessment. As a result, he will lose some of his pension rights. There is a strong argument for reviewing how we deal with the people we expect to go into any conflict on our behalf, if that is how we treat them.

The formula lacks flexibility. The Secretary of State seems to be arguing for a rigid formula, but when one is dealing with families and children, we cannot have that rigidity of rule. We need flexibility.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) would agree, given his legal training, that we need the sort of attitude that has been tried and tested in the sheriff courts of Scotland for centuries, where decisions on aliment and maintenance were based on very sensible grounds. The men in those courts listened and understood the reality of life. They knew all about hard knocks, and ensured that all aspects of people's lives were taken into account before decisions were reached.

I must emphasise that the retrospective aspect of the legislation is intolerable, as other hon. Members have said. Also, in a rural constituency such as I represent, travel-to-work payments are important, and I ask for discretion on that matter.

The Secretary of State did not understand my argument earlier. Perhaps I did not express it effectively. From my work with one of the legal companies in my constituency, I know of a girl who is seeking to raise a paternity suit in the Scottish courts. She has been denied access to legal aid because, until she proclaims the name of the child's father to the Child Support Agency, the legal aid forms cannot be signed.

That role is not suitable for the CSA. Surely it should be restricted to the legal profession. I shall send the papers to the Secretary of State and the Minister, as the matter concerns me greatly. I may have come across only one such case, but I am sure that other hon. Members will have encountered similar ones.

It is very difficult for these young women to decide to raise paternity suits. Such a course is not undertaken lightly; it requires courage, especially in small communities where people tend to know a great deal about each other's business.

I should like to refer now to a matter about which I wrote to the Secretary of State this week. A couple from my constituency who separated last year decided to reconcile. In such a situation, will money be reclaimed from the wife if she received income support during her husband's absence? Will there be any exchange, or will the separation be deemed never to have occurred? A couple trying to get together again should not have to face such a debt. This is an unusual aspect of the situation, but it is an important one as people do try to work out their differences.

The Secretary of State has said that the chief executive of the Child Support Agency did not receive performance-related pay. Let me remind the hon. Gentleman of evidence that was taken on 2 November 1993. On that occasion, Mrs. Hepplewhite made it quite clear that performance-related pay was involved. It was stated that clear targets had been set, and that if they were not reached, there would be an alteration in pay structure.

I have it in black and white. This is one aspect of the whole affair that our constituents find difficult to accept. They feel that they are being penalised in order to pay someone else. What we are asking for, in the name of all humanity, is not performance-related pay for executives but flexibility and a humanitarian attitude towards our constituents and their families.

9 pm

Sir David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I welcome in particular the last part of the amendment, which indicates that the Government will

"keep the arrangements under continuing close review as further experience is gained."

Like many other hon. Members, I am sure, I shall gain further experience of the Child Support Agency at the constituency surgery tomorrow night. When one is confronted with such cases one never knows what problem is going to arise.

During the debate on 2 February, my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), referring to constituents rather than to himself—as I am doing—said:

"Constituents who come to see me complain that the agency simply will not answer their questions, either by telephone or by letter; all it does is send those draconian assessments. Even when a response by the agency is received, it is belated and does not solve the problems that have been put to it."—[*Official Report*, 2 February 1994; Vol 236, c. 968.]

The Child Support Agency ought to make much better use of the telephone when contacting fathers about their assessments. If it wonders what sort of standard it should aim at, let me suggest one. My constituents and I received

nothing but help from the disability living allowance telephone unit in Blackpool when we encountered difficulties with the introduction of that allowance. If the CSA aims at such a standard, progress will be made.

However, it must phone at sensible times. It is obvious that people who go out to work should be called when they have returned home. That will mean evening calls. My experience is that when, occasionally, people manage to get through to the CSA by telephone, problems can be solved, but the agency must demonstrate flexibility and sensitivity.

I agree with those hon. Members who have said that they do not like the term "absent parent". It is a misleading and upsetting term. On 2 February 1994 my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State—my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt)—said:

"There can be no clean break between a parent and his children."—[*Official Report*, 2 February 1994; Vol. 236, c. 943.]

It would be much better to refer to the parent without custody.

As I have said, the amendment refers to the Government's intention to undertake a close review as further experience is gained. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will remember that many fathers not only are in touch with their children but contribute over and above maintenance payments. Sometimes they take the children on holiday or buy them clothes and presents. In other words, there is no clean break. These people are making an additional contribution towards the well-being of their children.

Many hon. Members have mentioned the question of travel-to-work costs. As a Member from the south-east, I want to emphasise this problem. Some system of relief ought to be built in. Of course, such relief would be time-limited, as children get older and maintenance changes accordingly. If, as I suspect, the Child Support Agency is anxious about how this might be worked out, let me suggest that there is a case for looking at the tax system to see whether it can be used to provide some relief in respect of travel-to-work costs. Some people have a company car or receive a mileage allowance for using their own car or have their British Rail season ticket paid for by the firm. Anyone who does not receive such help could be granted a temporary adjustment in his income tax code.

It cannot be beyond the wit of the Government to use the tax system to provide a temporary help to people who want to stay in work but find, as a result of their assessment, that their travel-to-work costs swallow even more of their taxed income so that they face difficulty in staying in work. Throughout the debate, the Government have endlessly emphasised that they want as many people as possible to stay in work or get back to work. Will they use the tax system to help people pay their travel-to-work costs?

People are understandably worried about what will happen if their income suddenly drops. Will their assessment be changed quickly or will they be pursued immediately on the basis of their previous income? The Child Support Agency sometimes makes the mistake of not differentiating between salary and earnings. Earnings fluctuate and some bonuses are paid not monthly but annually, if one is lucky. I had a dreadful job trying to get it across to the Child Support Agency that a constituent received an annual bonus if he was lucky and that a monthly bonus was not built into his earnings. The agency must take the greatest care to differentiate between straight wages and earnings.

Another problem experienced by constituents arises when the father can genuinely no longer pay because he has lost his job or been sacked. In that case, will the mother be able to return to benefit quickly and without difficulty? That problem needs attention.

I welcome the Government's assurance that details of the second wife's income will not be passed to the first wife where it is irrelevant to an assessment. I hope that there will be more publicity on that, because it is one of the greatest causes of complaint. We should stress and explain to people that, if the second wife has a very low income or no income whatever, taking it into account for an assessment means that her husband will pay less. People do not mind giving intimate details of their financial affairs if it means that they pay less.

In the previous debate on this subject, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) spoke of the welcome changes which the Government are introducing. He said:

"However, I thought it essential to introduce the changes as soon as feasible, even if that may cause some difficulties and delays to the normal day-to-day business of the agency."—[*Official Report*, 2 February 1994; Vol. 236, c. 947.]

That sounds a little ominous. It is a political decision to introduce more phasing in and alter assessments. Those changes are welcome and I support them, but I am worried about

"delays to the normal day-to-day business of the agency"

because that might mean further delays for people who are in the middle of dealing with the agency.

I appeal to the Government to make the Child Support Agency more sensitive, courteous and customer friendly. They have made political decisions in the right direction and assured us that further changes will be made in the light of experience. I appreciate the fact that they do not do the day-to-day administration. It is done by the Child Support Agency. I hope that the agency will strive for better standards, because those are vital.

9.7 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): While many of my constituents would put out the flag if they heard that the Child Support Agency was to be consigned to the scrap heap, I hope that we can, by less drastic means, adapt the working of the agency to the mutual benefit of absent parents and parents with care. I hope that we can reassure parents that the agency can do its job without striking fear into the hearts of people who are paying three and sometimes four times what they were paying under a court agreement. We should also send the message that we are listening to their concerns and are prepared to take action.

Reassurance can only come from a change to the fundamental workings of the agency itself. We all agree that an absent parent must fulfil a financial obligation to his children. The CSA can never function fairly unless that is its only objective. The powers of the CSA go far beyond that basic principle. In many cases, the formula has given rise to such huge increases in maintenance agreements that it is hard to believe that the assessment was based on the needs of the child. Indeed, we have all heard of the classic case of the absent parent who can no longer afford to visit his children because of increased maintenance payments.

[Mr. Gerry Steinberg]

Under the present system, many absent parents are being asked to increase maintenance payments substantially, with next to no consideration being given to their financial obligations towards any children that they have by a subsequent marriage. When a maintenance settlement previously agreed in court between parents is trebled, or sometimes quadrupled, can it really be said that it is for the sake of child maintenance? If a perfectly reasonable court settlement is destroyed by increasing the maintenance payments, in many cases far beyond the amount that the individual can afford to pay, such action will act against the interests of the child.

Even after the recent changes, the scheme will disproportionately benefit the wealthiest parents. The poorest absent parents will pay an additional 85p in maintenance for every extra £1 of income. Those whose disposable incomes allow them to meet the basic requirement will pay an extra 50p, while the wealthiest absent parents will pay only a further 25p maximum, and less if they have fewer children. If the child support scheme is to succeed, it must be fair to all parents. How else can it be said that it protects the interests of the child?

I believe that the formula for maintenance assessment is designed specifically so that the maximum amoung of money is extracted from the absent parent. That is the root of the problem. If the formula is to remain unchanged, at the very least the public should be given the right of appeal to the agency for a review of the assessment, although I am sure that we would all have preferred to see a fairer system in the first place. All too often, there is no justification for the agency's involvement. I refer, for example, to a couple who made an informal mutually acceptable and long-standing financial agreement based on the needs of the child. Why interfere in such cases? What can the agency achieve by its involvement that has not been achieved already by the parents?

One case came to my attention of a woman who has had an informal agreement with her ex-husband for many years and received money from him every month on the same day without fail. The CSA came along—not at her request—and upped his maintenance payment. She readily admits that she did not need the increase. The result of that interference was that the ex-husband now pays the money direct to the CSA, which is supposed to pass it on to her within a few days. She has not once yet received her money on the appointed day. When she telephones the CSA to complain about that, it can never tell her when she will receive the money. The reason that the agency give is that the cheque may be in one, two or three different places.

Who benefits from that? The absent parent who pays more does not; nor does the parent with care who does not receive the maintenance on time, although the CSA has received it on time. Quite clearly, the interests of the child are not the motivating factor in the CSA's involvement in such a case. Why does it need to be involved in a mutually successful arrangement? I hope that the Secretary of State can explain who benefits from that and perhaps clarify whether it is to prevent child poverty or simply to raise money for the Treasury as a form of indirect tax.

I would dearly like to see the CSA doing what we were told that it would do—chase absent parents who pay no maintenance or pay it at inadequate levels. Like my colleagues, I have cases in my constituency where people are vowing to leave work rather than work to pay such huge increases and be left with just a pittance. Recently, a gentleman wrote to me:

> "I have no objection to paying sensible, affordable maintenance but the CSA has left me financially worse off working than being on benefits . . . I would prefer to work but I am not stupid and if the CSA make it easier to be unemployed, that then is my obvious option."

The issue of clean break settlements has been widely discussed, and rightly so: it is a bone of contention that will not go away. For years, the courts have encouraged property transfer as part of a comprehensive divorce settlement; any parent who walked away from the marital home with nothing more than a suitcase and the clothes he or she was wearing has a right to feel aggrieved when told that that now means nothing at all—which is fundamentally wrong.

A gentleman who came to see me recently had been party to a once-and-for-all break. He told me that he had left the marital home with a cut-glass vase that his mother had given him for his birthday, and nothing else. He was paying £100 a month in maintenance for his children. The CSA became involved. Now he has to pay £400 a month. He feels aggrieved, and no wonder.

Many absent parents simply cannot afford to pay what is asked of them. I examined the weekly budget of one family in which a parent had remarried, had one stepchild and was responsible for the maintenance of a child from a previous relationship. That parent could pay his maintenance only by ceasing to travel to see his son, and by paying for no more school trips, clothes, holidays, pocket money and telephone calls: those were the only voluntary elements of his budget. That gentleman lives in my constituency, in Durham; his child lives on the Isle of Wight. That is why I mentioned the travelling.

I believe that the Government misled us by suggesting that the agency's purpose was to pursue maintenance dodgers. It exists simply to reduce social security costs. It is not too late to reassess the workings of the agency, and to refine them—in short, to enable it to carry out what I was led to believe was its purpose: securing maintenance payments for children who would otherwise receive nothing, or next to nothing.

9.16 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): There is plainly an enormous amount of common ground on the assertion that the problems we have encountered with the CSA stem not from the principles of the Child Support Act—which are fundamentally sound, and generally approved of—but from the consequential regulations and administrative provisions that the House empowered Ministers to put into practical effect.

We—by which I mean hon. Members on both sides of the House, including busy Ministers: they have constituents too—trusted, perhaps too readily, that a measure containing so much justice in principle would be justly administered from the outset, and would be seen to be so. The Child Support Agency was introduced into an extremely sensitive and emotionally charged area. I remember the matrimonial cases with which I dealt during my practice at the Bar in the early 1970s; nothing much has changed since then. The bitterness, anger and resentments that are inseparable from divorce proceedings—particu-

larly where children are concerned—are all too frequently of a harrowing magnitude that no one could fully understand without experiencing or witnessing them.

The CSA set out to unpick many of the arrangements that had been so carefully constructed, and so often finally settled after months—even years—of recrimination and sorrow. That required very sensitive handling. Unfortunately, the whole thing got off to a poor start owing to bad publicity based on, for instance, a leaked report of priorities, and the reporting of examples that, by comparison, almost rehabilitated Shylock.

Initially, I had a sense that my serious concerns on behalf of some constituents with genuine grievances were not being dealt with sympathetically enough. Since then, Ministers and the CSA itself have been working fast to improve matters—to publicise the true facts effectively, and to persuade us, our constituents and the media of those facts. Those moves include the welcome concessions on which we voted last week, which will help matters significantly when they are properly understood. That is a crucial condition.

I do not intend to go into individual constituents' cases. I shall continue to take them up by letter and by personal meetings with my hon. and right hon. Friends the Ministers most directly concerned. My main purpose today is to mark my continuing concern about certain features of the operation of the agency and of the rules and regulations which apply. I reinforce what the Government amendment makes clear: that the present arrangements will be kept under continuing close review. Of course they must be.

9.19 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I feel as though I have become the Marjorie Proops of the House of Commons as I have brought into the Chamber a pile of letters—more than a foot high—that have been sent to me from all parts of the country about the so-called Child Support Act. Those letters express the anger, bitterness and despair that many men, women and children and their families feel about how the Act is working.

I received one letter this morning; it is the last one on the pile. It says:

"As a person who has always supported my children and has done so not because it was the law but because I take pride in my duty as an absent parent, I now find myself unable to comply with the unrealistic demands of the CSA formula and unable not to comply with the CSA demands for fear of criminal prosecution . . . this crippling increase, implemented in a haste destroyed mine and my partner's life . . . we are not unwilling to pay we are unable.".

When we examine any legislation, we should consider whether we support the principle and the way it is to be put into practice and agree that the result is what was intended. Each letter supports the principle of parents maintaining their children. Far from wanting to abandon their children, there is an overwhelming feeling of wanting to maintain contact.

The Minister should see some of the letters that I have received from Families Need Fathers to know how desperately fathers battle against women who use children to spite their former partners and deny them access, and how they struggle to maintain contact. Even where there is no conflict, it is mostly men who travel many miles to reassure their children that they still love and care for them. So there is no disagreement about the principle of the Act, but there is a huge tide of feeling about how it is being put into practice.

Many of the letters speak of clean break settlements under the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings act 1984 which had been agreed in courts and not discouraged by the Government at the time. How can the Government now turn that Act on its head and say to absent fathers, "You may have given up your home and its contents and given a lump sum to your wife as well as paying some maintenance to the child. You may have taken out a large mortgage and bought a car on hire purchase, which is essential for your work, with any money you had left. You may have other purchase agreements and responsibilities, but we shall ignore your commitments and previous court settlements with the statement that your first responsibility must be to maintain your child." What do the Government consider such a man had been doing under the court procedure?

The inflexibility of the formula is damaging the lives of far too many people. The Government say that the vast majority of those approached so far have never paid maintenance. That is good, but what about the remainder, the responsible parents who have been paying maintenance, who have taken over family debts and who are now faced with long-term commitments which they can no longer meet? They may have long-term commitments to new families or other children. Do they have no rights?

Are those responsible, caring men and women to be threatened and treated in a way which reduces them to pleading desperately in those letters, "I cannot pay this amount. Please can someone help me?" When did it become right to act arrogantly, without even a spark of decency or understanding, when dealing with families and children?

What of the children? Not very much has been said about the children by Conservative Members, but have the Government no understanding of the strain that divorce and family break-up cause to children? Do they not understand the need of children to know that both parents love and want them? Does the standard formula that produces predictable and realistic amounts—as the Child Support Agency describes its formula—take into account the warmth and reassurance that children need to grow and the contact that they need with both parents? As many of the letters show, contact between parents and the children does not enter the calculations of the Child Support Agency.

Is that what the Child Support Act 1991 was intended to do? Can we not find a halfway house, another way—something that takes the children's feelings into account? Is there not some other way of assessing maintenance which considers children and their needs—not the need for money, but for care, for contact and for their feeling and the way in which they wish to grow to be taken into account?

I would not wish the decision to be made by courts again, for they, too, failed miserably in dealing with maintenance payments. The principle of the Act is right. The inflexibility of the formula is wrong. Surely an Act with a formula that puts so many decent people into debt and drives them to despair, causing them to write letters in such vast numbers to me, cannot be what was intended.

The Minister must reconsider immediately and amend this flawed and unsatisfactory Act.

9.26 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Since time immemorial, women have been left holding the baby in poverty and it has taken until 1993 and the present Government to put the matter right. If the teeth of the Act are to be drawn, we shall return to the situation of relatively rich father and relatively poor mother, and we do not wish to do that.

There has been a black hole in much of the debate—one that was referred to by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) in his opening remarks, in which he said, blatantly, that the majority of people in the House were in favour of major changes. That is simply because the hon. Members who have been able to speak—or perhaps have come to speak—have largely spoken for an articulate minority of men who have sat down and written to us or come to our constituency surgeries. However, I shall speak for the great number of women—the silent women—who benefit from the reforms and are grateful for them.

I shall also speak for another silent minority in the country, those who pay for the reforms. I have received a letter from a pensioner who says:

"As a . . . pensioner, no State benefits, I was delighted to hear"

that the Government have at last decided to ensure that people who have children do not expect them to be supported by

"single people, pensioners and childless couples".

She says that she has saved and paid for her pension all her life and that she

"should not be expected to help men shirk their responsibilities."

That is another silent group of people that we need to take into account before we start speaking about changing the Act.

It is interesting that in the debate all that we have heard about is men not wanting to part with more money for the children of their first marriage. That has been the basic theme. We have heard about the little treats that they give children—the extra pair of trainers, the sweeties, the trip to the zoo, the holiday. Why should they not pay? They should pay a proper amount so that their children do not have to wait for daddy to turn up and give them a few crumbs from his income. That is not how we should expect people to behave.

Reference has been made to the way in which the Child Support Agency operates. I am glad that some of my colleagues complimented the agency because every case that I have brought to its attention has been handled courteously, promptly and kindly. I have nothing but good to say about the job that Ms Hepplewhite is trying to do under new legislation which is extremely contentious.

I am sure that all hon. Members will admit that most complaints have come from men. It is almost axiomatic that it is articulate, middle-class men—or sometimes their second wives—who are writing to us because it is the better-off fathers who are expected to pay more. By definition, poorer fathers are not expected to pay, if they are expected to pay anything at all. Their second family responsibilities are taken into account before the payments for their first families are calculated, and stepchildren are included in the calculation.

There must be no suggestion that the Government reverse the changes that have been introduced. The changes were greatly needed and were welcomed by all the women to whom I have spoken. I have only one further suggestion to make to the Government.

The women to whom I speak are grateful for the help that the Government are giving, but, in addition to keeping the extra payments, they would like to be able to go out to work and earn a little more. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to talk to the Treasury team about giving these women a little more support. They do not want to be dependent on state benefits or have to hold out their hand for a little extra from the father of their children. They want to be independent and the Government are helping them to be so.

9.31 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): This is the International Year of the Family, an irony that has not escaped me as I have listened to the catalogue of complaints from hon. Members of all parties about how a Government agency acts against the interests of parents and children. One of the aims of the IYF, according to the Government-funded office in London, is to be

"a catalyst for building a more family friendly society."

The IYF booklet tells us:

"Opinions may vary about what family means, but we all agree now more than ever before, that families matter and their well being and that of each individual member of the family is crucial to the well being of society."

The Children Act 1989 also put centre stage the interests of the child.

I am glad that that the Secretary of State seems to have moved on a little from his appalling speech at the Tory party conference two years ago when he talked about single young ladies trying to jump the housing queue by becoming lone mothers. I hope that some of his remarks tonight mean that he has a little more understanding of the situation.

From what we have heard today and from our constituency post bags, it is abundantly clear that the Child Support Act 1991 and the Child Support Agency are not working in the best interests of children and families—they do not have their interests at heart—and that they are not working in quite the way the Government predicted. Last week we debated the Government's regulations to amend the agency. The changes were welcome, but they were not sufficiently far reaching or comprehensive.

The Secretary of State, and the Prime Minister only today, said that the agency would be kept constantly under review. I think it was the Prime Minister who said that we should need more evidence before we make any more alterations. Presumably, we have to wait for the other 250,000 cases to come forward. We are all aware that the agency will have to be altered before long if its principle is to work without the hardship that its application causes to many people.

The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) rightly said that some mothers—4 per cent.—have benefited from the legislation, and I welcome that fact; it is great. Most of us support the principle of non-resident parents—mostly men—supporting their children financially and emotionally. Precious few have said that it is not a matter of either/or—just because 4 per cent. are benefiting does not mean that the rest should suffer as a result. That is the implication. As we have heard tonight, some will be worse off, as they will be floated off income support, with the subsequent loss of passported benefits.

The hon. Member for Billericay ridiculed the loss of one-off payments. There is nothing wrong or worthy of derision in a father agreeing to pay for a holiday, buy the shoes and contribute—that is what fatherhood is all about and I welcome it. Those are some of the things that the non-residential parents are doing.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Lestor: I shall not give way. With great courtesy, may I say to the hon. Gentleman that both the Government and the Opposition Front-Bench teams agreed to cut the length of their speeches so that more Back Benchers could speak. I have a lot to say and, although I speak quickly, I might not have time to advance all my arguments.

Some people have lost benefit because they have refused to co-operate with the agency. That is terrible. It may involve a small number of people—160, I believe —but if people had an incentive and a disregard, it might assist in bringing irresponsible, absent fathers to book.

We are all aware of the devastating impact of the Act on second families and stepchildren. It puts a strain on new relationships and causes hardship to the children. It is the children about whom I am concerned. All those problems were predicted when we first discussed the then Child Support Agency Bill. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) referred to my speech in that debate, because the Government refused to listen.

The then Minister, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), accused us of political deceit when we tabled our reasoned amendment. He said that we were trying to undermine

"in the mind of the public the wholly honourable intentions of the Bill."—[*Official Report*, 4 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 240.]

A lot of history has been rewritten tonight. I want to make it clear that we supported the principle that men should be responsible for the children that they father. That was why we did not vote on Second Reading of the Bill. We tabled the reasoned amendment to show some of the difficulties that would arise from the Bill.

We argued that clean break settlements should be properly taken into account. My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) now supports the principle that the impact of the Act on second families should be taken into account. Indeed, Ministers were keen during discussions to play up the moral argument, but they did not take account of the fact that many people were already contributing. I remember one hon. Member referring to "tower block stags", who tend to jump from one flat to another with no responsibility for the children they father. That got a "Hear, hear" from Ministers. The message was clear and many people were misled.

The Child Support Agency was supposed to be the means by which non-resident, irresponsible fathers who did not contribute a penny to the families they had abandoned were to be brought to account. I am afraid that it has not worked out like that. CSA staff have been advised to go after the soft targets first—parents on higher than average incomes, parents with second families, parents who rent rather than have a mortgage and those who are in regular contact with their first families. Those are not the Jack-the-lads whom we were told were the principal targets of the Act. It is disgraceful that those who refused to name the father of their children have had their benefit taken away or reduced.

There is another difficulty. The agency has made many mistakes. My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) gave me the example of a man who received through his letter box a demand for £75. He was told that he was responsible for a child he had fathered and for whom he had not paid. The demand bore his name, but it was not his child. When he asked for details, he was told that he could have them. What happened? His marriage temporarily broke up and, as the man had had a vasectomy, the efficacy of medical science was also undermined. That is not on. Surely to goodness when an agency or anyone else is chasing an absent father, it should make sure that it has the right man before it makes a move.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Even worse than that has happened in the same neighbourhood. A father committed suicide when he was told how much he had to pay, and the inquest said that it was all because of the Act.

Miss Lestor: Yes; I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Many such parents are responsible caring parents, who pay regularly and who share the care of their children. The hon. Member for Billericay dismisses such matters, but those fathers take care of their children, take them on holiday and buy them clothes and all sorts of other extras above the maintenance levels agreed in court.

The White Paper "Children Come First" has been totally undermined. Because of the agency's involvement, some first and second families are financially worse off, and some children are seeing less, or even nothing, of their father if he cannot afford visiting costs on top of the increased maintenance. Is that putting the interests of the child first?

Indeed, some fathers have been told that they would be better off if they became unemployed, because the sums demanded from them are unworkable. Who would benefit from that? Not the family, not the father and not the Exchequer. Some fathers slip through the net altogether. I was advised that when fathers are really absent, because they are resident abroad, the agency can take no action.

The giveaway was making the agency chief executive into a bounty hunter. When the Secretary of State opened the debate——

Hon. Members: Rubbish.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

Miss Lestor *rose*——

Mr. Jenkin: You are wasting time, dear.

Miss Lestor: Don't call me dear.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Come over here and say that.

Miss Lestor: He dare not. He has not got the guts.

The giveaway was making the agency chief executive into a bounty hunter through the introduction of performance-related bonuses. The Secretary of State said that that was not so, and that the arrangement was no different from what happened everywhere else. However, he said that there were no plans to make the document available in the Library; so if what he says is true, will he publish the details of the enforcement and special tracing section? My hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) has already asked for that, and his request was refused.

When the Bill was passed, it was said that it would operate on a straightforward principle, aiming to improve

[Miss Lestor]

on the existing court system that had failed so many mothers and their children, leaving more than 80 per cent. of lone parents on income support. We were told that that was the principle—but family policies are never that straightforward, and Acts of Parliament, especially those such as the Child Support Act, which have such a strong and direct impact on the lives of ordinary families, cannot be viewed in isolation.

The backdrop should be a coherent family policy which embraces employment opportunities, a national child care strategy and a mediation and conciliation service to help families cope with the stresses of separation and divorce. The CSA is operating in a vacuum. Although this is the international year of the family, there is no Minister for the family to develop a co-ordinated approach to support for families; instead, the Government are concentrating on penny-pinching short-term measures that increase costs in the longer term, both financially and socially.

At the beginning, when the agency was first set up, the Government argued strongly that the taxpayer should not be left to pay for other people's children. I do not regard money spent on children as wasted, unlike the tens of millions of pounds that were lost pushing ahead with the iniquitous poll tax and then scrapping it, or the administrative bungling recently unearthed by the Public Accounts Committee, the £48 million Whitehall project. There have been all sorts of losses. I say to hon. Gentleman, and to the Minister in particular—*[Interruption.]*—and hon. Ladies—that most people in this country would prefer—*[Interruption.]* Don't be so stupid.

Given the choice, I know how I should prefer my taxes to be spent, and I think most people in the country would want to put children first. Cherishing children is an important principle, yet today their interests are being sacrificed to feed the Exchequer.

Most of the hon. Gentlemen who spoke—not the hon. Ladies—said that they were dissatisfied with the working of the agency. They pointed out the hardship that it was causing and they were absolutely right to do so, as were all my hon. Friends who spoke. If that is true and if that is what those hon. Gentlemen believe, I ask them to join us in the Lobby tonight. There have been hardly any supporters of the Child Support Act 1991 here tonight.

Mrs. Gorman: The supporters are outside.

Miss Lestor: The hon. Lady said that they are not here, but outside. Few have got up and stood for the Act—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman ought to get up and say what he has got to say and not snipe.

Mr. Burt *rose*——

Miss Lestor: I am not talking to the Minister. I am talking to the one with the silly grin on his face.

If Conservative Members who have spoken are concerned—I share their concern and we know that what they say makes sense—about the operation of the Act, if they join us in the Lobby tonight, we can begin to alter the Act and establish a principle that, yes, not only makes people responsible for their children but does not impoverish second families and put the interests of children at risk. Those are the principles and that is why we have moved the motion. I hope that the hon. Gentlemen who have complained about the operations of the agency will join us in the Lobby tonight.

9.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): This has been a lively debate with a variety of speeches. They have been mostly measured speeches on both sides of the House, and there have been one or two that we would have wanted to listen to again. As I said in the past week—the debate is second on child support recently—I am not 100 per cent. certain that all the speeches made in the House showed an acceptance of the basic principles of the Child Support Act 1991. I should like to develop that theme and suggest to the House why our amendment is the best way to move forward in the circumstances.

The Child Support Act 1991 did a number of things. It certainly reiterated a principle which we all find easy to sign up to—that parents should be responsible for their children. No one seriously disagrees with that. However, I must remind the House that the Act did other things as well which we now find not so comfortable with which to identify.

First, the move from a discretionary system to a formula system was deliberate. My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) said clearly, and with some degree of honesty, that hon. Members had not appreciated the full impact of the move from the discretionary system to the formula, and he was right.

Secondly, the Act gave a retrospective ability to the agency to consider settlements. I wanted to make the point to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) that it is by Act of Parliament that the agency does what it does and it is not for us to say that it is a bureaucratic organisation that acts on its own. The House must recognise its responsibility for creating the Child Support Agency which works to the formula that we set.

I am grateful for the variety of comments made about the CSA by my hon. Friends the Members for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson), for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks), for Newark (Mr. Alexander), for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) and for Bedforshire, South-West (Sir D. Madel).

My hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) spoke about those who worked in his local CSA. As with all public servants, we probably all have constituents who are Child Support Agency officers. As with all other civil servants, they work according to what we wish them to do and try to do their job. I found some of the criticisms of the Child Support Agency made by Opposition Members quite uncalled for. Those who work for the agency are civil servants doing a job. I wish that all colleagues would take the opportunity to see their local field officers and to talk to them about their work.

I shall now respond to the point made by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy), who made an excellent, measured contribution to our debate. She especially asked what assistance we were giving the agency with the changes. We are giving assistance to the agency. We recognise that the changes will make a difference to targets and that they will make a difference to administration costs.

I hope that I have reassured the hon. Lady. She was the first Member this evening to raise the point about the sheer

misery of divorce and separation, and about our growing awareness of its impact. No hon. Member of any party can safely ignore that point. The hon. Lady was right to raise the matter in the way that she did.

I spoke earlier about the House's responsibility for the Child Support Act 1991. The move from a discretionary approach to a formula and the reasons for acting retrospectively were justified. Colleagues must understand the position from which we moved. Few hon. Members have pointed out how bad the previous system was. It was because so many women did not receive maintenance through the courts that we realised that we could not go on as we were. It was because we recognised the effect on the taxpayer that we had to look at all aspects of the previous position.

I shall quote, justifiably, from the report by the Select Committee on Social Security. I want to quote this paragraph because Opposition Members repeatedly made the point about the taxpayer. I want them to see what a Select Committee—not the Government—said about that point, and I want to remind them of what they clearly intended to do a couple of years ago.

At paragraph 20, the Committee says:

"The Committee has received complaints that causing absent fathers to pay money which was formerly paid by the social security system is a distortion of the original purpose of the Act. There have also been criticisms that the money being sought from absent parents does not provide any extra benefits for the children. Given what was said in the White Paper, these criticisms are misconceived. One of the purposes of the changes was to provide a secure income that would enable parents with care to take paid employment without losing another part of their income, as would be the case with Income Support. However, it was always intended that, in cases where it was assessed that the absent parent could afford to do so, the financial responsibility for the care of children should move from the social security system to the absent parent. In some cases maintenance will be a substitute for Income Support; in others, the sums received by the children will certainly improve their circumstances."

That is what we passed; that is what the Select Committee recently said we were right to pass. That is the principle that we should all live up to, it may be uncomfortable for hon. Members.

As we did last week, we have today confronted a number of genuine issues. The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) was right when she talked about how she wished to spend her taxes. How do we strike the right balance for our children, especially in relation to separation? How do we get the balance right between the interests of both parents and the interests of the taxpayer? Three years ago, the House was clear—let us make no bones about it—about what was the best thing to do. We felt that the first family had been disadvantaged for too long. We knew that we had to redress the balance for such families, and we knew that we had to redress the balance for the taxpayer as well.

The mood of the House has now changed; we are not quite so clear about the issue. That is the honest truth. Having seen the Act in operation, we are not quite so clear about the balance. It is because the House is less clear than it was that I invite the House to support the Government amendment. I believe that it more accurately reflects the mood of the House than does the Opposition motion, which tries to come up with a solution before the issues have been thought through.

We made our position clear with regard to the legislation. As the Select Committee said, it is the most major social change in 40 years. We made a commitmenmt that we would review the Child Support Agency once it was established. When a piece of considered work came to us reflecting the concerns of the House, our constituents and many commentators, we listened and responded. That pledge is not the empty words suggested by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). When we said that we would keep something under review, we meant that if something came up, we would respond—and we did so. That is what the House approved last week in the proper terms that we proposed.

It is right to allow the changes that we made, prompted by the Select Committee, to have effect so that we can judge the impact. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the impact on the changes will be significant. It is right to assess the impact. From the variety of issues raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House, I do not believe that simply accepting the hon. Gentleman's solution is the right answer. He suggested that there was one easy panacea.

I refer to the debate that I had with the hon. Gentleman this morning—I have had the same debate with him on one or two previous occasions—about what an appeal means. I still cannot get it out of my head that what he means by an appeal, which sounds attractive, is that in some way all those people who are concerned and upset about the changes will have a way out.

I did not think that that was a genuine and honest proposal to put to the people. We must define the gateways to the appeal system because, if everyone appeals, we would go back to the discretionary system to which the hon. Gentleman in his next breath said the House did not want to return.

As I cannot be sure that the hon. Gentleman is clear about what he wants the appeal system to do, and how he wants it to be drawn up, I cannot recommend it to my colleagues tonight. I simply say that, because of the degree of concern and uncertainty raised by my colleagues, we meant what we said in terms of keeping the Act under review. In the past, we have proved that we are able to respond, and that is what I offer my colleagues tonight.

Once again, a voice not heard so much in this debate was that of lone parents—that silent group mentioned by the Select Committee and one or two hon. Members in this debate, and championed so strongly by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). They made the point that the House must not forget why we made the changes in the first place. If we move too precipitately to change—the House should have some experience of this now—and if we lose the gains that we have made, that would be wrong.

I shall quote from a letter that I received yesterday morning from a lady in Northampton:

"I am just writing to say as a single parent through no fault of my own, I am very grateful for the CSA's help.

After two and a half years of no maintenance, it is now being sorted and feel I can now get on with my own life.

As a nurse I can now seek employment, as the maintenance will help with costs for a childminder giving my son and myself to have a better future to look to.

You have my full support and I just hope that any changes wil not affect us too much."

That is the honest and straightforward voice of a woman who has seen a number of changes.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose*——

Mr. Burt: No. I must refuse to give way to many of my hon. Friends because time is short.

[Mr. Burt]

I cannot recommend the Opposition's motion to the House because of my uncertainties about it.

Let me now comment on the question of absent parents —this may help hon. Members on both sides of the House. An absent parent does not mean an errant parent. *[Interruption.]* I am happy to reassure the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) that we know the difference. We are chasing errant parents who did not pay money before. We are trying to find them. We have a tracing mechanism that has been successful in 89 per cent. of cases. In the past, the men involved in those cases would have disappeared. We are now catching them, and it is right to do so. All that the term "absent parent" denotes is the distinction between them and the parent with care. It is not meant to be pejorative in any way.

We have proved that when we are offered solid reasons for reform, our commitment to review the legislation is good and we respond. I am not prepared without proper consideration to return to a system of discretion, which I fear is behind much of what the hon. Member for Garscadden has said.

We will look carefully at what the Act is doing, but it was introduced to improve a system of maintenance that was bad. The system left women dependent for too long on maintenance which was not there, and on the taxpayer on whom she did not want to be dependent. I am not going to allow the lone parent to return to that position, and I ask the House——

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place, and claimed to move, That the Question be now put.*

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 285, Noes 316.

Division No. 118] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*

Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas

Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thumham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 314, Noes 279.

Division No. 119] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric

Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick

Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the support of the all-party Select Committee on Social Security for the principles of the Child Support Act; reaffirms its own support for those principles, in particular that every parent has a duty to contribute to the maintenance of his or her child, that the amount of maintenance paid for children should be increased, and that the cost of bringing up children should fall on other taxpayers only if parents are unable to maintain their children themselves; recognises the inconsistency and arbitrariness of the previous court-based system, which gave insufficient priority to parental support of children and left many children on benefit; welcomes the important changes recently introduced by the Government in response to early experience of the new scheme and the Select Committee's report on its practical working; and approves the Government's intention to keep the arrangements under continuing close review as further experience is gained.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you recently any notification of a statement tomorrow at 11 am on the investigation report on the Beverly Allitt case? That subject should be brought before the House, and if that is to be done, the appropriate Department should have notified you tonight, so that people know in good time for tomorrow morning. Has the Department had the decency, good sense and sense of co-operation to do that?

Madam Speaker: I have not been informed of any statement this evening. As the hon Gentleman and the House are aware, the House and I do not need to be notified until 10 am if the Government wish to make a statement.

Further Education (Swale)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

10.31 pm

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): I warmly welcome this opportunity for a debate on the subject of opportunities for further education in Swale. It is a matter of great importance to my constituents, whether they be young people who may be seriously losing out or the employers —large and small—who may be deprived of the skills and professional work force on which we all depend.

Do I exaggerate when I say "losing out"? I do not think so. The latest analysis produced a startling figure. It showed that only 13 per cent. of Swale youngsters opt for further education, compared with 26 per cent. in the whole county of Kent. That suggests a serious educational deficit, and one that we can, and must, correct. Why it has occurred and how we can correct it are matters that I shall mention tonight.

I welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education. I thank him for his concern and the interest that he has already shown in the subject. I know that he already knows a lot about the borough of Swale. I shall mention some background facts that are crucial to the debate.

Swale in north Kent, most of which is covered by the Faversham constituency, is rightly perceived to be a most attractive part of the garden of England. It is the birthplace of the English fruit industry. It is proud of its orchards, hop gardens, north downs villages, estuarial land, coastline and bird reserves. Agriculture, horticulture and food distribution are still the largest sources of employment. What is not widely understood is that Swale is also one of the most important industrial areas of the south-east of England.

In 1989, the national percentage of people engaged in manufacturing industry was 18·3 per cent. In Swale, it was 29 per cent. The port of Sheerness on the Medway is one of the largest ports in the United Kingdom and—with the Olau line ferry—directly and indirectly generates thousands of jobs. The steel industry produces a significant percentage of United Kingdom steel production, pharmaceuticals, electricals, glass, ceramics, three major paper mills, a major brewery, plasterboard manufacturing, many large industrial estates and much more besides.

With our concentration on industry, construction and commuting to London, we have been hit very hard by the recession. As a result, the Sittingbourne and Sheppey travel-to-work area—that is, the borough of Swale—has the 10th highest unemployment rate in England, the 13th highest in the United Kingdom as a whole, and the highest rate of long-term unemployment in the county of Kent.

Because of that, our area has been granted assisted area status: that, coupled with the prospects for economic growth nationally, presents a great opportunity, but one that can be seized only if we can offer a skilled work force for new or expanding companies in manufacturing or the service industries.

Surveys show that among the top issues that the business community wants to be addressed are further education and skill training. Two of the main constraints on expansion locally were shown to be poor infrastructure and lack of skilled labour. We are moving rapidly ahead at last on infrastructure—on road and rail investment; the

question is, what are we doing about skill training and further education? There we must do more, and we need Ministers' help if we are to more ahead.

As I said earlier, the number of Swale youngsters entering further education is only half the figure for the rest of the county. Almost every other borough in Kent has its own dedicated further education facility; Swale has not. Students and trainees from Sittingbourne, Faversham, Sheerness and the surrounding district must travel to Canterbury, Maidstone or Medway.

That travelling time is the crux of the problem. Cross-county communication in Kent is never easy; even those living close to railway stations must spend two or three hours travelling each day. Someone living at the eastern end of Sheppey—perhaps that is the most extreme example—would have to travel for about four hours each way to and from Canterbury.

Let us take a BTEC business administration course at Canterbury college. It starts at 1 pm, and ends at 8.30 pm. Someone from Sittingbourne would get back to the station at 10 pm, which is too late for most 16-year-olds, and certainly impossible for anyone living on Sheppey. Those transport problems must be the main reason why young people from Swale are not entering further education at the same level as young people in the rest of the country. That is very serious.

Swale is a large borough, with a population of 116,000. That figure is rising fast, and already represents about 8 per cent. of the county of Kent. Further education funding for 1992-93 for the whole county was £34 million, and the Swale share of that could be seen as just under £3 million.

If we could direct resources of that order—or even part of that amount—into Swale, we could establish excellent local facilities of a good size. That is a goal worth aiming for, which should be in our minds when we consider the more immediate steps that can be taken. Our goal should surely be a Swale college, and I hope that that concept will stimulate a sympathetic response from the Department and neighbouring further-education establishments.

The right framework is already in place, in the form of the Swale training centre. That organisation has grown out of a remarkable level of co-operation between the business community and Swale borough council, the education service, Kent technical college, Swale chamber of commerce and many other agencies. It is important to underline the amount of backing and co-operation that the community would provide in support of a new further education initiative in Swale.

Swale Training Centre Ltd. is Kent's largest training provider, housed on a 1-hectare site in Sittingbourne. It has 6,000 sq m of workshops and other facilities, and is very well equipped to a very high standard. Those training facilities are very highly regarded, and are in a very good location. The training centre was founded in 1981, and now employs more than 100 staff and consultants. It assists the training and development of more than 3,000 people annually, and is accredited by most examining organisations and industry-led bodies.

Like others, I had hoped that the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 would be the springboard for expansion. The Act provides for the funding of external institutions such as the Swale training centre—further education colleges that cannot meet local needs because of, for example, location or lack of specialist provision. It required that any external institution had to be endorsed by an existing college—one within striking distance.

Funding decisions are taken by the Further Education Funding Council, which is clearly constrained by the Act. It is not obvious how much discretion it has when a neighbouring institution is not able or willing positively to endorse an external institution that would obviously be competing for funds from the same pot.

Swale training centre applied for funds last year, but the application was rejected. Although the application was routed through an existing college, the lack of positive endorsement was cited as a reason for rejection. This year we are applying again, and it is tremendously important that we secure funding for the first important step in the expansion of further education in our area.

Let us be clear what will happen if we do not get the funding: perhaps hundreds of youngsters will not get the training opportunities that they need and that could be made available in September.

The funds that we are seeking this year will be about £250,000, which would provide facilities for at least 100 full-time students. They would include a range of BTEC courses in vocational subjects such as mechanical engineering, business administration, motor vehicle mechanics, information technology and a range of courses for the new general national vocational qualification—equivalent to A-levels—in manufacturing, construction, catering, design and so on. There is a special problem, as the application forms are not yet available, although the courses start in September.

I am sure that the requirement for endorsement by an existing college was conceived with the best of intentions, but it should not be a straitjacket stifling new initiatives and local enterprise. So what is the position? The funding council might not statutorily be able to fund an external institution that has not received positive endorsement from an existing college.

Last November, however, the funding council, in consultation circular 93/34, put forward a number of options for the method of funding external institutions. One was sponsorship by a college, another was sponsorship by the local education authority, and a third was direct funding by the council to largely autonomous external institutions, of which Swale training centre is undoubtedly one. That suggests that the Act does not prevent direct funding. There is also an implication that approval could be allowed even where sponsorship falls short of enthusiastic endorsement by another existing further education college.

What specifically am I asking the Minister this evening? First, it would be greatly appreciated if he could come and see for himself just how good the Swale training centre is. I can assure him that he will be impressed. At the same time, he could experience some of the other delights of north Kent.

Secondly, will he use all his best endeavours to help ensure the success of our funding application this year? It may be that his officials at this early stage in the application—the application has not been submitted because we do not yet have the forms—could advise us on the best route to achieve approval in accordance with the requirements of the legislation. Where there's a will, there must be a way.

Thirdly, I should like to ask for my hon. Friend's encouragement and that of his Department for the concept of the Swale college, and again seek his support and advice on how best to attain that objective, albeit perhaps a longer-term one. It is not an issue of local pride, nor is it

[Sir Roger Moate]

about creating institutions for their own sake; it is about providing vitally needed training and further education to hundreds of young people. We have clearly identified a serious educational deficit. That gap—that deficit—exists for geographical reasons, which are unalterable. That gap exists in one of the most important manufacturing areas in the south of England. It is a gap that can and must be filled, and I repeat my hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can, and will, give us a helping hand tonight.

10.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): I must begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) on securing a debate about what is, I know, an important subject for many of his constituents—and, if I may say so, on the excellent manner in which he presented his case and the obvious concern that he showed for them, as ever. It is also a subject of general interest to the House.

My hon. Friend has spoken eloquently of the difficulties that confront some of his constituents in gaining access to further education. I will turn to his specific concerns in a moment, but first, I should like to say a few words about the Government's general policies for further education. Those have two main aims; to increase participation and to raise levels of achievement.

I am glad to say that the participation rate of 16 to 18-year-olds in education and training is at record levels. That marks a definite shift in cultural attitudes. It is now normal for young people to continue in education and training after the age of 16. The participation rate of 16-year-olds in full-time education—both further education and schools—in England in 1992-93 was 70 per cent., up from 42 per cent. in 1979-80

For 17-year-olds, the participation rate in full-time education in 1992-93 was 54 per cent., up from 27 per cent. in the same reference year. Adult participation has also increased, to the point at which adults now account for 70 per cent. of the total number of students in further education.

Those are impressive increases, but our aim must be to increase the figures still further. I am aware that, in certain parts of the country, participation rates are lower than elsewhere—indeed, there are considerable variations even in individual areas.

The Government have taken practical steps to ensure that we secure an increase in participation. In 1992, we announced that we were aiming for a record expansion of student numbers in further education of 25 per cent. during the three years to 1995-96. The expansion plans announced in the unified Budget allow for that expansion to be sustained, and for a further 3 per cent. increase in 1996-97 to maintain participation of 16 to 18-year-olds at the level that it will have reached in 1995-96.

That is against the background of the most difficult public expenditure round for many years. I believe that that shows clearly that further education continues to be at the heart of the Government's policies for raising levels of achievment and increasing skill levels.

Our plans will also enable a large step to be taken towards achievement of the national education and training targets. Those are the minimum that we must achieve if we are to match the levels of achievement of our competitors. I should like to take the opportunity of the debate to reaffirm the Government's commitment to achieving the targets.

That, then, is the national picture. It is one of which we can, I believe, be justifiably proud. I fully recognise, however, that it is important that the progress that we have made in recent years, and the further progress to which we are committed, are reflected throughout the country.

That is why the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 gave the Further Education Funding Council responsibility for securing the provision of facilities for all full-time education for 16 to 18-year-olds, and for certain types of part-time education and certain types of full-time education for those aged over 18.

The funding council carries out its duties principally through the 465 colleges in the further education sector. However, in drafting the legislation, we recognised the need for the council to take account of other providers. That is why the Further and Higher Education Act requires the council to have regard to education provided by other institutions, such as schools and city technology colleges.

In recognition of the diversity of local provision, the Act also allows institutions outside the further education sector —known, as my hon. Friend said, as "external institutions"—to request funding from the funding council for providing certain types of part-time courses for 16 to 19-year-olds and full-time courses for older students who fall within the council's responsibility. They include courses which lead to academic or vocational qualifications, access courses and basic skills courses. All are courses of national significance. As my hon. Friend said, the mechanism by which they may apply for funding is known as the "sponsorship" mechanism, the relevant provision being section 6(5) of the Act.

I understand that that is the procedure under which Swale training centre sought funding unsuccessfully in the current year—1993-94—and under which it will be seeking funds from the Further Education Funding Council in 1994-95. I can perhaps lay to rest my hon. Friend's fears about the forms. I am advised that they are now available from the funding council, and that they need to be returned by, I think, 21 March. I suggest that he advises the college to get on with its application.

In discussing the Swale case, it is important to be clear how the procedure is designed to work. When an external institution wishes to seek funding from the Further Education Funding Council, it must first put its case to a college in the FE sector. It is then for that college to decide whether to support the request and to make the application for funding to the funding council on behalf of the external institution.

The criteria against which the sector college—the "sponsoring body" in the legal parlance—must reach a decision are clearly laid down in the Act. The Act states that, where there are no arrangements for the provision by any other institution of any facilities of the kind specified in the application for people living in the locality, or where the arrangements for such provision are inadequate, the sponsoring body should submit the application for funding to the FEFC.

Following extensive consultations with colleges and local education authorities, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made an order specifying all institutions in the new further education sector as "sponsoring bodies". However, my Department has also made it clear in

guidance that, in order to fulfil its role, the sponsoring body has to be able to take an objective view of the adequacy of the provision available for the population of its locality. "Locality" must be interpreted sensibly; it will apply differently in urban and rural areas. In most cases, the suitable choice of sponsoring body will be the nearest sector college to the applicant institution or, if there is more than one within a reasonable distance, one of them.

As for last year's procedure, the funding council has told us that the funding request from the Swale centre was not supported by the sponsoring college—in this case Canterbury college—on the basis that the facilities already available for the local population were adequate. Indeed, I gather that it was the college's view that Swale training centre's application would duplicate existing provision, including franchised arrangements between Canterbury college and local schools. The funding council did not, therefore, make any funding available.

My hon. Friend made much of the inadequacy of opportunities for further education in the Swale area, but Canterbury college's decision to refuse to support the request by Swale training centre for funding to alleviate the perceived lack of opportunity does not appear to square with that. Moreover, in assessing adequacy of opportunities, any relevant provision offered by schools in the area needs also to be taken into account.

In order to review the effectiveness of the section 6(5) procedures that I have described, the funding council employed a consultant last year to visit the Swale training centre and similar institutions. I understand that the consultant reported that courses of the type for which Swale training centre was requesting funding were already being provided in at least two of Kent's further education colleges—Canterbury and Mid-Kent—whether directly or through a franchising arrangement of some sort.

I fully appreciate the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend about the difficulties and long journeys faced by many of his constituents, especially the younger ones, in travelling from Swale to Canterbury and Mid-Kent colleges. Public transport is not one of my responsibilities, but it is clearly an issue that Swale training centre will wish to stress in making its request for funding in 1994-95, and something which the sponsoring body will need to take into careful account.

My hon. Friend argued that the section 6(5) mechanism —a mechanism that we introduced to ensure that bodies outside the further education sector, such as the Swale training centre, could have access to funds from the Further Education Funding Council—did not appear to be working. But I must beg to disagree. The funding council made available a total of £50 million in 1993-94 in support of applications from external institutions. Those allocations were designed to deliver broad stability from the previous year, with some growth in the following year. I believe that the procedures have worked well.

Two important indicators have emerged. First, there are clear signs of buoyancy in demand for courses. Secondly, the procedures have led to increased co-operation between institutions in the further education and local education authority sectors.

It is not for me or for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make the judgment as to the adequacy of local provision. The Act very properly gives that decision to the institution which best knows the extent of both existing provision and demand in the area—the local college in the further education sector.

There are safeguards to those procedures. If an external institution feels that the decision of the local FE college is misguided, it can approach the funding council direct, which could review the case with the sponsoring college.

My hon. Friend expressed fears that potential sponsoring bodies would not support an application from Swale training centre, because it would be seen as a competitor. As we made clear during the passage of the Bill, the funding council—as well as my ministerial colleagues and myself—would be concerned by evidence that a college was blocking an application for purely self-interested reasons.

In the last resort, the external institution may complain to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the sponsoring college's view of the adequacy of local provision is not soundly based, or that the college—or indeed the council itself—had failed in its statutory duty. I should add, however, that, for the Secretary of State to be able to intervene, it would be necessary to show that the sponsoring body's view about the adequacy of provision was not simply different from his or the council's, but manifestly ill founded. I should expect that to be a hard test to pass.

My hon. Friend spoke about the support which the Swale training centre has had locally for its application, and I have myself seen letters from the local education authority to that effect. I may add, however, that one of the factors which the funding council took into account in considering applications from external institutions via sponsoring bodies in 1993-94—the first year of the council's operation—was whether the courses for which funding was being requested had been funded in the previous year by the local education authority.

That was because the council was quite rightly concerned to ensure continuity of provision wherever possible. I understand that, when the council came to consider the new request from the Swale training centre, it noted that the request was for the funding of new provision which Kent education authority had not supported the year before. Thus, even if Canterbury college had supported last year's request from Swale for the current year, the council would not have been inclined to support it.

For 1994-95, the funding council is introducing new procedures for funding external institutions, which will allow more scope for funding new provision, on the basis of the council's new funding formula. Despite last year's unsuccessful application, it is therefore open to Swale training centre to put in a request for funding once again, but it must be put in promptly.

I repeat that the sponsoring college can make a formal application to the funding council only if it is convinced that there is no alternative provision or that alternative provision is inadequate. The centre may therefore be well advised to consider very carefully the nature of the provision available in alternative institutions in the area, and Canterbury and Mid-Kent colleges in particular, before making its request for funding.

However, as I have also said, in the event that one of those colleges declines to sponsor the application, it is open to the centre to approach the funding council direct. The funding council would then be able to consider the request itself, and negotiate how best to deal with it with the sponsoring body.

I was interested to hear my hon. Friend's remarks about the long-term plans for a Swale college of further education. He will know that I cannot comment on those

[Mr. Tim Boswell]

this evening. He may, however, like to know a little about the procedure for bringing an existing institution into the further education sector.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has powers under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to establish, by order, a further education corporation to conduct an existing institution. Given the funding council's statutory duties with respect to securing the provision of further education, it is my right hon. Friend's view that any proposal for the establishment of a new FE corporation should fall to be considered by the council in the first instance.

Where the council favours such a proposal, the institution would need to publish proposals for incorporation in accordance with certain regulations. My right hon. Friend would then take account of the council's recommendations before taking a decision whether to make the necessary order.

We have had an interesting debate, and I recognise the strength of feeling in the Swale community, which my hon. Friend has so convincingly and eloquently conveyed. However, I believe that the procedures in place for ensuring that the case for funding the Swale training centre is properly considered are adequate and have been properly followed. I have no doubt that they can work again in the coming year if the Swale centre makes another request.

My hon. Friend will understand from what I have said that it is not a matter in which I or my right hon. Friend have any direct locus. We have set the framework; it is now for the Further Education Funding Council and for local institutions in the area to make it work.

I conclude by thanking my hon. Friend for his contribution to the debate, and for opening up the topic. I express the hope that I shall be able to accept his kind invitation to visit Swale so that I can see the area for myself and the institution before too long.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 11 February 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Ethnic Minorities

9.34 am

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 500 of my constituents in Cambridge. I should explain that the petition is a little unusual, in that the top page is written in English but the rest of the pages are in either Cantonese, Bengali or Gujerati. That is because of the cuts in section 11 funding, which will disadvantage my constituents and their families.

The petition says:

To the House of Commons. The petition of residents of Cambridge and elsewhere. Declares that the proposed Home Office cuts in section 11 funding will disadvantage our children who currently receive help at school funded by Section 11 money. Our Education Authority has no money to replace that which will no longer come from Government. This means that spending in Cambridgeshire will be cut from the current £2,000,000 for 1993-94 to only £1,000,000 in 1995/96. The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Home Secretary to repeal the decision to cut Section 11 funding.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Tobacco Advertising Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.36 am

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I wish to thank the co-sponsors of the Bill, for without their support its passage to Second Reading would have been immeasurably more difficult.

I also wish to record the support of two friends of the House whose loss we have had to bear in recent weeks. I know that, like me, Members on both sides of the House regret their absence. Jo Richardson, the late Member of Parliament for Barking, in spite of being so ill, wrote to me on 24 January saying that she would certainly vote with me today, but would have to be nodded through the Division Lobby; and Jimmy Boyce, the late Member of Parliament for Rotherham, had pledged his support for the Bill. I hope that the House can quickly conclude the business today to allow time for many Members who are travelling to Rotherham to be in time for Jimmy's memorial service, which is being held later today.

The Bill has been brought before the House because it is an essential public health measure, one which was first recommended to the Government in 1962 by the Royal College of Physicians, when it published its first report on the health effects of smoking. Since then, both Labour and Conservative parties have occupied the Government Benches, and we still await a total ban on tobacco advertising and promotion.

Since 1962, according to the Royal College of Physicians, more than 4 million citizens of the United Kingdom have died from lung cancer, heart diseases, stroke, emphysema and other diseases caused by smoking. The House now has a real chance to put to an end the promotion of the cause of those diseases.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): The hon. Member mentioned the Conservative and Labour parties. Does he think that it might be helpful if there was a register of interests of the leaders of parties who smoke? I know that the leader of the Labour party does not smoke, and we know that the Prime Minister does not smoke, but I believe that the leader of the Liberal Democrats is a smoker. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that that will contribute to the debate?

Mr. Barron: The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) should wait to see what the Bill is about before he makes such ill-informed comments. This is not a party political issue. Those who have died and who continue to die from diseases caused by smoking were or are supporters of all political parties. The children who are being recruited to smoking—500 every day on average—have parents who support all political parties. This is an issue of public health and, as such, should not divide the House.

I have had several letters from interested parties suggesting that the Bill is about banning smoking or banning freedom. The Bill is not about banning smoking. Adult smokers who are properly informed of the dangers of smoking have a right to smoke, provided that they do not

[Mr. Barron]

cause harm to other people. However, the individual right to smoke does not extend to children, and it does not extend to the unrestricted advertising and promotion of the product.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Some 400 or 500 of my constituents are employed by Gallaghers; I have no commercial interest of my own. I do not smoke, and I have caned children for smoking because I do not believe that children should smoke—*[Interruption.]* Let it be noted. The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) rightly says that people must have the freedom to choose whether to smoke. Why does he object to the argument of the Pre-School Playgroups Association, which talks of advertising freedom? It is an important freedom, and it must be wrong to dictate to advertisers. I wait to be convinced.

Mr. Barron: I am coming to that point now. If the House gives me 10 minutes in which to explain what the Bill is about, I shall be more than pleased to give way to any hon. Member who wants to ask about the intention of the Bill.

There is no fundamental right to advertise and promote products in our society. It is a commercial privilege to advertise—a privilege that carries certain responsibilities. The advertising and promotion of tobacco products is already banned on radio and television, and is further restricted by clauses in the voluntary agreement. The argument against a ban on tobacco advertising has already been conceded. It was conceded in this country in 1965 when we took cigarette advertising off television. I hope, therefore, that the House is clear what the Bill is not about.

I now come to what the Bill is about. Clause 1 makes it an offence to publish or cause to be published an advertisement for a tobacco product. The object of the Bill is to put an end to the promotion of an addictive and dangerous drug; half-measures are not enough. The definition needs to cover not only posters and press advertisements, but publicity linked to sponsorship of events and other such devices for getting round a ban. That is the fundamental aim of the Bill.

Under clause 1(2), some point of sale advertising is exempted. Point of sale advertising is allowed for specialist tobacconists, but it must not be visible from outside the shop. For the ordinary retailer, who also sells sweets and comics to children, the Bill states that only a notice of brands and their prices, complete with a health warning, is permissible.

The Bill also gives a definition of what is meant by an advertisement for a tobacco product. The wide definition in clause 1(6) covers

"any form of communication which might reasonably be considered to promote . . . smoking."

Subsection (7) gives guidance on how to interpret that definition. The wide definition is vital, and experience abroad shows why. One would scarcely know that there was a ban on tobacco advertising in Italy, as tens of million of pounds are spent every year on television commercials and other promotions for Marlboro shirts and Camel watches.

One has to read the small print on television screens to see that one Marlboro advertisement is purportedly for racing helmets for grand prix drivers. I do not believe that Italy is a nation of grand prix drivers. Such advertisements are the means of getting round advertising bans.

Tobacco companies sponsor sports and arts events, not as an act of corporate generosity, but as an advertising opportunity. M. Whitehead from Gallagher International said:

"Sports sponsorship . . . is a form of advertising which enables us to introduce glamour and excitement."

A Rothmans spokesman said:

"No one hands over big cheques just to give themselves a warm fuzzy feeling."

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Barron: I will give way in a minute. I want first to address some of the comments made about the Bill this week by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle).

The tobacco industry spends about £8 million a year on sponsorship. It is limited to that amount by the current voluntary agreement. That figure represents about 3 per cent. of commercial sponsorship of sport and should not be too difficult to replace. It was the Government supported by the hon. Gentleman who, in 1985, introduced the restrictions on sports advertising precisely because Gallagher International and others were using sport to promote tobacco.

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members should make two points clear from the start. First, is the Bill part of Labour party policy? There seems to be some disparity of opinion between the hon. Gentleman, his hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and his hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam).

The Labour party did not mention a ban on advertising in its manifesto or in its charter for sport. Are Labour Members now saying that it is party policy that sports promotion by tobacco companies will be banned under a future Labour Government?

Secondly, is the hon. Gentleman——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Interventions should, by their nature, be short. That intervention is long enough.

Mr. Barron: It is interesting that the hon. Member for Luton, North seems to have become a custodian of Labour party policy. He seems to have stepped away from the position in party politics that I thought he held.

The hon. Gentleman cannot have been listening earlier, because I said that the Bill was a private Member's Bill. The only people I consulted before introducing the Bill were those concerned about public health. Whether the Bill is part of Labour party policy is not a matter for me. It is an issue of public health, and I believe that that should override all party politics in the House.

The Test and County Cricket Board has written to me recently saying that it is opposed to a ban on sports sponsorship by tobacco companies. The letter may have been prompted by a radio interview I gave a few days ago. Although the board may be opposed to a ban, it has previously said that other sponsors could be found to take the place of Benson and Hedges. Its spokesman, Peter Smith, said in an article in the *Yorkshire Post* in May 1971:

"We get a number of inquiries asking when a contract comes to an end. I expect we would be able to sell the Benson and Hedges again to a new sponsor."

Similarly, David Harrison, the chief executive of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association said in the same article:

"If we had to replace our tobacco sponsor, we believe we could do so".

A number of other options are clearly becoming available. Perhaps the new national lottery could provide a valuable bridge. I want hon. Members to remember that only 3 per cent. of sports sponsorship is tobacco advertising. The Bill would not prejudice sport. I have been active in sport in an amateur capacity for most of my life, and I watch one of the finest football teams in Great Britain—Rotherham United. It is a non-smoking club; that is its policy. We do not need smoking to be involved in sport.

The consequence of the wide definition of tobacco advertising, especially taken with the wide definition of the word "published" in English law, is that the Bill excludes innocent activities such as mentioning the name "Rothmans" in a conversation. That might otherwise be penalised. Clause 1(3) sets out the circumstances in which an offence will not be committed. Paragraph (a) exempts personal, unpaid endorsements of a tobacco product in conversation or letters and the like.

Paragraph (b) exempts communications that are not paid for by the tobacco industry and do not aim to promote a specific tobacco product. That covers journalism and innocent republications of tobacco advertisements in health, educational or historical contexts and the like. Sub-paragraph (c) exempts trade advertisements. Tobacco manufacturers would still be allowed to advertise to the retail trade. Sub-paragraph (d) exempts small-scale imports of foreign publications. Sub-paragraph (e) exempts materials produced in the United Kingdom for export.

In both sub-paragraphs (d) and (e), the limit is set at 5 per cent. of the total number of copies, or 1,000 copies, whichever is the lower. I recognise that that would be a point of debate if the Bill became law, and at some later stage I would be prepared to consider that issue.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Does the hon. Gentleman realise that, if his Bill becomes law, it will be a devastating blow to health education? Is he aware that 17 per cent. of the space on most posters is taken up by the Government health warning and, in many cases, the message of the other 83 per cent. of the space is so obscure that one does not even know what product is advertised? He claims that £100 million a year is spent by the tobacco companies. Therefore, it could be suggested that £17 million will be lost to health education, which is 1·7 times as much as the Health Education Authority spends on preventing the promotion of tobacco.

Mr. Barron: I shall move on to that subject, but I agree with two words of the hon. Gentleman's intervention: "so obscure".

Paragraph (4) of clause 1 recognises a difficulty that would otherwise arise from the ban of indirect advertising using tobacco names or non-tobacco goods. As far as I see, it would affect one company only—Alfred Dunhill Ltd., which began as a luxury goods business and has remained so, but which has licensed its name to a tobacco company for many years. The paragraph will allow Alfred Dunhill Ltd. to continue to advertise its luxury goods but will not, of course, allow Rothmans International plc to advertise Dunhill cigarettes.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): On a point of clarification, would the Dunhill masters golf championships be able to continue?

Mr. Barron: That is sports sponsorship, and it would be stopped. Did not the hon. Gentleman hear what I said earlier in relation to sports sponsorship?

Paragraph (5) provides transitional exemptions, and would allow a year's grace for permanent structures of advertisements such as those at Piccadilly circus. Clause 1 covers the great majority of tobacco promotion, but clause 2 deals with free samples, coupon schemes, gifts and other promotions that tobacco companies use. I do not know whether any Conservative Members have ever been to Silk Cut discos, which are promoted to encourage young kids to get to know product names.

To sum up the rest of the Bill, clause 3 provides powers for the Secretary of State to make further regulations if anybody is trying to avoid the implications of the Bill. Clause 4 lays down the penalties and the policing of it, clause 5 gives a simple definition of a tobacco product, and clauses 6 and 7 deal with the usual formalities.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I agree that this is a cross-party Bill, but will the hon. Gentleman accept that, in Northern Ireland, there 17 times more victims of tobacco-related diseases than of terrorism? Is it possible that those Conservative Members who are objecting to the Bill are reflecting the view of a former Secretary of State who talked about an "acceptable level of violence"?

Mr. Barron: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. It sums up the crux of the Bill and what it fundamentally attacks in public health in the United Kingdom.

Why ban tobacco advertising? While adult smoking rates are falling, smoking rates in children are not. In 1982, according to the Office of Population, Census and Statistics, 35 per cent. of adults were regular smokers, and by 1992, the figure had fallen to 28 per cent.—a significant improvement.

For 15-year-olds in 1982, regular smokers made up 24 per cent. of the population and 23 per cent. in 1992. There has been no real change. By the age of 15, eight out of 10 people who become regular adult smokers have begun smoking. It is clearly not a mature decision that those people reach. At a rate of 500 per day, those children are replacing the smokers who quit or die.

Much research has been conducted on the factors that influence the uptake and maintenance of smoking by children. The major influences include smoking by parents and friends, health education, the price of tobacco, its availability and advertising and promotion. I shall take each of those in turn.

There is a limit on what the House can do about the smoking behaviour of parents and friends of would-be smokers. The House has made appropriations to support health education on smoking, and the Government have anounced a new programme targeted at parents, which will cost £4 million each year for the next three years. Although that expenditure is welcome, it is small compared with the £100 million spent every year on tobacco advertising and sponsorship.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Barron: In a few minutes.

The Government's long-standing record on price policy is commendable, especially in the light of the Chancellor's latest commitment to increase tobacco duties by at least 3

[Mr. Barron]

per cent. a year in real terms in future. However, price policy alone will not work. It has not worked to reduce teenage smoking rates—15-year-olds smoke as much today as they did 10 years ago.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman comes from a northern consitutency, so he will be aware of the "Reg" campaign. Does he agree that that was in breach of the voluntary code and was targeted at children? All those advertisements plastered on billboards near schools must have had an effect on children.

Mr. Barron: Since I am from a northern constituency, the hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to know that I shall be mentioning "Reg" and the Advertising Standards Authority later.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Would the hon. Gentleman address two points before he moves on? First, does he agree that his Bill is a private Member's Bill, that it is not a matter for party politics, and that the House should be clear on that? Secondly, does he agree that his Bill is sincerely aimed at reducing and stopping the take-up of smoking among 15-year-olds and those below that age? If he does agree, it is a wholly laudable, key aim to the Bill, since, if those 15-year-olds smoke for 40 years and do not die of heart disease or lung cancer, they are likely to become respiratory cripples.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman's intervention identifies the main issues of public health, especially that of young and vulnerable children, which are addressed by the Bill.

The third reason for young people smoking concerns availability, by which I mean the illegal sales of tobacco to children under 16. That issue has been addressed and was initiated by the private Member's Bill sponsored by my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). That Bill was warmly supported by the House, and has been admirably backed by the imaginative initiatives of Parents Against Tobacco and the Health Education Authority, with the full support of the Secretary of State for Health.

There is too much evidence for me to review of the influence that tobacco advertising has on consumption by young people. The most recent comprehensive review of the evidence was undertaken by the Department of Health and its chief economic advertiser, Dr. Clive Smee.

The Smee report found that tobacco advertising affected total consumption, not just brand share. There were 68 statistically significant results which pointed to a connection between advertising spending and tobacco consumption and only two indicating the opposite. The report also found that countries with stronger controls on advertising for the purpose of protecting public health and not trade monopolies tended to have lower consumption of tobacco. The report found that, in individual countries, the balance of evidence based on a study of the relationship between advertising spending and consumption over time showed that advertising had a positive effect on consumption.

When enough detailed evidence was gathered for a proper study, it was found that in four countries, advertising bans—excluding the effects of other factors—produced a significant drop in consumption. In Canada, tobacco consumption fell by 4 per cent., in New Zealand by 5·5 per cent., in Finland by 6·7 per cent., and in Norway by 9 per cent.

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): The hon. Gentleman rightly quotes the Smee report, which includes some of the arguments that he has advanced. Does he concede that page 15 of the Smee report states that, although some other studies have found statistically significant links between advertising and consumption, his study failed to do so? Is it not about time that proponents of an advertising ban quoted accurately from the Smee report?

Mr. Barron: Before I end my speech, I shall quote not only from the Smee report, but from a Government publication that the hon. Gentleman received this week about the implications of the Smee report on public health.

Other figures that I have received this week—not represented in the Smee report—showed that the drop in tobacco consumption following advertising bans in France was 5·2 per cent. and in Australia 6 per cent.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that, in the conclusion to the report, Clive Smee, the Government chief health economist, said:

"The balance of evidence thus supports the conclusion that advertising does have a positive effect on consumption."

He reviewed the position in other countries and concluded:

"In each case the banning of advertising was followed by a fall in smoking on a scale which cannot reasonably be attributed to other factors."

Does he agree that it is possible for Conservative Members to pick odd sentences from the report, but the key factor is to study its conclusions and those of the Government chief health economist? They conclude that there is a link between advertising and smoking.

Mr. Barron: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. We should also consider the Government view on the Smee report, and the material that they have published this week.

It is not difficult to conclude that, if similar effects were seen in the United Kingdom following an advertising ban, between 4,400 and 9,900 premature deaths from tobacco-related diseases could be avoided each year. As the effects of an advertising ban would be expected to work with other programmes designed to reduce smoking, the reductions in deaths might be even greater.

Critics of an advertising ban say that advertising does not influence consumption and has no effect on children. The evidence suggests otherwise. A study conducted by MORI for the Health Education Authority in 1990 found that children smoked the most heavily advertised brands at higher rates than among adults.

In 1990, £15 million was spent advertising Benson and Hedges and 47 per cent. of 11 to 14-year-olds chose that brand compared with 21 per cent. of adult smokers. Embassy spent £10 million, and was chosen by 22 per cent. of child smokers compared with 15 per cent of adult smokers. Silk Cut spent £9·9 million and was chosen by 29 per cent. of child smokers and 12 per cent. of adult smokers. Marlboro spent £5 million and was chosen by 13 per cent. of child smokers and 4 per cent. of adult smokers. In each case, a greater proportion of child smokers than adult smokers preferred the most heavily advertised brands.

The Advertising Association sent a booklet to all Members of Parliament this week, claiming that the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys had found that some of the most important factors in the uptake of smoking were, first, being a girl, secondly, having brothers or sisters who smoked, thirdly, having parents who smoked and fourthly, having relatively less negative views about smoking.

It is understandable that children should have negative views about smoking. It would seem that the advice of parents, teachers and health education campaigns are having an effect. How does a child acquire a less negative view on smoking? What instruments exist that help to form their opinions? Clearly, advertising is important in the formation of less negative views on smoking, and the Advertising Association has been damned by its own booklet.

A research study from Australia found that, while teacher-led education programmes can reduce the rate of smoking by up to 6 per cent., advertising encourages it in both sexes by about 15 per cent. Tobacco advertising works against education. That is obvious if one looks at the matter in any detail.

There is unacceptable competition for the hearts and lungs of our children if tobacco advertisers spend £10 for every £1 spent by health educators. It is a disadvantage, and it should not continue. We should either increase expenditure on education on the dangers of smoking to the level spent by the tobacco industry, or we should get rid of the counter-education. If we do not, smokers will continue to be recruited from our children at the current rate.

My constituency of Rother Valley provides a good example, as do those of other hon. Members. There are about 1,300 15-year-olds in my constituency, of whom about 300 are regular smokers. If they keep smoking and stay brand-loyal for the rest of their lives, which is what the tobacco companies want them to do, at least one in three, or about 100, will die from cancer, heart disease or other diseases caused by smoking.

No other threat of that size, including those posed by hard drugs, alcohol and motor vehicles, faces the children in the Rother Valley or in any other constituency. For every 1 per cent. reduction in consumption in the Rother Valley, one premature death will be prevented. Across the country, a 1 per cent. fall in tobacco could be expected to prevent 1,100 premature deaths. The House should be proud to be responsible for lessening smoke-related deaths.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Gentleman enjoys widespread and strong support on both sides of the House. Is he aware that eight directors of health in the Mersey region have issued figures that show that of the 480,000 children, some 80,000 of them—one in six—are likely to die of smoking-related diseases? Hon. Members should take notice of those statistics, and not the blandishments of the advertising industry.

Mr. Barron: I agree with every word that the hon. Gentleman said.

Monday's Government press release on the voluntary agreement is full of inconsistencies—I hope that the Minister does not mind me saying that. In that release, the Minister referred to effective and long-standing voluntary agreements that have "served us well". It goes on to say that the agreement is to be strengthened. Why does it need to be strengthened if it has worked so well? It does not work well, and has not. Children's smoking rates have not changed in the past 10 years.

The voluntary agreement covers women's magazines. It prohibits cigarette advertising in magazines

"whose primary readership is women in the age range from 15 to 24 years."

Despite that, tobacco advertisers still promote the leading cause of lung cancer among more than 7 million female readers of other magazines. They do so at a time when female lung cancer death rates are rising and have overtaken breast cancer death rates as the no. 1 cause of cancer death in some parts of the United Kingdom. It borders on lunacy to continue to allow the promotion of a major cause of an increasing epidemic of lung cancer in women. When asked about that, the advertising industry ducks for cover and says, "We cannot possibly comment, because we are not health experts." As long as the industry can continue to advertise cigarettes, it does not care.

Recently, there has been the appalling farce of 'Reg', a comic character used to promote Regal cigarettes in the north of England, Scotland and Wales. Despite warnings 12 months ago from Action on Smoking and Health and *Campaign* about Reg's popular appeal to children, the Advertising Standards Authority did nothing about the 'Reg' campaign until it was confronted with excellent research commissioned at a cost of £20,000 by the Health Education Authority. That research showed that Reg was recognised by 91 per cent. of children as promoting cigarettes, but that he was recognised by only 48 per cent. of adults. He was twice as popular with children.

The ASA recommended that the 'Reg' campaign be withdrawn, and Imperial Tobacco, the maker of Regal, apparently obliged. In fact, at the press conference that I held to announce my intention to introduce the Bill, it was mentioned to me for the first time that 'Reg' was going to be withdrawn because of what was happening with the campaign in certain parts of Britain.

One month later, a mother from Cardiff brought to my attention an advertisement for the 'Reg' Welsh snooker challenge. That advertisement was given to her in a busy shopping centre, when many children were present. On her behalf, I complained to the Advertising Standards Authority, and last week I was advised that that campaign was the only exemption because the promotion had commenced before the ASA's ruling in December.

Last week, we found billboards in the same areas of Britain where 'Reg' is well known by children—that is, Scotland, the north of England and Wales—advertising "a farewell address". The advertisement is in the same colour and in the same style as the previous 'Reg' campaign.

On Monday morning, I was involved in a discussion on Radio Leeds. The presenter of the programme, Stephen Le Fevre, questioned Caroline Crawford from the Advertising Standards Authority about the new campaign that had come about in the north. As for the farewell address, Le Fevre said:

"It has got 'Reg' in there—are they not just making a fool of your recommendations?"

Caroline Crawford replied:

"Certainly, they are in a way, saying goodbye to the 'Reg' campaign."

People are flouting a sensible interpretation of the code, or the code is so defective that all that one has to do is to remove Reg's face from a poster, and the poster falls within the voluntary agreement.

[Mr. Barron]

How long will it before young people do not recognise that advertising campaign? How many others will be encouraged to smoke? It has been confirmed this week that removing the face from the poster enables the poster to be within the voluntary agreement, and that will make fools of us, the voluntary agreements and the Advertising Standards Authority for ever and a day. The campaign is also making a fool of attempted restriction.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): There is confusion among hon. Members. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the ban on radio and television advertising of cigarettes and, more recently, cigars is not voluntary, but is a Government ban?

Mr. Barron: There is speculation in the media that, as a consequence of my Bill, there might be further Government bans. Perhaps we should go one step further.

The essence of the cigarette code is:

"advertisements should not encourage people, particularly the young, to start smoking. People who already smoke should not be enticed to increase their level of smoking or to smoke to excess".

That objective is contradicted by the Government's action plan.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman is making an excellent speech. I am glad that he has started to comment more fully on the 'Reg' campaign. I have just received a note from *Hansard,* asking what the 'Reg' campaign stands for and to confirm the 'Reg' campaign. It is clear that people in the south of England are not familiar with that campaign.

They do not know the extent to which it is plastered over billboards, certainly in my constituency, near schools, and is clearly aimed at youngsters. There might be hon. Members who still do not understand exactly what the campaign is. It concerns a balding, somewhat absurd character who thinks—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps I should leave it to the hon. Gentleman to continue his speech and make it clear exactly what 'Reg' means.

Mr. Barron: I gratefully accept that invitation. The hon. Gentleman correctly described Reg. He wants people to smoke Regal cigarettes. The first Reg advert showed a Regal cigarette packet, with Reg's finger covering the letters A and L. Reg says:

"I smoke 'em because my name's on 'em."

He then went on to "party politics", did our character Reg. He said:

"If you drop ash on the carpet, you won't get invited again."

We then go on to Reg on the greenhouse effect. He said:

"My tomatoes seem to grow better under glass."

Reg on television:

"No, I'm not. I'm on a poster."

Reg on train spotting:

"There's one."

That is Reg's schoolground humour to induce young people to recognise that as cigarette advertising, and 91 per cent. of them do. Now we have everything but Reg. An advertisement shows a suitcase with a label stating "Dunadvertisin' Bognor Regis"—some people in the north might say "Bognor Reg's"—and it flouts anything that we can do to protect young people from tobacco. That is what voluntary agreements are delivering, and it is not good enough. We must protect young children.

When I explained the cigarette code, I said that it contradicted the Government's action plan. Paragraph 4.52 of the Smee report states:

"The review supports the Government view that there is a relationship between tobacco advertising and total tobacco consumption".

It further states:

"the Government believes that it would be desirable to take further steps to reduce the potential for tobacco advertising to encourage people to start smoking or to smoke more".

It is my firm belief, given the way that the voluntary agreement has failed to protect children from Reg, that the only way to ensure that tobacco advertisements do not have any influence on our children is to get rid of them. I invite hon. Members to join me, all the royal medical colleges, the National Consumer Council and, more important, the 60 per cent. of the British public who, in every survey, have said that they want to ban tobacco advertising.

I invite hon. Members to join me not only in the Lobby today but throughout the passage of the Bill, so that we can provide proper protection for the nation, not the half-hearted protection that we have in voluntary codes.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It must be clear that there is great interest in the Bill. Therefore, I ask succeeding speakers to be as brief as possible, so that as many hon. Members as possible may contribute.

10.18 am

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I must make it clear that I am the unpaid national chairman of the National Asthma Campaign. Although that is not a declarable interest, I do not want anybody to be under any misapprehension.

Let us stop some of the cackle. I congratulate the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on bringing forward the Bill and on an extensive speech in which he dealt with many interruptions. In cutting the cackle, let us be in no doubt: smoking is unpleasant, it is dirty, it is physically dangerous, and now, with conclusive evidence of the effect of passive smoking, it is an anti-social habit when carried out in public.

Those are some of the basic reasons why we want to ensure that smoke decreases. No one supporting the Bill wishes to ban smoking—that must be left to individuals to decide. However, people should not be lulled into smoking by advertising that suggests that it is socially an advantage to smoke, that smoking makes young people become members of a peer group, that it somehow enhances a person's attraction to the opposite sex or, indeed, that it relieves stress. None of those things are true and they need to be nailed immediately.

In passing, I pay a tribute on the death of Josephine Richardson. I knew Josephine probably better than any other hon. Members in her early days because we fought our first political battle over a seat on the Hornsey borough council back in 1951. She was the thorn in my flesh when I was the chairman of the Hornsey housing committee for many years. She suffered a great deal in the latter part of her life but still gave service to the House, and hon. Members should give credit to her.

If what I previously suggested is not true, what is true? Smoking is the largest preventable cause of death. Hundreds of people die from smoking-related diseases every day. Smoking is also a major cause of serious ill health, and it is estimated that more than 250,000

admissions to hospital every year are due to smoking-related illness. It is increasingly clear that smoking not only affects the health of those who smoke; passive smoking has become a significant public health issue. Those are not my words; they are the Government's words contained in a booklet.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): My right hon. Friend has talked about passive smoking and made some very dogmatic comments about it. Did he read the article in *The Times* this week which suggested that medically the evidence is less strong than he is dogmatically asserting?

Sir Peter Emery: I did not read the article in *The Times*. All I can say is that all the medical evidence on asthma —I can talk about that from personal experience—is that asthmatics find that passive smoking is a specific trigger for further asthma attacks. There is no doubt about that —it is factually correct.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that one of the most moving occasions in the House was about a year ago in the Jubilee room when Roy Castle, the entertainer, came here? Someone who had never smoked in his entire life had lung cancer as a direct result of passive smoking.

Sir Peter Emery: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his added support and the evidence that he has provided.

"Smoking causes cancer". "Smoking causes heart disease". "Smoking causes fatal diseases". "Smoking kills". "Smoking when pregnant harms your baby". "Do not make children breathe your smoke". Those are not my statements, but they are fairly damaging. It has now been agreed legally that those statements will be rotated on all cigarette packets. Surely that is a sign that even tobacco companies accept that those statements have to be made and are, indeed, true.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Is not my right hon. Friend defeating his own object, as it is understood that the vast majority of people in this country understand the dangers of smoking because advertising has put across the message about smoking harming health?

Sir Peter Emery: I like my hon. Friend very much but I find the logic of that question slightly absurd. If it is proved—as it is—that advertising must have some effect on increasing smoking, whatever the advertisements say, they are still being put forward with the intention of making people smoke more. Otherwise, why do companies advertise? I shall come to that point in a moment.

I shall add to the important evidence in the Smee report, which was referred to by the hon. Member for Rother Valley. That report

"concluded that the evidence from four countries where tobacco advertising has been banned indicated a 'significant effect' on tobacco consumption."

That is not a fool making that assumption; it is the economic adviser to the Department of Health. At the behest of the Government, he made this report. I quote:

"He noted that advertising could persuade children or adults to start smoking, smokers to smoke more or to continue, and quitters to start again. One study, quoted by Mr. Smee, showed that 44 per cent. of smokers agreed that 'smoking can't really be dangerous or the Government would ban cigarette smoking'.

In a recent survey carried out by the National Asthma Campaign, 57 per cent. of people with asthma showed that passive smoking caused them difficulties. In July 1993, Dr. John Britton, of Nottingham University, working with National Asthma Campaign funding, announced his findings that women who smoke during pregnancy are significantly more likely to produce children with asthma than women who do not. These women may unwittingly be precipitating in their unborn child the occurrence of a potentially fatal illness."

Surely, we should look at that instance.

The British Thoracic Society, meeting in Dublin this year, made it clear that

"Children whose mothers smoked heavily during pregnancy, and during their child's early years, are over 30 per cent. more likely to develop asthma or experience wheezing by the time they are 16."

The study was not small; it was carried out among 15,000 children who were born in one week in 1970. I quote:

"Among children not exposed to cigarette smoke, 29 per cent. were reported to have asthma symptoms by the age of 16. Among children whose mothers smoked 25 or more cigarettes a day during pregnancy and early childhood, 39 per cent. had asthma symptoms—an increase of over 30 per cent. Low birth weight babies were also much more likely to develop asthma. Fifty per cent. of those in the study born under 1·5 kg had experienced wheezing illness by the age of 16."

Those are some of the results of cigarette smoking.

If we break down the figures for advertising, £60·4 million is spent on press advertising, £11 million on television, £16 million on posters—I am delighted that the Government are moving in this direction and we must give them credit for that; I hope that our action is hastening them along in this way—and about £14 million on other promotions. Can any hon. Member honestly put his hand on his heart and tell me that that money is being spent not to encourage people to smoke? What is it not meant to encourage—anyone to take up smoking? I am more likely to believe that the money is being given as a gift to the advertising agencies than that cigarette companies are spending the money not to encourage people to smoke.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I have a convenience store in Swansea, and I sell tobacco products.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Drug pusher. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Evans: It is a legal product. During the past 10 years, the turnover of my business of tobacco products has fallen from about two thirds to one third. That is fine, because the business has diversified into other products. There is not a monopoly of tobacco producers in this country and there are competing firms with competing brands. Is not advertising a way by which those firms include people who already smoke to switch brands, and not an inducement to non-smokers to take up tobacco?

Sir Peter Emery: I am sorry that I gave way before my next sentence, which was to deal with that subject. I cannot accept that this immense sum is spent to fulfil brand image between different brands of cigarettes. Of course, there may be some aspect of that, but the concept that that is the main reason for spending £100 million on advertising is nonsense.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I worked for many years in the advertising and public relations business. On one occasion, I had to turn down—because I could not touch it—an account from the Freedom Association for the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco. FOREST is a front organisation for the tobacco industry, and I think that it now stands for the freedom for the right to eliminate somebody else's throat.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the sole reason for the industry investing such huge sums in advertising

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

has nothing to do with brand loyalty, but is to replace with younger people those of their customers who are dying at the upper end of the age range?

Sir Peter Emery: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman has to say. There is certainly a suggestion of that, although, as yet, there is no statistical proof. The House will take the point made by the hon. Gentleman from his own experience.

It is argued that we would be interfering with the liberty of people if we limited advertising. That might be true if the Government had not already taken the steps so to do. However, the Government have taken such steps. The libertarian argument is that if something is legal, it ought to be able to be advertised. That is the type of statement that we hear from those people.

There are a number of things that are legal but which cannot be advertised. That is not anything unusual. A barrister is legal—in more senses than one—but he is not allowed to advertise. [HON. MEMBERS: "They are."] If, in fact, one looks at the structure of law societies one will find that that is still discouraged. Sanitary products were initially banned, and those products are only allowed to be advertised on television only at certain times later at night. The concept that there are no controls over advertising for legal things does not hold water.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The House should examine the argument that because something is legal it is permissible. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if tobacco were a new drug coming on to the market, it would not be licensed by the Government? Does he also agree that it has been known for drugs to be taken off the market when they are found to be dangerous?

Sir Peter Emery: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention.

I wish to deal with one aspect of costs about which I know personally. It is widely accepted that passive smoking and smoking have an effect on asthma. The direct cost to the NHS of drugs and admissions to hospitals is £473 million a year on asthma, the estimated amount lost to industry because of the illness is £400 million, and the social security costs of sickness and invalidity benefit are £70 million.

That is a cost of just under £1 billion because of the problems of asthma in this country. There is positive proof that smoking is causing those difficulties to be accentuated, so surely we should take every step to discourage smoking. I am not alone in saying that—the Government are also saying it. They have produced smoking-related literature which outlines a strategy to reduce smoking. The Government have described their future action, and the effect of the price of tobacco. They have given a commitment to work with the European Community to encourage other European countries with prices lower than the United Kingdom to raise them to match our own.

The Government have dealt with the illegal sales of tobacco, health education, banning harmful new products, action in schools, health warnings, Government support to the voluntary sector—*[Interruption.]* I just want to build up a case, which hon. Members may not like. This is not my case, but the Government's. I am doing the Government's job.

The Government's strategy also deals with insurance premiums. The Department of Health will provide advice to insurance companies on the health effects of smoking, and will encourage them to consider whether they should introduce or extend preferential treatment to non-smokers. The strategy contains a commitment to effective controls of advertising, smoking in public places, smoking in the workplace, action in Government Departments, action to ensure a virtually smoke-free NHS and action on a research programme.

In all those positive moves to ensure that smoking is decreasing, the one thing that the Government have left out is advertising. They know and I know that advertising encourages people to smoke. The real problem that must be faced is the £7·5 billion which comes in tax on tobacco products.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): My right hon. Friend has done a most marvellous job of reviewing the Government's strategy. In a desire to be helpful to him, I will inform him that he will find that advertising is included in that strategy.

Sir Peter Emery: I think that I did refer to it. [HON. MEMBERS: "You said that it had been left out."] I did refer to effective controls on advertising. *Hansard* will tell us whether I did refer to advertising. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Seated interventions from hon. Members trying to assist another Member with a speech are not helpful.

Sir Peter Emery: Even if they are trying to assist, they are not helpful.

I was trying to say that the Government are building up a massive case against smoking. I do not think that the Government will actually approve the Bill, although I believe that they are willing to see that it goes to Committee. That would allow greater discussion on the matter, even among those people who are against it. We can argue the matter better in Committee than we can on the Floor of the House.

The real reason why the Government cannot support the Bill is because £7·5 billion comes in tax. If advertising were to be banned and cigarettes were to fail absolutely, where would that money come from? Would taxes have to be increased?

Mr. Bayley: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, in their "Health of the Nation" programme, the Government have set a target of reducing the number of cigarettes sold from 98 billion in 1990 to, I believe, 57 billion in 2000? The Secretary of State for Health, in setting that target, must have spoken to the Chancellor and explained to him the tax implications of the Government's policy for reducing the number of cigarettes sold. Will not the Treasury have taken account of that already?

Sir Peter Emery: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Indeed, it is the Government's policy to attempt to reduce smoking by about 40 per cent. by the turn of the century. What I am saying to the Government is that considerable financial benefits would accrue to the Treasury from moving more quickly than the Government propose. That is why I gave the list of the costs of just asthma to the nation, amounting to almost £1 billion. The

Bill would assist in bringing at least the 40 per cent. reduction through more quickly. The financial benefits to the nation would balance the loss in taxation.

We must consider the factors that I have listed. If we do not, we do not look at the whole picture.

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Peter Emery: No, I am sorry. I am just coming to a conclusion.

I have set out the various factors: the difficulties, the effect on health, the moves that the Government are gladly making to discourage smoking, the difficulties in carrying those moves through, but also the benefits that would accrue from reducing smoking. I have tried to bring a balance to the problems of the finance. I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading. In Committee, there may be ways of making alterations to promotion or advertising only of cigarettes. We can debate all that not on the Floor of the House, but in Committee. Therefore, I hope that we can obtain a Second Reading for what is in many ways an admirable Bill.

10.41 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I agree with the comments of the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir Peter Emery). I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on introducing the Bill. Despite the many interventions that he faced, he knows and the whole House knows that there is widespread agreement throughout the country among parents of young children, teachers in the schools that those children attend and, most certainly, the medical profession. There is no doubt that such agreement exists.

Some three years ago I was a member of the Standing Committee considering the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, which was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). That Bill, like the Bill that we are discussing today, had massive support. It went into Committee and we had some interesting discussions. I am sure that if my hon. Friend catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, he will elaborate on what happened. The only way in which we could make progress on that Bill in Committee was by accepting amendments and making concessions that those of us on the Committee who supported the Bill did not want to make. Afterwards, we found that there was widespread annoyance among people outside who had been associated with the Bill, especially parents, about the concessions that had to be made so that the Bill would at least get through its Committee stage. I hope that we have learnt from those experiences.

I take the comments that you have made, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I realise that a great many hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to speak. I do not intend to speak for long, but I want to make a few comments that are relevant to the debate. In the past few days we have all received a document from the Minister for Health entitled "Smoke-free for Health". With that document he sent a letter in which the following statement was made:

"The voluntary agreements have served us well and the Government has no reason to believe that they will not be effective in delivering the firmer controls which are needed in some areas, particularly in respect of exposing children to tobacco advertising. We believe that they are preferable to a statutory ban."

We received that letter on 7 February.

It so happens that on 2 February I received a letter from St. George's hospital in my constituency, one of the major hospitals in the United Kingdom. The letter was from Sandra Legg, the chief nurse and chairman of the smoking policy committee of St. George's hospital. What she said contradicted completely what the Minister said. Her letter came three or four days before the letter and booklet sent to all Members of Parliament by the Minister. She said:

"As health care providers, St. George's Healthcare is keen to support any measures which promote health. There is, I believe, evidence to support a view that imposing a ban on tobacco advertising would decrease cigarette smoking and I would therefore welcome such a move . . . The Trust has taken steps to reduce smoking amongst its own staff, patients and visitors. From January 1st 1994 a total ban on smoking was introduced in all Trust buildings".

So there we have a senior member of staff in one of the major hospitals of Britain stating a view based on her and her colleagues' experience, which is contrary to the line that we have been given by the Minister for Health. The Minister says that a voluntary ban would succeed. But Sandra Legg, with the support of her colleagues, on the basis of her experience, doubts what the Minister seeks to tell us and sell to us.

I am sure that many Members of Parliament, irrespective of party, and people outside the House will take far more notice of highly qualified people in our health service who say that the voluntary basis has been tried before and, sadly, just has not succeeded. Now is the time for the Government to give support to this Bill.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that many items for sale in shops—I probably sell most of them—would damage the health of the nation, particularly youngsters, if over-consumed. I am thinking of confectionery. Over-consumption might be said to damage the health of young people. Does the hon. Gentleman think that it would improve the health of the nation to ban or control advertising of any other items?

Mr. Cox: I certainly believe that there must be a much greater campaign on the effects of excessive drinking. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] Yes, most certainly. I should have thought that all of us in the House know that we are repeatedly told that we should do this or that in our health service. Of course we should. The problem is the expenditure that such action would incur. That is why I believe that we are right to look at other products the consumption and use of which affects people's health. Possibly, at some future date we should deal with issues such as that named by the hon. Gentleman.

Today, however, we are considering smoking and the effect that my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley seeks to make in introducing the Bill. There is ample evidence of the danger of smoking and, sadly, the damage that is caused to millions of people throughout Britain.

In an intervention on the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir. P. Emery) I mentioned Roy Castle's visit. He has never smoked but throughout his life he entertained in clubs where the atmosphere was polluted by smoke. Sadly, that is how he developed cancer—through passive smoking. *[Interruption.]* It is no use hon. Members waffling on from a sedentary position. If they want me to give way, I will do so.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: (Hexham): How does the hon. Gentleman know that?

Mr. Cox: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to my comments about Roy Castle's sad illness, he was told that that was the cause after extensive medical examinations and opinions when he was treated by the national health service. To its credit, Roy Castle's very serious illness was detected, but the cost to the health service must have been substantial. I would be shocked if the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) objected to someone who had never smoked but became very ill having the opportunity to go to hospital to find out what was wrong with him.

Dr. Spink: Is it not true that the hon. Gentleman did not know that that was the reason, but that medical experts stated it? We cannot substitute our amateur knowledge for that of the medical experts in that case or in any other.

Mr. Cox: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that comment. I received a letter from the British Medical Association —I am sure that it was sent to other hon. Members—dated 8 February. The Association is no doubt about what it wants. It writes:

"The BMA, on behalf of doctors, has always taken a very public stance in support of tobacco advertising being banned. There is overwhelming evidence which shows that advertising does attract new smokers, particularly among the young."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley outlined, there is clear evidence that advertising affects young people and we have such evidence from many different sources.

If hon. Members listen to people outside this place, who look to us to introduce legislation that will benefit not merely their families but society, I believe that the Bill should get a Second Reading and go into Committee.

I was here last Friday when we debated the Energy Conservation Bill. No one seems to have argued today as they did then that, although the Bill contains many good measures, we must question its cost. That sort of blue herring has not been floated during today's debate and I hope that it will not be a consideration in a vote—it would be regrettable if we were forced to divide on the Bill. The Government have the opportunity to show their concern on this important issue and to respond to requests that the general public have made. The real test of the Bill will be in Standing Committee.

Heaven only knows how much this publication—"Smoke-Free for Health"—cost. I welcome it because there are times when Governments can say that they believe that it is essential to prepare the case and make it available for everyone to read, even though that may be expensive. I have already quoted one of the Minister for Health's comments in the document. That comment is totally denied by national health service workers.

I warmly support the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley, who presented this Bill, and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East three years ago. He did a great service to this country and was widely supported both by people and by organisations who understood the damage that he was seeking to overcome through the introduction of his Bill.

I hope that this Bill will not be opposed. Hon. Members who have been in the House for some time know that Standing Committees are the real place for discussion. Even if some of us have reservations, we do not want a good Bill to be killed off by bringing in the payroll vote who, if they were honest with themselves, would support the Bill.

I hope that the Minister for Health will not say that the Bill is good but that the Government have reservations about it. I also hope that if there is a Division the payroll vote will not be forced into the Lobby to vote against the Bill. I want the Bill to be given an unopposed Second Reading and to go into Committee, where the main issues can be discussed properly.

10.55 am

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I have no connection with the tobacco or advertising industries now, although I spent most of my business life in advertising and marketing, and therfore hope that I can speak with some background knowledge.

I yield to no one in my keenness to dissuade people from smoking, in spite of the fact that I have the occasional small cigar—that applies particularly to dissuading young people from smoking. The House will know of my interest in the problems of drug misuse. There is a definite link between the propensity to smoke and the chances of being lured into taking drugs, especially those that are smoked.

This debate is not about smoking, but about advertising and its probable effects, particularly on increasing the likelihood of people smoking cigarettes, I feel that I can make the most useful contribution by concentrating on advertising.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Rathbone: Why does my hon. Friend not hang on, because he does not even know what I am going to say? I I certainly will give way later.

The arguments against banning tobacco advertising do not rest on whether a link can be found between advertising and total consumption, although it is significant that there is no good evidence for such a link.

Mr. Barron: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rathbone: Please may I make some headway?

Mr. Barron: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rathbone: I resisted the temptation to intervene during the hon. Gentleman's speech.

Mr. Barron: Do not resist the temptation to give way.

Mr. Rathbone: I shall do so in a moment.

In mature markets, the role of advertising is almost always to focus on brand share—on growth among users, rather than generic market growth. That means manufacturers going after the people who use a product and want to buy it and persuading them to buy their brand. Even among market leaders, brand switching is a more common marketing objective than market building—that is an important point—whether they are marketing soap, automobiles, the use of energy, airline tickets, toothpaste or cigarettes.

It is interesting to note that 25 per cent. of smokers change brands once a year.

Mr. Barron: I do not wish to get into a philosophical debate about advertising in general. The Bill is about tobacco advertising. How can the hon. Gentleman stand up

and say that, when all the evidence shows the contrary? The Government's publication, which we received this week, says that the Smee review

"supports the Government view that there is a relationship between tobacco advertising and total tobacco consumption."

This is not a philosophical debate about advertising and take-up, but about studies directly related to advertising and the tobacco habit.

Mr. Rathbone: I knew that I was right to resist the temptation to give way to the hon. Gentleman earlier. If the hon. Gentleman, who gets frightfully over-excited about his Bill—I do not blame him, as everybody gets over-excited about their own babies—would listen to the arguments——

It being Eleven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Beverly Allitt (Report)

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): With permission, I wish to make a statement about Sir Cecil Clothier's inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the murder by Beverly Allitt of four children and the injuring of nine others in the children's ward of Grantham and Kesteven general hospital in 1991.

Following the trial and conviction of Beverly Allitt, I instructed an independent inquiry to be set up in May 1993, chaired by Sir Cecil Clothier QC, to examine the issues raised by the case and what lessons for the future could be learnt from them. I have now received Sir Cecil's report. I am today publishing it in full. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. I should like to thank Sir Cecil and the two members of his inquiry team, Miss Anne MacDonald and Professor David Shaw, for the efficient and effective way in which they have conducted the inquiry and produced their report. I am sure that all who read the report will welcome it as a fair and thorough account of the events.

From the outset, we must all acknowledge, as the report does, that the tragic events in Grantham were the product of a malevolent, deranged criminal mind. Everything must be seen in that light.

Before saying more about the report's findings, I know that Members on both sides of the House will wish to join me in conveying our deep sympathies to all whose lives have been blighted by these tragic events, and particularly to the families of the victims of Beverly Allitt's crimes. The least we owe those families is an explanation of how Allitt's crimes went unchecked for so long and an assurance, from which I hope they will be able to take some comfort, that everything possible will be done to prevent such a tragedy ever happening again.

I welcome the thoroughness of Sir Cecil's report and the speed with which it has been produced. What is important is that his findings and recommendations are absorbed and applied throughout the health service with equal diligence and dispatch.

The report emphasises that the events described were extraordinary and unprecedented in this country. It considers whether prompter action could reasonably have been expected to detect Allitt and stop her doing further harm—and there are criticisms of the speed of the hospital's response. However, its main conclusion is:

"a determined and secret criminal may defeat the best regulated organisation in the pursuit of his or her purpose".

It goes on:

"no measures can afford complete protection against a determined miscreant. The main lesson from our Inquiry and our principal recommendation is that the Grantham disaster should serve to heighten awareness in all those caring for children of the possibility of malevolent intervention as a cause of unexplained clinical events."

The report makes 12 detailed recommendations to tighten procedures to safeguard children in hospital. I have instructed immediate action to be taken on the 11 that are my responsibility. The Home Secretary has accepted the recommendation concerning coroners. I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses a paper setting out the detailed response to each recommendation. The chief executive of the national health service, Sir Duncan Nichol, has also written today to all health authorities and trusts to draw the report to their attention.

The work that I am now setting in hand in response to the report is in addition to the action that has already been

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

taken following the earlier inquiry commissioned by the Trent regional health authority. Action has been taken forward in all that report's 51 recommendations. In particular, changes were introduced to the management at Grantham and Kesteven hospital and responsibility for the provision of paediatric service at Grantham was transferred to the University hospital NHS trust at Nottingham.

The Clothier report identifies and criticises failures of management and communications in the hospital, and it is important that lessons are learned from these throughout the service. It draws attention to the failure to take quicker action after the first evidence of possible foul play. However, it refutes any suggestion that Allitt could easily have been detected or stopped.

There are references to the parts played by individuals, but the report concludes that the main failure was collective. It describes a

"general lack in the qualities of leadership, energy and drive in all those most closely associated with the management of ward four".

There have been suggestions in the press that the Clothier report makes scapegoats, particularly of individual consultants or nurses. I hope that those fears can now be allayed. The report repeatedly refers to the dangers of hindsight and the temptation to seek individuals to blame and, although it does not shrink from making criticisms where those are considered justified, it is conspicuously fair and balanced throughout.

The report has important things to say about nursing staffing levels in the children's ward at Grantham. At the same time of the events, the specialist children's nurse staffing for ward 4 was below the standard recommended by the region at the time, and also well below the higher standard for two qualified sick children's nurses to be available, which the Department subsequently recommended to health authorities and hospitals.

The inquiry report recommends that the Department of Health should take steps to see that the guidance is more closely observed throughout the health service than the evidence suggests it is at present. There is a steady increase in nurses qualifying as children's nurses, with a 47 per cent. increase over the four years up to 1992-93, and we expect that number to continue to increase. But, as the Audit Commission has confirmed, there is considerable variation across the country in the numbers of registered sick children's nurses working in children's wards.

Sir Duncan Nichol has therefore today instructed district health authorities, in consultation with hospitals, to report by 1 May on the local position with regard to the standard. Further action will be based on that information. The objective needs to be considered in the light of local circumstances, particularly the number of high-dependency children on a ward. As far as the children's ward at Grantham is concerned, the number of registered sick children's nurses has more than doubled since 1991.

Four new consultant paediatricians have been appointed to work at Grantham; three are already in post, and a fourth will take up post on 1 May. I cannot comment at this stage on the two paediatric consultants mentioned in the report, since they have appeals to me pending under paragraph 190 of the terms and conditions of service for hospital medical and dental staff.

The circumstances surrounding Beverly Allitt's crimes have been exhaustively examined: during a three-month trial, under the glare of publicity; during the regional health authority's own inquiry; and, in particular, by the independent inquiry chaired by Sir Cecil Clothier. A thorough job has been done to identify the facts and report them to the public.

Ultimately, the responsibility for what happened rested with Allitt herself. If it were not for her grotesque actions, four children would be alive today and nine would be free from the injuries that she inflicted on them. It is the duty of Grantham and Kesteven hospital, and every other hospital, to read, absorb and apply the lessons which Sir Cecil Clothier and his team have so skilfully identified. We must leave nothing to chance in minimising the opportunities open to another Beverly Allitt.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I thank the Secretary of State for making the Clothier inquiry report available to me in time so that I could read it before she made her statement.

Clearly, party-political rhetoric would not be appropriate or acceptable on this issue. I concur with the Secretary of State, on behalf of myself and my colleagues, in saying that our hearts go out to the families and parents of the children who went through the nightmare on ward 4 at the Grantham and Kesteven general hospital.

I must deal with a number of issues that relate to the inquiry's recommendations and the Secretary of State's response. We give a partial welcome to the recommendations and her response. Given that she has rightly come to the House to make a statement and has acknowledged that there are lessons for the whole of the national health service, does she not agree that a statutory public inquiry should have been held openly, so that evidence could have been presented with representation and in a manner that gave full confidence to the parents and the public as a whole?

I should like the Secretary of State to deal with the final area of the terms of reference of the Clothier inquiry and its wider implications. We agree that it was right for Sir Cecil Clothier not to seek scapegoats and pinpoint individuals. Clearly, there are lessons to be learned from the events that are wider than the question of a malevolent presence in the hospital. There were 26 incidents involving 13 children over 61 days. Those incidents were not acted on in a way that would have been expected, irrespective of their cause. Something is seriously wrong when the crash team from the Queen's medical centre is called out four times in the space of two and a half weeks, when the norm is once a year.

As well as the issues related to Grantham and Kesteven hospital, will the Secretary of State take on board the comments made in the Clothier inquiry about radiology and other co-ordination action, which were highlighted at a well-staffed professionally run centre—Queen's medical centre in Nottingham? I ask her to deal particularly with recommendation 10, about which she has spoken, in relation to staffing levels of trained registered sick children's nurses. It recommends that there should be at least two on duty on the ward. The Secretary of State asked Sir Duncan Nichol, the NHS chief executive, to examine the issue and report back. I quote her words from the statement:

"The objective needs to be considered in the light of local circumstances, particularly the number of high-dependency children on a ward".

In responding, perhaps the Secretary of State will reflect on the fact that many of the children affected on ward 4

were not high dependency when they went into the hospital. They needed nursing and care. They needed to be brought back to health. They were not in the same position as that mentioned in the report of the British Paediatric Association on intensive care nursing facilities, which we dealt with only a few months ago.

Will the Secretary of State reverse her response to recommendation 10 and acknowledge that well-trained nurses and well-staffed wards for children are absolute priorities for the NHS and that it will not be left to the vagaries of the market or decisions of local purchasers? The NHS is far too important for that to happen. Her recommendation and response this morning are inadequate on that point.

Does the Secretary of State also agree that there is a need to review the whole of the occupational health strategy of the NHS to ensure not only that another Allitt could not be recruited but that there would be no necessity for one to be deployed on a ward? The truth is—I hope that the Secretary of State will respond to this—that had there been adequately trained children's nurses available, Beverly Allitt would not have got anywhere near ward 4 of the Grantham and Kesteven hospital, because a state-enrolled nurse would never have been employed in those circumstances.

Will the Secretary of State respond to the fact that there is no recommendation in the report, or a response from her, on the need to train and retrain management to deal with situations that may not arise from a murderer but from inadequacies in procedures and practice on the ward? Does she accept the question that has been put by the parents: was Grantham different from any other hospital in Britain in terms of staffing, qualification, training and the practices and procedures that were adopted?

Does she accept that we know that Grantham was not different? That is why the report must be taken seriously, not only to deal with a potential crisis or malevolent spirit but to put right what is wrong throughout the NHS. In that way, we can ensure that the confidence that is rightly there for all those who work in the NHS can be reinforced, and we can put this tragic incident behind us.

Mrs. Bottomley: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's response to my statement and the seriousness with which he quite rightly takes this matter.

I shall first speak on the nature of the inquiry. It is important that the parents and others involved believe that the full facts have been revealed. I must tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that, having myself been involved in a number of inquiries concerning child abuse, I know the way that an adversarial public inquiry, in the blaze of publicity, can frequently intimidate witnesses, maximise distress and, far from exposing the full facts, result in a report that many believe fails to get to the bottom of these sensitive matters. Debate will continue about the right form of inquiry when such tragic cases of a very sensitive nature take place.

I commend to the hon. Gentleman and the House an editorial from the *Solicitors Journal* in which it is said that the adversarial system of examination of witnesses in public in such matters has major drawbacks: potential witnesses whose existence is not at present known may be reluctant to come forward if they are to endure public examination, and their evidence then will remain untold; known witnesses may be reluctant to tell the whole truth and will hold back information. The key criteria to be satisfied should be that the inquiry team is competent and independent, that it has access to information, that witnesses are confident to come forward and give their evidence, and that the report is published in full.

Those criteria particularly influenced me in the decision that it was the best form of inquiry to get to the bottom of those desperate facts. Sir Cecil and his team interviewed 94 witnesses, all of whom were willing to come forward. Thousands of pages of documentation were studied. There was no problem in obtaining documents. Had there been any difficulty with the powers under the inquiry, Sir Cecil would, of course, have come back and I would have been able to reconsider the basis of the inquiry. The single and only purpose in my mind as Secretary of State was to establish the facts in the most effective way. The fact that the inquiry was supported by the community health council, Sir Louis Blom-Cooper and others from an authoritative position was encouraging. I believe that the report vindicates the means of the inquiry and establishes it as a good model for the future.

The hon. Gentleman raised a series of other important matters. I shall quote from the report, which I believe is central to the issue of how 26 incidents could have taken place without being identified. Sir Cecil says:

"The idea of a nurse deliberately taking the lives of children under her charge is almost unthinkable."

It was as though the staff there were paralysed from looking to the area they needed to look to for the source of those crimes. Although there has been speculation about her absence record, the report also says that there was nothing to suggest that Beverly Allitt, with all her record of sickness absence, would have been a danger to those children on the ward.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about occupational health. It is an extremely important area. We will provide new guidance, but we must work with other agencies and authorities before we produce that final guidance—particularly on the question of people with a severe personality disorder—about the appropriateness of contracting GPs to ask medical questions which may conflict with medical confidentiality about staff who work in the health service. There is more work to be done before that final guidance can go out now that the report is in the public domain. The same applies to staffing.

There has been a 60 per cent. increase in the number of sick children's nurses in training over the past four years. That is a substantial rise. The number of registered sick children's nurses in the wards has risen from 3·5 to 8·4. There has also been a substantial increase in the number of paediatric consultants: the total number of medical staff in paediatrics has risen by more than a third in the past five years. There will be an extra 1,000 qualified children's nurses this year, an extra 1,200 next year and an extra 1,300 the following year. The challenge is to ensure that those who qualify as registered sick children's nurses stay on children's wards; if that is to be delivered in practice, more work must be done with the profession.

Sir Cecil Clothier says:

"No single circumstance or individual can be held responsible for what happened. But taken together, the catalogue of lapses from the high standards to which the National Health Service aspires point to lessons which need to be heeded if every effort is to be made to contain such a catastrophe should it strike again."

The chief executive of the NHS has written to people throughout the health service, to be certain that management, nurses, doctors and all concerned study and absorb the lessons of the inquiry.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): The parents of one of the children involved are my constituents. May I echo the condolence that has been expressed so far? Let me also express the condolences of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who, although he is present, is unable, by convention, to take part in exchanges such as this because he is a senior Minister.

It is some small comfort to know that, as soon as these dreadful incidents came to light, the health authority took prompt action to try to reassure patients, potential patients and their parents. It is also very satisfactory that four paediatric consultants from the Queen's medical centre in Nottingham—a centre of excellence in our region—are now running that department. It is hoped that that will reassure those who may wish to use Grantham and Kesteven in the future, particularly its paediatric department.

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for what he has said. A determined effort has been made to improve services on many fronts at Grantham and Kesteven hospital. The hospital will hold a press conference later today, at which it will report not only changes on the children's ward—my hon. Friend rightly cited the management control from Queen's medical centre in Nottingham—but improvements to services generally. In regard to waiting times and many other matters, it now leads the region.

My hon. Friend rightly commended the work of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). He has been a diligent, dutiful and determined constituency Member of Parliament throughout these events, and has engaged in regular discussions with me —and with others concerned—about the deep anxiety felt by parents and many others.

The distress felt by other staff at the hospital is formidable. The affair has been a great shock to all concerned, but the staff are determined to put it behind them, and to ensure that the hospital continues to flourish and to serve the community. Above all, I hope that the report will lay to rest parents' deep unhappiness, which has been exacerbated by the feeling of not knowing the full facts about how these events could possibly have occurred.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I, too, welcome the report, and extend my sympathies to the parents involved. I only wish that the inquiry had been public, as the parents wished it to be.

I am glad that the Secretary of State agrees that understaffing was one of the problems. How will she address the understaffing problems that exist throughout the country? She has told us that four paediatric consultants have been engaged; will she tell us the number of hours for which they will work?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have already made it clear that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children's nurses being trained, partly as a result of the extremely successful Project 2000 initiative. As the hon. Lady will know, we have put £321 million into that project, which includes a component specifically for children's nurses. That has made it possible to increase substantially the number of sick children's nurses being trained: there will be a 9 per cent. increase this year alone. As I have said, in the past four years there has been a 47 per cent. increase in the number of qualified children's nurses.

As is made clear in the Audit Commission's report "Children First", we must ensure that, once children's nurses have qualified, they are encouraged to work on children's wards. It is a question not just of supply, but of recruitment and retention. On the basis of the mapping of the present position contained in Sir Duncan Nichol's inquiry report, we shall also want to talk to members of the profession about how we can encourage retention on the children's wards. Consultants are also working at Queen's medical centre, to secure the best possible standard of care and state-of-the-art help for children.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will my right hon. Friend confirm, in fairness to them, that no individual doctors can be held directly responsible for these tragic events—although, as I am sure she will agree, all doctors must learn from them?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can indeed confirm that. I hope that there will be opportunities to read the report more fully. According to Sir Cecil,

> "There was certainly no evidence of lack of clinical skill and conscientious care on the part of the Consultants. The fact that more of the children did not suffer death or permanent injury can largely be attributed to their skill and persistence. Their failure was not to grasp with energy the problem presented by the highly unusual events that they were witnessing and to take systematic and decisive steps to elucidate their cause."

As those matters are subject to an appeal under section 190, I cannot comment further at this stage.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): The whole House will agree that this appalling tragedy is every parent's nightmare. Now that the Secretary of State has published the report in full, may I point out that the parents—who are the people of whom we should be thinking—desperately wanted a public inquiry, as did their supporters? Surely they have as much right to the upholding of their views as have the professionals, however well meaning was the advice of those professionals.

Sometimes, the grieving process is helped if parents can go through events stage by stage. Access to a public inquiry might have provided the whole country with a lesson for the future.

Mrs. Bottomley: It is a question of judgment, and my judgment is that, if 94 witnesses had been interviewed in the glare of publicity, the distress felt by many of the parties would have been exacerbated. Anyone who wished to make evidence public was free to do so. I have made it clear that if we want witnesses to speak freely and openly, we must ensure that they do not feel inhibited—as they frequently do—by the pressure of cross-examination, and the sense that every detail will be reported in the press, if not on television that night. Such an atmosphere is not conducive to free and open speaking.

There had already been a lengthy trial, and all the publicity associated with it; in a public inquiry, many of those elements would have been repeated. It is important, however, that parents study the report. If they have further questions, the various parties involved will be more than happy to see them. We must find the most effective and speedy way of getting to the bottom of these events. When the hon. Lady studies the report, she will be impressed by the rigour and determination with which the inquiry team undertook its task.

Tobacco Advertising Bill

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

11.29 am

Mr. Rathbone: I must first apologise for not realising that you, Madam Speaker, wished to intervene in my speech.

I was saying that advertising in mature markets, whatever the product or service, is almost always tuned to the development and capturing of market share rather than to market development.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Rathbone: Will my hon. Friend forgive me if I do not do so? If I do not make headway, I fear that I shall not say everything that I want. I am afraid that it is rather factual, heavy stuff but it deals with the thrust of the Bill.

The Smee report, which has been mentioned, is seen by many proponents of an advertising ban as evidence of a link between developing consumption and advertising, but the opposite is true. Interestingly, the Smee report states that it is most true in the United Kingdom. It categorically states that its own statistical research exercise established that there was no such link in the United Kingdom, and it noted that independent research shows that advertising has no discernible effect on persuading children to start smoking.

These are statements in the Smee report. It is not peculiar, therefore, that Clive Smee has stated his believe that much more work needs to be done before any link could ever be established. It is interesting that many current advertising campaigns for cigarettes are unintelligible for those other than smokers of the brand.

Mr. Bayley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rathbone: No, I will not.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): You are chicken—that is why.

Mr. Rathbone: If I am a chicken, it would be unparliamentary to describe what the hon. Gentleman is.

Argument for a ban would lead to much more pressure for such a step if a link were ever established. It is unlikely that it will be, but that is purely conjecture, and it is important to keep a perspective on the issue as a whole.

Advertising is permitted in the United Kingdom, yet cigarette consumption is declining faster here than in any other European country except Holland, where advertising is allowed. That is a considerable achievement, not least because of the positive contribution of the Health Education Authority. I defer to its efforts to improve health in this country, and to reduce the propensity to smoke. It needs our support.

It would be sad if that achievement were put at risk by freezing the market, which would be likely to stop the decline. The Health Education Authority says:

"all available measures which reduce smoking should be taken."

I absolutely agree, but an advertising ban would be as likely to have the opposite effect as it would be to have a beneficial effect. That is an extremely important point to make to all hon. Members who are concerned, as I am, about smoking and its effects but who have misunderstood the Bill as making the contribution that it aims to make.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Rathbone: I have to give way to my right hon. Friend.

Sir Peter Emery: I rise to interrupt because I know that my hon. Friend would not want to mislead the House. He has quoted conclusively from the Smee report. It has been pointed out, but I must point it out to him again, that, in his conclusion on the effect of advertising on the consumption of cigarettes, Smee says:

"The balance of evidence thus supports the conclusion that advertising does have a positive effect on consumption."

It would not be right for my hon. Friend to advance evidence without giving the conclusion of the Smee report. I am certain that he does not wish to mislead the House.

Mr. Rathbone: Smee has also expressed his belief that much more work needs to be done before any link can be established. Either of the statements can be interpreted in any way, and each side of the argument will do so, but Smee's belief is as true as the conclusion that my right hon. Friend quoted.

Mr. Bayley: Could the hon. Gentleman possibly give way?

Mr. Rathbone: No, I could not possibly.

It is interesting that the four European Community countries with the best record on reducing smoking oppose further restrictions on cigarette advertising. It is not by chance that none of the four owns or has a monopoly in tobacco production and distribution, as is found in other countries. The power of advertising, in helping to sell a brand into a market, is clearly an insidious one as far as some countries' domestic trade is concerned. That influences their support of an advertising ban much more than any health circumstances.

The hon. Members for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and for Tooting (Mr. Cox) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) have said that the case for health must be given priority. It is extremely important to analyse the experience of other countries where an advertising ban has been put into effect and what other influences have come into play. I say that particularly because I believe that our Chancellor of the Exchequer has applied the most serious, strongest and successful determinant in deterring people from smoking cigarettes —putting up their price.

New Zealand was mentioned by the hon. Member for Rother Valley. A partial ban on advertising was introduced there in December 1990. The *British Medical Journal* made much of the effect of the ban and declining consumption thereafter, but at the same time, and predating that Bill, there was a massive series of increases in excise tax.

These figures will shock my hon. Friends who are worried about indirect taxation or taxation of any kind: excise tax was increased in July 1989 by 28 per cent. and again by 110 per cent., in September 1989 by 112 per cent., in March 1990 by 115 per cent., in September 1990 by 118 per cent., in March 1991 by 121 per cent., and in July 1991 by 146 per cent.

Tobacco consumption had been falling since 1975—long before the increases started—but it was given added impetus by them. It is not peculiar, therefore, that the New Zealand Health Minister commented in November 1991:

[Mr. Rathbone]

"Changes in New Zealand's attitude to smoking led to a decline in tobacco consumption before the imposition of a ban and this decline has continued. At the same time economic factors such as a fall in incomes have had an effect on consumption."

Price increases, economic recession and changes in attitudes are responsible for the decline in overall consumption, rather than a partial advertising ban.

Let us go right the way round the world—to Canada, where there are similar circumstances. An advertising ban came into effect there in 1989. Simultaneously, excise tax was increased by more than 50 per cent. In 1990, the majority of provinces increased excise taxes by between 10 and 50 per cent. In 1991, the Federal Government increased their excise tax by another 58 per cent., and nine out of the 10 provinces increased excise tax by 20 to 40 per cent.

It is no wonder, therefore, that a recent appraisal by the Canadian Superior Court found

"the possibility (that advertising may affect overall consumption) goes no further than speculation and certainly does not rise to the level of probability."

Hon. Members may say that those are instances from other parts of the world, so let us return to an instance in our continent. An analysis of consumption for the period 1973 to 1990, carried out by the Institute for Youth Research for the German Federal Office for Health Education, concluded that there is no link between advertising for cigarettes and their consumption. Indeed, smoking had been decreasing among young people even though——

Mr. Tony Banks: That defies logic.

Mr. Rathbone: The hon. Member might listen rather than always interjecting from a seated position.

Smoking among young people had declined even though the weight of advertising had substantially increased. That is very important.

I therefore remain committed to the reduction of smoking, but, contrary to popular opinion, and contrary to some of the arguments put in the House—in speeches and from a sedentary position—there is no case that will hold water that shows that the banning of tobacco advertising will contribute to that commitment. The gist of the Bill is that there is a link.

I share with other hon. Members considerable regret that so many children smoke, but all research shows that peer group pressure and parental influence are, and always were, the predominant factors in the problem. It is completely unproven, so it should not, especially when considering legislation, be unquestioningly accepted that advertising plays any significant part.

Of course children see advertising wherever they go —we all do—but that is because advertising is widespread in our daily life and is an expression of commercial freedom that allows our free market to operate. If ever advertising were restricted on the basis that children might see it, a peculiar foundation would have been laid for similar restrictions on all products that are inappropriate for sale to children, not always for reasons of health promotion.

Mr. Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rathbone: No; the hon. Gentleman has already interjected enough from a sedentary position.

Seeing is not the same as being influenced to consume. Advertising's task would be much simpler if that were the case. Further, in pursuing such an argument in the case of tobacco, one should not ignore the publicity given to health risks through the advertised health warning, an argument that was made in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman).

One must, I believe, pay a compliment to the Government for the progress that has been made. It is well outlined in the "Smoke-free for Health" publication. I cite two items. There has been a decrease in smoking in the United Kingdom from 45 per cent. of the population in 1974 to 30 per cent. in 1990. A linear extrapolation of that line will lead to a rate of only 20 per cent. in the year 2000.

Another item to which I draw the House's attention is the effect of the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991. That gives additional protection to children at the point of sale, and it is crucial that they are protected at the point of sale.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rathbone: I should like to draw the attention of the House——

Mr. Faulds: Will the hon. Gentleman give way? It was my Bill——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order.

Mr. Rathbone: I should like to draw the attention of the House to the importance of that Act. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), who promoted the Bill and who is trying to draw attention to the fact now.

The freedom to communicate is what is at stake in the Bill. That must remain an extremely high priority for products that are legally and generally available. In a matter as important as that, I feel that the case for banning advertising has to be made—I believe that it has not been made in this case—before the Bill is given a Second Reading.

11.45 am

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): On behalf of the Liberal Democrats, I am extremely happy to welcome the Bill. I wish the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) every success during its passage through Parliament. I also hope that the Government will allow hon. Members to express their own views rather than trying to impose the view of a section of the Cabinet. I have been part of the campaign against tobacco advertising for many years—long before I was elected. I am sure that many other right hon. and hon. Members have waited even longer for an opportunity to introduce a ban on tobacco advertising.

There is widespread evidence that tobacco advertising has an effect on consumption, whatever some right hon. and hon. Members may say. There is evidence that the Government themselves accept. Despite that, the Department of Health has failed to act decisively. The body of people—and organisations—who have come out in favour of a ban has been growing daily. I am sure that most hon. Members here have received information from various groups urging us to support a ban. One group in favour of a ban is the Conservative Medical Society. The patrons of that esteemed organisation are the Prime Minister and his immediate predecessor, who is not exactly

well known for her anti-smoking stance. Even the Cabinet is split on the issue, with senior Ministers such as the President of the Board of Trade, the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, a former Secretary of State for Health, being reported as being in favour of a ban.

Despite the groundswell of support, the Government have failed to act. In its recent document, "Smoke-Free for Health", the Department of Health admitted that smoking and its consequences for the health of the nation were still a major problem and that it was especially unhappy that smoking levels among 11 to 15-year-olds were not declining as much as it would like. The Government's response to the news—proposals to tax advertising or a levy on hoardings—will merely swell the Treasury coffers. Despite accepting the link between advertising and consumption, all that the Department has given us is an action plan which plans to take no effective action.

What is the extent of the health problems related to smoking? There are some useful statistics on this, courtesy of the Department of Health. Every year, more than 100,000 people die from tobacco-related diseases, more than 1,100 of them in my constituency of Rochdale. One non-smoker dies each day from lung cancer as a result of inhaling other people's smoke.

About 50 children under five are admitted each day to hospital suffering from illnesses related to passive smoking. Those children also have more respiratory diseases than children from families who do not smoke. At a recent conference, it was declared that passive smoking was the biggest single factor in cot deaths. It is clear from those figures and many others that smoking is a major health hazard. Should we, therefore, be encouraging people to take up that addictive and dangerous habit? I think not.

Mr. Robert Banks: The hon. Lady has produced some figures, but she has not substantiated them. She has not explained how they have been evaluated or whether we can be sure about them. Will she enlighten us?

Ms Lynne: I suggest that the hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) contacts the Department of Health. I am sure that the Department will give him all the statistics that he needs. Nobody here today is arguing that people should not have the right to choose to smoke.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am.

Ms Lynne: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. We may in future want to consider measures such as those that the United States Government are proposing whereby smokers are limited to smoking in certain places. Today, we are simply talking about a ban on advertising tobacco products. Given that most of us agree that smoking is harmful, it must be questionable whether such activities should be advertised on that basis alone.

I admit that the evidence on the effects of a ban is mixed. However, it is clear that in many places a ban has been successful. In Norway, smoking has decreased by 9 per cent. since the introduction of a ban. In New Zealand, it has decreased by 5·5 per cent. and in Canada by 4 per cent. Of course I accept that there are other influences that lead people to smoke, such as parental example, which may be more important. However, that alone is not an adequate excuse for not tackling the problem of tobacco advertising.

If, as many people argue, tobacco advertising is of little consequence and merely encourages people to change brands, why do tobacco companies spend about £100 million a year advertising their products? If the general public are so immune to advertising in general, why are the Government spending £12 million on an advertising and publicity campaign against smoking? Clearly, advertising does have an effect on people's behaviour. If it does not, the tobacco companies and the Department of Health are wasting an awful lot of money.

The final argument against banning tobacco advertising is that it is a terrible affront to freedom. As a Liberal Democrat, I am naturally concerned about attacks on individual liberties. However, we should consider whether it is more important for tobacco companies to have the freedom to advertise their wares or for individual citizens to have the freedom to live long and healthy lives. To my mind, a long and healthy life is of greater importance.

We have long had restrictions on the freedom of tobacco companies to advertise their products. Cigarette advertising, as has been mentioned, was banned on television in 1964 and the ban was extended to other tobacco products in 1991. Essentially, the theoretical argument for banning advertising was won more than 30 years ago. The Government's weak-kneed response to these arguments and to others that have been put by other hon. Members is that the voluntary controls that they have agreed with the industry are perfectly adequate. I would dispute that.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): If the argument that the advertising of tobacco was all about brands, would it not be true to say that if all brands were banned from advertising they would have nothing to lose? Does the hon. Lady agree that the reason why hon. Members are arguing against the Bill is that they want to atttract new people to smoking?

Ms Lynne: The hon. Gentleman makes an excellent point with which I agree. Although the cigarette advertising code of practice says that adverts must not appeal more to the young than to the rest of the population, it is clear, as has been stated before, that the "Reg" campaign for Embassy Regal cigarettes did so. We all know that the series of advertisements was eventually withdrawn under pressure from the regulators. However, as the hon. Member for Rother Valley said, the adverts are back in a different form. The problem with regulations, voluntary or otherwise, is that advertisers will do their best to get around them and will often succeed in subtle ways which are not noticed by the regulator until it is too late.

Mr. Nigel Evans: What would happen if we banned the advertising of tobacco products and therefore the Government health warning disappeared from magazines and billboards? What impact would that have?

Ms Lynne: It would mean that a lot of young people especially would not take up smoking. If they could not see the tobacco advertising hoardings, we would not need the Government health warning.

The health risks involved mean that smoking is not a habit that we should be encouraging people to take up. If tobacco had been discovered in the past 100 years, rather than in the time of Elizabeth I, it would have been declared illegal. The number of teenage smokers shows that current campaigns and regulations do not work among the group of people about which we should be most concerned. The freedom of potential smokers to live a long and healthy life

[Ms Lynne]

and the freedom of their children or partners to be unaffected by passive smoking for outweigh the freedom of the tobacco industry to market their products.

I therefore urge the House to support the Bill for the sake of the health of nation.

11.55 pm

Sir John Hannam (Exeter): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on securing a place in the ballot and also on the selection of such an important subject for his Bill. Many of us have had the opportunity to promote private Members Bills in the past, but no one has had such an opportunity to save hundreds and possibly thousands of lives through such a Bill.

It is important for the House to remember that the Bill is an attempt not to remove an essential freedom from the individual, but to protect the susceptible individual from the dangers of addiction to a dangerous drug through subtle advertising. John Stuart Mill wrote on liberty:

"as soon as any part of a person's conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others, society has jurisdiction over it, and the question whether the general welfare will or will not be promoted by interfering with it, becomes open to discussion . . . Whenever, in short, there is a definite damage or a definite risk of damage, either to an individual or to the public, the case is taken out of the province of liberty and placed in that of morality or law".

There are plenty of precedents for such limitations in the promotion of other goods. Prescription medicines are not allowed by law to be advertised to the general public, and under the British code of advertising practice, no advertisement to the lay public is allowed in respect of a long list of diseases and conditions including cataracts, glaucoma, kidney disease, tuberculosis, any heart disease, diabetes, cancer and a number of others. It is extremely ironic that it is illegal to advertise cures for cancer, but legal to advertise and promote the agent that causes it.

Every year, 110,000 people die from smoking-related diseases in Britain. Smoking is the greatest preventable threat to health in the developed world. It kills 21 times as many people as road accidents and 15 times as many people as those who die of suicide, murder or manslaughter. Smoking is responsible for approximately one third of all cancers. Lung cancer kills more people than any other type of cancer, and 81 per cent. of lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking.

The younger the person when he or she begins smoking, the greater the risk of developing lung cancer. When I see young boys and girls puffing away at cigarettes, I feel a deep sense of anguish at the dangers they are facing.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): On that point, I am fortunate to have as one of my constituents Professor Baum, professor of surgery and director of clinical research at the Royal Marsden hospital. In a letter to me, he says that he was especially in favour of banning tobacco advertising, and says that it could prevent young people from developing the habit. The letter states:

"this could lead to the saving of say 20,000 premature deaths a year. This simple expedient could achieve more than the sum total of our research efforts into cancer".

Sir John Hannam: The hon. Lady is right to produce that evidence. All hon. Members have received a wide range of representations from medical experts that give the same message. There are other common killers in our lives, one of which is coronary heart disease. That is the leading cause of death in the United Kingdom, and smoking is responsible for at least 20 per cent. of those 175,000 deaths.

My father died of a coronary attack 10 years before his normal life expectation. He was a chain smoker who smoked 50 or more a day. He was encouraged to smoke during the first world war, in which he served, by the free issue of good old Woodbine cigarettes to all service men. We talked about parental influence—I grew up with my two brothers and my sister to the sound each morning of a wracking smoker's cough. The effect of my father smoking meant that none of us ever smoked a cigarette in our lives.

In recent years, medical evidence has accumulated to the stage where any measure to prevent smoking addiction surely must have the support of anyone interested in preventive care.

Mr. John Carlisle: My hon. Friend has read out figures on the causes of death that are probably not in dispute. He mentioned coronary diseases and heart problems. To provide a sense of balance, he should inform us—if he knows the figures—how many diseases are alcohol-related, particularly in relation to young people. If, as I suspect, those figures are comparable with the ones that he has given on tobacco-related illness, would he follow the same course of action suggested in the Bill and ban the advertising of alcohol?

Sir John Hannam: I shall leave the hon. Gentleman to make the points that he wants to make in his own speech. As someone who is interested in preventing illness, disease and death, I find it astonishing that people should use another activity that also causes deaths to argue against a measure that could prevent hundreds and thousands of deaths.

We now know that unborn children are affected by their mothers smoking, just as non-smokers are affected by smokers in confined spaces. With all that evidence, I am amazed that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health still defends the present position, although she is beginning to meet our wishes with the voluntary code. I am amazed that the Government oppose the European draft directive to ban tobacco advertising.

The costs to the health service are enormous. About 10,000 hospital beds are occupied daily by people suffering from smoking-related diseases, at an annual cost to the NHS of more than £325 million. The Government have set "Health of the Nation" targets for the reduction in the morbidity and mortality patterns in heart disease, cancers, HIV and AIDS, sexual health, accidents and mental illness. Smoking has been implicated directly or indirectly—including social settings—in the epidemiology of those diseases. If there is no ban on tobacco advertising, the Government's own good intentions for health of the nation issues will be seriously undermined.

If the Department of Health wishes to decrease the incidents and prevalence of those diseases, but stands out against banning advertisements, it sets up a contradiction. It is strange that, while the Department of Health pays lip service to the problem, I, and I expect other hon. Members, have received impassioned pleas from our constituency health organisations asking us to support the Bill.

I have received letters from the Devon family health services authority, the Royal Devon and Exeter health care trust, the Exeter and district community health service trust, the Exeter and North Devon health authorities, the

Exeter and district branch of the National Council of Women of Great Britain and the local office of the Royal College of General Practitioners. Surely that combined call from integral parrts of our national health service should convince the Government of the need for a complete ban on tobacco advertising.

I received a letter from the British Thoracic Society which stated:

"In our work as respiratory physicians we are all too aware of the tragic consequences of smoking. Every year over 40,000 men and women die from lung cancer, and in 90 per cent. of these people the condition is caused by smoking. On top of this, 75 per cent. of the 22,000 people who die from chronic bronchitis and emphysema can blame their condition on smoking, and we know and see much of the long-term breathlessness and suffering which precedes death."

This is the important bit:

"It seems most unlikely that the Government's White Paper targets for smoking reduction among children will be achieved without a major new initiative particularly to reduce the alarming levels of children and especially young girls who continue to take up smoking. The Government's advisers, in the Smee Report, concluded after a full appraisal of the evidence that one of the most effective ways of reducing the uptake of smoking among young people would be a complete ban on all forms of tobacco advertising and promotion."

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am sorry to intervene on my hon. Friend and take up time, but as two and a half hours have passed and only one speech has been made against the Bill, I hope that I will be allowed to make a point.

Surely my hon. Friend, who is a reasonable man, will accept that, notwithstanding one's disapproval of smoking —I do not smoke, either—there is a fundamental civil liberties point; that never before have we banned advertising of something that was freely available over the counter, not on a prescription and not on a licence. It is truly a mark of a free society that one is prepared to tolerate other people's practices and opinions, even if one disapproves of them.

Sir John Hannam: If that was a correct statement, I would agree with it, but it is not. There are bans on advertising in a wide range of areas.

Mr. Leigh: Where?

Sir John Hannam: On television and on radio. We have bans, in effect. As I have mentioned, we have bans on the promotion of all sorts of other products. My hon. Friend's argument does not apply.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I do not want to labour the point, but does my hon. Friend accept that restrictions are different from total bans, and that there is no example of a product which has a total ban on advertising and yet is freely available? That is a crucial point.

Sir John Hannam: There is a total ban on the advertising of cigarattes on television and radio. There is a ban, in effect. It is untrue that it does not exist—it does exist. The Bill would extend the ban to try to alleviate a grave threat to the nation's health.

The question is whether a ban would work and effectively reduce smoking. The fact that the Government are pursuing wide-ranging controls through their voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry shows that they believe that bans work.

In any case, the chief economic adviser of the Department of Health, who has been quoted several times, in his survey on the effectiveness of such bans, reported that other countries have introduced bans on advertising and that there have been evident significant drops in consumption. He has reported on four countries, but others, such as France, Italy, Australia, Sweden and Portugal, also now have bans on advertising, so we are not treading a lone course in following the proposal.

In this country, such a ban would replace the voluntary agreements between the Government and the tobacco industry which currently control tobacco advertising. All are agreed, I believe, that that self-regulatory system is flawed, as it regulates only the style and the media of tobacco advertising. Such advertising is banned on television and radio, but it is legal elsewhere. It is legal in streets, shops, cinemas, sponsored sports and entertainment venues. As we know, every year the tobacco industry spends more than £100 million on advertisements which help to recruit new users, usually young children and young adults.

If there is a problem with a loss of tax revenue, it is misplaced. The saving in health costs and in the health of the nation will more than outweigh the tax revenue lost through the introduction of the measure. In any case, the Government have power to adjust tax revenue through the tobacco duties that they apply.

We in the all-party disablement group place at the top of the list the prevention of illness, disease and disability. Prevention is absolutely at the top of the list. I passionately believe that the House should support the measure, and I ask hon. Members to give it a Second Reading today.

12.10 pm

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): This Bill, like the one introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Faulds), is partly aimed at the rights and protection of the health of children. This is one of the areas on which I wish to concentrate.

Hon. Members may have seen the report from the Royal College of Physicians, a "Charter for children's rights to freedom from tobacco". Essentially, the message of the royal college, which is backed by a range of organisations such as the British Cardiac Society, the British Heart Foundation, the British Lung Foundation, the British Thoracic Society and numerous organisations concerned with health, is that they expect public health to reflect those rights.

There has been some discussion about who is influenced by advertising. There is no doubt that young people are especially susceptible to being affected by advertising. Eighty-four per cent. of regular smokers say that they became regular smokers before the age of 20. Forty-five per cent. of male smokers and 39 per cent. of female smokers say that they became regular smokers before the age of 16—before the age below which it is now illegal for retailers to sell and supply the product.

It has been suggested by those who speak for the advertising industry and the tobacco industry that tobacco advertising only increases the market share, not the total consumption. All the evidence points to the fact that the advertising of cigarettes has a particular effect, both in terms of total consumption and market share, on young people, especially those under the age of 16.

[Mr. John Austin-Walker]

When we talk about this product, and whether it is right or wrong to ban specific products, we must examine the specific nature of tobacco. Can hon. Members name any other manufactured product that, if used according to the manufacturer's instructions, is likely to kill one in four of the people who use it? Tobacco must be seen in a specific light.

We know that the largest cause of preventable ill health is smoking. Each year, 110,000 premature deaths are caused by and linked directly to smoking. A comparison has been made between deaths from smoking and deaths from other causes such as road accidents and suicides. If we add together all the deaths from road accidents, suicides, murder, manslaughter, fires, the use of illicit drugs and AIDS, we still find that there are six times more premature deaths from smoking than the total number of deaths from those other causes.

We are talking about 300 deaths a day—that is 300 customers a day that the tobacco industry loses. To maintain its market, the industry needs to recruit 300 new smokers a day. Who are those new smokers whom the industry recruits? Are they people my age? Are they people of your age, Madam Deputy Speaker? Are they people of the age of the Minister? No. The people who are recruited daily are young people—and predominantly those under the age of 16.

All the advertising—it may have been banned on television and radio—is geared in its imagery to appeal to young people. Tory Members say that perhaps we should leave this to the good sense and trust of the tobacco industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley showed through the "Reg" campaign how much we can trust the tobacco industry. The industry will use every method available to get round the voluntary regulations.

In 1990, the Secretary of State said:

"if cigarettes were introduced today, their production and sale would probably be banned".—[*Official Report*, 20 July 1990; Vol. 176, c. 1340.]

Tory Members have said that the sale and consumption of tobacco is not illegal. The sale of tobacco products to persons under 16 is unlawful, yet the basis of advertising campaigns is to attract people to whom it is illegal to sell the product. I do not believe that children, through advertising——

Mr. Merchant: The hon. Gentleman puts a persuasive case, which is widely accepted, about the health damage caused by smoking, and suggests that, if tobacco were a new product, it would not be legal in the first place. Is he therefore saying that he supports making the product illegal—and if not, why not?

Mr. Austin-Walker: That is a wider debate. I am concerned today with getting through a Bill which will make a major contribution to saving lives, and particularly the lives of young people.

All the advertising industry and most of the imagery in advertising is geared towards young people. I believe that that is inherently evil, and hon. Members have a responsibility to try to stop it. The Government have accepted the principle that it is right to put controls on advertising, because they have accepted that cigarettes and tobacco should be banned from advertising on radio and television.

Mr. John Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman says emphatically that advertising is aimed specifically at young people, and he mentioned the "Reg" campaign. "Reg", as we have heard, was an old and balding man, who I hardly think would appeal to young people. Will the hon. Gentleman explain how advertisements such as the one in which a dog was cocking its leg against a bollard and other tobacco advertisements which mystify the majority of the population, including children, actually influence young people to take up cigarette smoking?

Mr. Austin-Walker: The hon. Gentleman may find that children and young people are more adept at interpreting the messages which are concealed behind advertisements than perhaps people of his own age and generation.

Mr. Bayley: One year ago, Kirklees council conducted research on the effects of the "Reg" campaign among young people. In a sample of young people aged between 14 and 15, 43 per cent. said that the "Reg" advertisements would make them more likely to smoke, while 5 per cent. said that the advertisements would make them less likely to smoke.

The research was done long before the Health Education Authority research, and the tobacco companies said at the time that the research was flawed, and that it should be chucked into the waste bin and ignored. However, the HEA produced research later which was so damning, and which backed up those early findings so strongly, that the "Reg" campaign was banned.

Mr. Austin-Walker: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention, and I agree with him.

I draw the House's attention to a resumé of the academic research on the influence of advertising on children. The document is called "From the Billboard to the Playground", and was produced by the Cancer Research Campaign. It concentrated on the particular impact of advertising on young children.

The research shows that young people more readily remember advertisements. They can identify the product with its slogan; the research shows that 83 per cent. of 11 to 14-year-olds recall seeing at least one cigarette advert, and over half remember seeing two or more. When those same children were shown examples of cigarette adverts, they were, on average, able to recognise as many as five different adverts.

Hon. Members should look at the interviews with children themselves, when they were asked what images they see from advertising. The children replied:

"hard men smoke this cigarette . . . the advert was telling you that if you smoke them you are going to be a macho he-man . . . it is colourful, like all cigaretts ads . . . trying to associate the products with glamour . . . glamourising cigarettes—cocktails and all that fanciness".

There is a suggestion that advertising is directed at young people to make smoking appear smart or cool because the tobacco industry needs to recruit those 300 new smokers a day.

Mr. Congdon: The issue of advertising and young people is clearly critical. The Smee report has been referred to by hon. Members in the debate. Although it is true that advertising increases the awareness of young people, the report suggests that it is not reliable evidence that advertising increases consumption among young people. What does the hon. Gentleman have to say about that?

Mr. Austin-Walker: The hon. Gentleman ought to read some of the statements by Ministers. One of the things on which all hon. Members agree is that we must be clear in the messages we give to young peole and children. Children need clear messages. As a result of the current state of public policy, children are receiving mixed messages. The advertising from the tobacco industry contradicts the advertising of the Government's health message. A ban on cigarette and tobacco advertising would be just about the most powerful health message that the Government could give.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Health came to the House to talk about health in London. She made a statement about the importance of primary care services and the prevention of ill-health. The biggest contribution she could make to combating ill-health in the nation would be to put a ban on cigarette advertising.

Every Member of Parliament could point to the impact of cigarette smoking on their constituencies. Of the 792 people who die in Woolwich every year, one in five dies as a result of cigarette smoking. Each year, 458 residents of Woolwich go into a national health service hospital because of smoking-related illnesses. Twelve beds every day are taken up by people with smoking-related illnesses.

The Secretary of State said yesterday that some of us in London were obsessed with beds. I can tell her one way of reducing the need for beds. It is to reduce the consumption of cigarettes. She could make a major contribution by supporting my hon. Friend's Bill.

Mr. Sweeney: On that point, has the hon. Gentleman found, as I have, that many people who work in the health service have written pleading with us to support the Bill? They appreciate how many lives it will save and how much it will reduce the pressure on our valuable national health service resources.

Mr. Austin-Walker: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention. I was about to refer to the £325 million direct cost to the national health service of tobacco-related illness. I draw in aid and support the comments which consultant physicians in my area have made to me, as they have to other hon. Members. I have received a letter signed by every consultant in the department of respiratory and general medicine of the Greenwich health care trust urging me to come to the House today to support my hon. Friend's Bill.

I have received a letter from a consultant physician at the Brook hospital. He says:

"As a Chest Physician, virtually every day I see both in my Out-patient clinics and as In-patients . . . the effect that smoking has had on my middle-aged and elderly patients who have gradually become incapacitated with chronic bronchitis and emphysema which has progressed to respiratory failure . . . In addition, I have a substantial number of young patients with asthma, many of whom have taken up smoking in their teens. These individuals as well as risking the medium and long-term consequences of smoking, already in a minor way exhibit the detrimental effects of the habit on the frequency and severity of their attacks of asthma. Like most health professionals"—

in this case we ought to listen to those people who are involved at the sharp end in dealing with the menace of tobacco smoking—

"I feel exasperated and frustrated by the unwillingness of the Department of Health to support proposals to ban tobacco advertising; indeed, the perception is that the Department is more interested in the promotion of the tobacco industry than good health."

If the Minister wants to show that that is not true, and end the exasperation and frustration of consultants, he should give his whole-hearted and unqualified support to my hon. Friend's Bill.

There is concrete evidence. Some people will deny evidence, no matter how strong. If they do not believe that the evidence is absolutely foolproof, I ask them to examine the evidence on the basis of reasonableness and probability. No one who takes an objective view could come to any other conclusion than, first, that smoking kills, and secondly, that advertising tobacco increases the take-up of smoking.

As the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) said, other factors may lead to an increase or decrease in smoking. Price, taxation and Government health education campaigns may all have an effect, but advertising presents smoking as an apparently normal and socially acceptable habit, and it swamps the health message that the Government are trying to convey. Will the Minister consider how many children could be saved from thinking that smoking is okay, cool and a smart habit?

As the Smee report suggests, smokers feel that smoking cannot be as dangerous as the Government point out, if they allow the product to be advertised so freely. The Government spend an important sum on tobacco-linked health education, but it is a pittance compared to the resources of the tobacco industry against which they are competing.

The Government report states that the existence of pro-smoking advertising dilutes the impact of the health education message. Other factors may lead to a decline in smoking, as the hon. Member for Lewes said, but Smee concludes in the Government's own report that in those countries where a ban has been imposed, taking into account all the other factors, such as price, taxation and health education,

"the banning of advertising was followed by a fall . . . which cannot reasonably be attributed to other factors."

The Conservative party derives much of its income from the tobacco industry. One wonders whether some Conservative Members might be more concerned about the health of the Tory party than the health of the nation. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members believe that that is a slur on their integrity, they can prove it by voting for my hon. Friend's Bill.

12.26 pm

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I have always been surprised at the convention of the House by which we congratulate an hon. Member on his success in the ballot, bearing in mind that it was a ballot, but I congratulate the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on the way in which he introduced his Bill. As one who has introduced a private Member's Bill and seen it through to the statute book I appreciate the commitment and emotion associated with the introduction of his Bill.

First, I shall try to make as much common cause as possible with some of the comments of the hon. Member for Rother Valley. I am sure that everyone would wish to endorse his generous comments about the late Jo Richardson and Jimmy Boyce. I did not know Jo Richardson very well, but it is one of the pleasures of this House that friendships can strike up across the Floor between Members of opposite parties. I should like to think that Jimmy Boyce and I would have considered ourselves friends and just before his death we were discussing the

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possibility of my visiting his constituency with him. As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is not a matter for me, but I hope that it will be possible for those hon. Members who so wish to attend his memorial service later this afternoon.

There are many areas of common cause between us. First, there is no debate about the fact that we want to reduce tobacco consumption. Our record in this country is impressive and I shall return to it. However, the Bill is not about reducing, or not reducing, tobacco consumption as that is a given.

Secondly, I agree that it is not a party political issue and I regret the end of the speech by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker). In three hours, that was the first attempt to make a party political point on an issue which is not party political.

Another issue on which we agree is that advertising is an important influence. As the hon. Member for Rother Valley pointed out, we said so ourselves on Monday in paragraph 4.52 of the document to which reference has been made. So there is no disagreement among us about whether advertising is a legitimate area of concern—we agree that it is.

This manifestly difficult issue generates strong feelings and views, some of which have been expressed this morning. Others will no doubt be expressed before the end of the debate. The Government believe that the existing voluntary agreements, which we intend to strengthen, have been effective and have served us well, that they can achieve the necessary protection and that they are preferable to the legislative route. But I wish to deal with that matter as helpfully as I can.

Clearly, there is no quick fix to this problem. Long-term concerted action will be more effective than just slogans, so I want to show that the Government have identified the main issues that affect tobacco consumption. We are trying to take, and believe that we are taking, effective action on all fronts. It will range from the £12 million three-year advertising programme to be launched later this year, to which the hon. Member for Rother Valley referred, to improving the material to be made available by general practitioners to people who visit their surgeries.

Controls on advertising are one element in that picture. I shall seek to explain why we believe that our proposed course of opening negotiations with the tobacco industry to strengthen the present voluntary agreement is preferable to a ban.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): As my right hon. Friend will know, I am a sponsor of the Bill. Is he aware that, seven or eight years ago, when I was a Minister at the Department, I made speeches using exactly the same words as he is now using about the value of the voluntary ban, how the Department of Health itself would spend more money on advertising to persuade youngsters not to smoke, and how the legislative route was not the right way to proceed? Does he now agree that the seven or eight years that have elapsed and the extraordinary body of evidence that has been presented so effectively by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) show that it is now time to think again?

Dr. Mawhinney: I agree with my hon. Friend that, since she was a distinguished Minister in this Department, the level of tobacco consumption has fallen considerably under the measures which she endorsed for this House. What she advocated at the Dispatch Box has proved to be effective in the years since she stood here.

If we depart from the voluntary approach and ban advertising for a product that is and will remain legal to sell, significant evidence would be needed to convince us that that would deliver more effective results. The element of the speech of the hon. Member for Rother Valley that was significant by its absence was the fact that he did not say whether he felt comfortable about seeking to make illegal the advertising of something that is legal.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many Conservative Members are concerned that this could be the thin end of a rather nasty wedge? Has he seen the comment of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) in which he asked the junior Minister at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to

"examine the possibility of promoting a ban on the advertising of alcohol products"?—[*Official Report*, 28 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. 967.]

Is there not a danger that a ban on tobacco advertising may be followed by a similar ban on the advertising of whisky, beer and tens of other products of which the hon. Member disapproves?

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand that concern. It is shared by some in the House and outside, but I shall concentrate on the Bill that is before us. No doubt, when right hon. and hon. Members make their judgment at the end of the debate, they will play a number of arguments in their minds. For some, the hon. Gentleman's argument may be one that they wish to play.

Mr. Barron: The Minister's argument about freedom and of things that are able to be bought legally could well have been argued in 1965 when the Government and subsequent Governments decided that they would not allow the advertising of cigarettes on radio and television, because of public health implications. What has altered?

Dr. Mawhinney: I think that the hon. Gentleman made that point earlier, but I am happy to have given him the opportunity to make it again.

It is already known—I repeated it on Monday—that we are making good progress on three of the four targets that we set out in "Health of the Nation". One target on which we are not making good progress is in young people aged 11 to 15. That is a matter of concern. I have been able to tell the House of some interesting new information. Within that age group, the children whose parents do not smoke have reached the target of 6 per cent. The percentage of children of parents who smoke has not shown any movement. I put that point to the House because no one has yet sought to make a differential advertising argument in relation to whether advertising would be effective for the children of parents who smoke compared with children of those who do not. The House will want to bear that piece of relevant information in mind.

Mr. Bayley: Does the Minister agree that factors that dissuade people from taking up smoking tend to reinforce themselves? In families where neither parent smokes, there will be strong pressure on the children not to smoke. Therefore, those children will be less susceptible to the effects of tobacco advertising. All the evidence shows that those who are most affected by advertising are those who grow up in a smoke-filled environment. Therefore, it is

important to ban advertising, because that group are most at risk of smoking, are affected by advertising and take up smoking in greatest numbers.

Dr. Mawhinney: When the hon. Gentleman comes to reflect on what he has just said, he will find that, in a perverse sort of way, he is reinforcing the point that I am putting to the House.

I shall deal later with parental behaviour and attitude, about which there is common ground across the House. I have not yet heard it argued that there is some differential advertising effect. In the light of the new information, that needs to be argued. About 20 years ago, 45 per cent. of this country's population smoked. In 1990, the figure was 30 per cent. In 1992, 28 per cent. smoked.

That is a very impressive record, not because the statistics look good or that it shines a lamp of glory on the Government, but because it has been achieved by the combined effects of many people and represents lives saved and ill health avoided. We need to examine the way in which that was achieved, and whether any improvements are necessary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I do not think that there is any argument about the reduction in smoking. Is my hon. Friend aware, however, of a disturbing trend among young people? The lung cancer death rate among women under 45 is 50 per cent. higher in some parts of Yorkshire than elsewhere in the country. Many of us are worried about the number of young people, particularly girls—not even women—who are taking up smoking after seeing all the advertising.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am aware of that problem, and I am no less concerned about it than my hon. Friend. We are all concerned. Concern about ill health is not a party political issue; all Members of Parliament feel such concern—on behalf of their constituents, and as a result of their corporate responsibility for the well-being of the country.

The issue is not whether lung cancer is caused by smoking. I was brought up in a family of non-smokers, but my uncle died of lung cancer, having smoked about 80 cigarettes a day. As a teenager, I visited him in hospital shortly before he died. Like many hon. Members, I need no instruction about the link between lung cancer and smoking. The issue, however, is much narrower—whether the Bill would improve the existing arrangements, which we are reviewing and some of which we intend to tighten so as to reduce tobacco consumption even further.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I thank my hon. Friend for the useful statistics that he gave. Two factors, however, should be borne in mind. First, a voluntary arrangement has been working very well in the United Kingdom; it has been revised nine times, and honed down. Secondly, action is being taken in regard to advertising. The Bill is, after all, about advertising. Despite the confluence of those two factors, Opposition Members say that advertising is causing the trouble, but obviously it is not.

Dr. Mawhinney: As I have said, I do not consider this a party political issue. Hon. Members on both sides of the House feel strongly about it, and I respect their views.

Smoking-related diseases still account for about 110,000 premature and avoidable deaths a year. It is estimated that some 50 million working days may be lost annually because of smoking. My right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) dealt with all the health issues with his customary skill.

Evidence also suggests—it is more recent evidence, but it is important—that perhaps one non-smoker a day dies as a consequence of inhaling other people's tobacco smoke. The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) made that point, citing Roy Castle. Every day, about 50 children under five are admitted to hospital suffering from illnesses related to passive smoking; children that age are almost certainly inhaling smoke from their parents' cigarettes.

There is no difference between hon. Members on this point. The White Paper, "The Health of the Nation", set out for the first time specific, quantified targets for reducing smoking, and the Government as a whole are committed to those targets. They have been widely welcomed by everyone with an interest in health. The targets are ambitious but, given the seriousness of the subject, they should be. They are not simply a forward projection of historic trends and the Government are determined to meet them.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am sure that the House will agree that the statistic of 110,000 people a year dying from smoking-related diseases is appalling. Why, then, does hardly anyone die from the smoking or using of cannabis? If we treat this as a health issue, cannot a case be made for banning nicotine and legalising cannabis?

Dr. Mawhinney: I have a vague memory that I have heard the hon. Gentleman on this point before. However, I suspect that our agenda today is full enough without wandering down that byway.

Mr. Thurnham: My right hon. Friend has outlined the success of the Government's voluntary policy in many respects. He will be aware that, nationally, the infant mortality rate has declined but that Bolton has a rising rate of infant mortality. It is now twice as high as the national average, which is causing concern. Will he confirm the link between maternal smoking and low birth-weight babies and that infant mortality is linked to the incidence of low birth-weight babies? Is he aware of the strength of feeling in Bolton about the "Reg" targeted advertising campaign, which without doubt is in breach of the voluntary code because of its impact on young people? Will he consider asking tobacco and advertising companies to make Bolton an oasis free of advertising and to conduct a health education campaign to see whether we can reduce diseases and the effects of tobacco smoking?

Dr. Mawhinney: On the first of my hon. Friend's three questions, yes, there is evidence linking maternal smoking to low birth-weight babies and other problems with new-born children. Secondly, I am aware of the effects of the "Reg" campaign in Bolton, not least because he and my fellow Minister in the Department of Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), have assiduously informed me of it on behalf of their constituents, and I pay tribute to them for doing so. Thirdly, as my hon. Friend will know, and he will be encouraged that I know, he has written to me in the past couple of days suggesting the oasis idea. I shall reflect on it and write to him.

I am beginning to develop a problem. Let me share it with the House. It has always been my view that, especially on private Member's Bills, Ministers presenting the

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Government's case should be as open and as active in the debate as it is possible to be, and I have sought to do that in the past 20 minutes. The consequence is that we shall not make as much progress and other hon. Members will not be able to make the speeches that they should like. I leave it to the House to decide. I shall seek to be as responsive and helpful as I can, but there is a price to be paid by other hon. Members and they will have to decide how they wish to handle the matter.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Recognising that 110,000 deaths a year are attributed to smoking-related diseases and that progress as a result of Government action to date has been rather slow in solving the problem, will the Minister make a dramatic gesture to show clearly today that the Government are taking this seriously, because it will become increasingly difficult for small measures to have any real impact in the future?

Dr. Mawhinney: The difficulty is that the hon. Gentleman's point does not stand robustly against the evidence. We are not making slow progress. Other than the Netherlands, to which I shall return later, we have the best record in Europe and one of the best in the world for reducing tobacco consumption. The hon. Gentleman knows me well enough to know that I am not given to dramatic gestures most of the time.

On Monday, the Government published "Smoke-free for Health", an action plan to achieve the "Health of the Nation" targets on smoking. It shows that we are on track for three of the four main targets, which is encouraging, but we need to build on that momentum. We also need to recognise that there are sectors in which we are not making the progress that we should like to make, and that is especially so in the 11 to 15 age group. That is a key concern for hon. and right hon. Members and it has been reinforced in the debate. I want the House to know that it is a key concern of Ministers also.

Because we recognise the need for continuing action, the plan sets out the key elements of what we believe to be a strategic and comprehensive approach to achieve the targets. That approach extends throughout Government, and comment has already been made, not least by the hon. Member for Rother Valley, about the involvement of the Treasury in that policy. Controls on tobacco advertising are one element of that strategy, but they are only one element. There are others.

We are taking action on price because we know that there is good, solid evidence that price influences consumption. We are taking action to ensure that tobacco products are not sold to children; I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), whose Bill—which became the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991—made that possible.

We are also taking action to tell smokers and non-smokers about the health risk and trying to put in place helplines and other forms of help to people who wish to quit smoking. We are trying to take action to protect non-smokers from passive smoking. We are trying to take action to improve scientific understanding of the risks from tobacco and to reduce the harm from tobacco products, and I was glad that several people welcomed my announcement on Monday of the setting up of the new scientific committee. We are also taking action to ensure effective controls on advertising and promotion.

Cutting smoking does not require action from Government only. It is a challenge for everyone. One ill-informed newspaper report accused me of passing the buck when I said that on Monday. It is a fallacy that the Government, by themselves, have the ability to reduce tobacco consumption. All of us have a part to play. I will discuss that in more detail later, but parents should realise how strong an influence they have on their children's smoking habits.

There seems to be no argument to enable us to discount the evidence that children with parents who both smoke are two and a half times as likely to be regular smokers as children with non-smoking parents. One study has shown that children who believe that their parents strongly disapprove of them smoking are seven times less likely to become smokers than children who think that their parents do not care. Whatever else may divide the House today, as the message goes out to the country I hope that there is no ambiguity about the message that parents' behaviour and attitude to their children and to whether their children smoke is one of the most powerful ways of trying to stop that crucial 11 to 15 age group from adopting the habit.

Ms Glenda Jackson: One of my constituents, Mr. Tim Graham, is a founder member of Parents Against Tobacco. He asks the Government to help parents to convince their children of the dangers of smoking. He says:

"It is very difficult to convince young people that we are serious about the risks of smoking, when they can see striking adverts for cigarettes on the streets where they play, in the shops where they buy their sweets, and when they watch sport on TV."

If the Government are serious about assisting parents they should respond to that cry from parents who are fighting that battle, and ban tobacco advertising.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Lady has twice made interventions that are essentially the same as her speech. I understand her point and I want her to know that my discussions at constituency level with my local Parents Against Tobacco group are constructive. Both she and I are committed in a variety of ways to trying to strengthen the influence of parents, which is crucial for this age group.

We look to teachers and school governors to give a lead by adopting policies on smoking and by taking action on health education in schools. They are talking to the crucial 11 to 15 age group. The nation curriculum now requires children between the ages of 7 and 16 to be taught about the harmful effects of smoking. I suspect that that requirement finds broad agreement across the House.

We expect retailers to obey the law which prevents sales of tobacco to children under 16. If they fail to do so, we expect local authorities to discharge their responsibilities. We also urge employers to introduce written policies and to restrict smoking throughout the workplace. The "Health of the Nation" working group devoted to workplace health, which includes representatives from industry, small business, the Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress, is advising on how best to take that aspect forward.

We are encouraging managers of public places to continue to think about the merits of introducing smoke-free areas and then to act. There has been a remarkable increase in the percentage of smoke-free public places over the past 10 years. That change has been carried

forward because people with a sense of ownership of their public places have made judgments about how they wish them to be. I continue to believe that that is an effective way forward. We want areas to cater for the interests of non-smokers. We expect health professionals to take every opportunity to use their special position to advise people about the damage done by smoking and to help them give up.

Dr. Spink: Does my right hon. Friend recall a written answer to me that revealed that many more youngsters are prosecuted for under-age drinking than for buying cigarettes under age? Chief constables and local authorities should address that problem. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend recognises that parental responsibility is the key factor in this equation. The major aim of the Bill must be to prevent people of 15 and younger from starting smoking.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that even though cigarette advertisements have not been allowed on television in this country since 1965, Sir Donald Maitland, the chairman of the Health Education Authority, told us that 64 per cent. of children between nine and 14 honestly believed that they had seen advertising on television during the past week——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order.

Dr. Spink: That was because——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If I call order, I expect hon. Members to resume their seats.

Dr. Mawhinney: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) for his comments.

I now turn more specifically to the policy on tobacco advertising. As the "Health of the Nation" White Paper and the action plan on smoking make clear, the Government recognise—the hon. Member for Rother Valley was right—the importance of effective controls on tobacco advertising and promotion. As has been said, the advertising of cigarettes on television has been banned since 1964. The ban was extended to all tobacco products in 1991. Other advertising and promotional activities have been controlled since 1971 under Governments of both parties through voluntary agreements between Health Ministers and the tobacco industry. The sponsorship of sport by the tobacco industry is also controlled through a separate voluntary agreement which is now the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

The agreements already provide wide-ranging and strict controls on tobacco advertising. The main provisions of them include the stipulation that the content of all advertisements must comply with the cigarette advertising code of practice. Advertisements must not, for example, appeal more to the young than to the general population and they must not associate smoking with success of sex appeal. I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Rother Valley said about the "Reg" advertising campaign and what may or may not be the re-emergence of that campaign.

Mr. Barron: Yesterday, the Advertising Standards Authority replied to my letter about that recent advertisement and defended it. The only difference between that advertisement and the four adverts that it said in December had to be withdrawn is the absence of that man's face. Does the Minister honestly think that we can have confidence in an authority if it polices matters in that way?

Dr. Mawhinney: I was careful to say to the hon. Gentleman that I listened carefully to the points that he made, not only about the campaign but about what he believed was its re-emergence.

The second part of the agreement is that all press and poster advertising must carry health warnings covering 17·5 per cent. of the area and advertising is not allowed in magazines where more than 25 per cent. of the readership are women aged between 15 and 24. The number of shop-front advertisements will be reduced by 50 per cent. from the 1991 level in five years and the voluntary agreement on sport precludes tobacco companies from sponsoring activities in which the majority of participants are under 18 or which are designed to appeal mainly to the under-18 age bracket.

The system of voluntary agreements has proved to be sufficiently flexible to respond to special concerns. One example is that when the voluntary agreement first came into effect, the area of posters which had to be covered with a health warning was 6 per cent. Now it is 17·5 per cent. The Government are concerned that the impact of the Bill would be to replace that flexible, voluntary system, based on negotiations in response to particular concerns, with a statutory ban on the advertising of that which, as I have said, it is and will remain legal to sell.

I fully accept that the Bill is motivated by concerns over public health. We share and applaud those concerns.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): My right hon. Friend's speech is completely consistent with the case which the Government have made for some years, especially with regard to a voluntary agreement. However, many of us feel that that case has within it gross inconsistency. It must be evident to him from the many speeches that he has heard this morning, that there is strong support in the House for the Bill. We all hope very much—[HON. MEMBERS: "No, we do not."] A clear majority of Members who have spoken have indicated their support for the Bill and we hope that it will go into Committee. If, nevertheless, some of my hon. Friends choose to divide the House on Second Reading, will my hon. Friend the Minister indicate what course he will take?

Mr. Leigh: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend said that the overwhelming feeling is in favour of the Bill. It is because only one speech has been allowed that is against the Bill. There are a number of hon. Members who will not be called.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The longer we take on such unnecessary interventions, the fewer hon. Members I can call.

Mr. John Carlisle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) has just said. It is a fact that the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) made a statement and was obviously waiting for the Minister to respond. There has been a desperate imbalance in argument allowed from this side of the House and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that hon. Members are not criticising the Chair. I notice that the speeches have

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been over-long. I am looking forward to the next speeches being short because I have a long list of Members who wish to speak and I imagine that some will speak for and some against.

Dr. Mawhinney: I will take from that an indication that it may be better for me to get on and take fewer interventions, although I would wish to try to be as helpful as possible. It is not a matter for me, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) knows, whether the House will divide or not or what the judgment of the House will be on the Bill. I am seeking to put the Government's case as clearly and as persuasively as I can. I am content that hon. Members will come to a judgment on it.

A lot of comment has been made about the Smee report. As I was the person who asked Dr. Smee to conduct the report, perhaps I too may be permitted to say a word or two on it. In the White Paper, "The Health of the Nation", the Government recognised widespread concern that controls on tobacco advertising and promotion should be strong and effective. We gave a commitment to review the effects of tobacco advertising and to consider further steps. The Smee report, as it has become called, if not known, reviewed the available evidence thoroughly.

The Government have also considered the many comments on the report. The review supports the Government's view that there is a relationship between tobacco advertising and consumption—indeed, that is the rationale for the existing controls. We find little, however, to support the argument that a statutory ban would have a dramatic effect on further reducing smoking. That view is reinforced when we consider that other measures, such as price and parental influence, have a much greater impact than a statutory ban. We were also unconvinced by international evidence that a ban was necessary if we were to achieve our targets, which are the common ground at the heart of the debate.

I want to consider those arguments in more detail. I fear that some supporters of an advertising ban often appear to overstate the evidence about its possible impact. We need to put that in perspective.

Mrs. Currie: Will my right hon. Friend give way?.

Dr. Mawhinney: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I want to make progress.

The studies reviewed in the Department of Health discussion document consider ban-related reductions in smoking using data collated over different periods. It is an interesting way to consider the matter and I want to bring to the attention of hon. Members the evidence from surveys in the United Kingdom.

That evidence is clear. Dr. Smee said that, according to surveys of the time, if a ban had been imposed 30 years ago, the reduction in tobacco consumption would have been about 7 per cent. and that, if it had been introduced about 20 years ago, the reduction would have been about half that amount. But the two most recent studies in the United Kingdom both showed that there was no significant statistical link between the banning of advertising and the consumption of tobacco. People will have different interpretations of why that should be so.

Having taught a little medical statistics in my time, my interpretation is that the increasingly stringent voluntary ban of the past 20 years has almost certainly squeezed out of the system any benefit that a ban would be likely to produce.

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): That is a misreading of the surveys.

Dr. Mawhinney: The most recent surveys, which showed no statistically significant link, were not Government surveys, but were carried out independently and reported by Dr. Smee.

Consumption fell from 45 to 28 per cent. in this country during the period referred to in the Smee report. Without a ban, which the evidence suggests would have had increasingly little effect with the passage of time, the consumption of tobacco dropped. To claim in the face of that evidence, as some health campaigners seem to do, that an advertising ban would have a dramatic effect in reducing smoking is not obviously supportable. It is arguable that the United Kingdom approach, which, through the voluntary system, employs a range of effective measures and places tough controls on tobacco advertising, is the most effective. It is noticeable and notable that, among European Union member states, only the Netherlands, which also relies on the voluntary approach, has a better record on reducing smoking than the United Kingdom.

The international comparisons that have been mentioned are also interesting. They show that a statutory ban does not guarantee success in reducing smoking. Supporters of a ban are fond of quoting the figures in the Smee report on the effects of banning advertising in other countries. Not only the hon. Member for Rother Valley but other hon. Members have quoted such figures.

I confirm, as the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) did, that in Norway there was a 9 per cent. reduction in consumption associated with a ban. In Finland, there was a 7 per cent. reduction, and in Canada there was a 4 per cent. reduction. As my hon. Friend for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) said, price might also have been associated with that reduction. However—this information might be new to the House—only Norway and Finland have had advertising bans in place for sufficient time to allow sensible comparisons of their changes in smoking prevalence with the changes in this country over similar periods.

As I have said, in Norway, smoking prevalence has fallen by nine percentage points since advertising was banned in 1975. The House will wish to know that, over the same period, smoking prevalence in this country fell not by 9 per cent. but by 12 per cent. In Finland, smoking prevalence fell by three percentage points in the eight years following the ban. Over the same period in this country, it fell not by 3 per cent. but by 8 per cent. Over the same period, without a statutory ban, we have achieved a greater fall in smoking prevalence than those countries have achieved.

Sir Peter Emery: There is no doubt that some of the Government's proposals work excellently. The policy was actually carried through in Norway and Finland. If we had an advertising ban, would we not have had a greater decrease in smoking in Britain than we achieved? We are left with a judgment, and I think that my right hon. Friend would accept that.

Dr. Mawhinney: As is often the case, my right hon. Friend is exactly right. I was seeking to show that, when other countries are prayed in aid in support of a judgment, evidence in this country suggests that, with our own arrangements, we are doing better in percentage terms than countries which claim some success following the application of a ban.

I am not saying whether those countries were right to introduce a ban; that is a matter for them. However, the hon. Member for Rother Valley is inviting us to impose a ban. If we are to take such a serious step and deem to be illegal advertisements for a product which itself is legal, the evidence will need to be sufficiently persuasive. I am sure that my right hon. Friend clearly understands that point.

Mrs. Currie: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Mawhinney: No, I should like to make progress, if I may. I have already given way to my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery).

Within the European Union, as I have said, the two countries with the best record for reducing smoking in recent years are the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, which favour voluntary controls on tobacco advertising. Our consumption has dropped from 45 per cent. to 28 per cent., and in the Netherlands it has fallen from 59 per cent. of the adult population in 1970 to 34 per cent. in 1992.

Indeed, it is instructive to examine progress in reducing smoking in the European Union generally and other countries' attitudes to advertising bans. Countries that support a ban tend to have low prices for tobacco products. We know that every 10 per cent. increase in price produces about a 3 per cent. to 6 per cent. decrease in consumption. Those countries also tend to have nationalised industries and receive European Union subsidies for growing tobacco —in some cases, huge subsidies. Italy receives £450 million and Greece receives £300 million. In contrast, the United Kingdom has the third highest cigarette prices in the EC and a further commitment to increase tobacco taxes in real terms by at least 3 per cent. Budget by Budget—a commitment that is unmatched in the European Union. That is why I say that the voluntary system has served the United Kingdom well. However, we recognise the need to ensure that the system evolves to reflect specific concerns.

As I announced on Monday, the Government believe that it is desirable to take further steps to control some aspects of tobacco advertising. One specific concern is the exposure of children to such advertising. I have noted tobacco companies saying that they have a concern about children. They need to understand that I have a concern about children. Whatever the outcome of this debate, I am grateful to the House for reinforcing that it has a concern about children, and I shall enter the negotiations fortified by that support.

We shall open negotiations with the tobacco industry to strengthen the existing agreement. I want hon. Members and people outside the House to understand that the negotiations are not an easy option. They will be tough because the issues that we must debate are serious, but they will also be fair. The Government have no reason to believe that voluntary agreements will not be effective in delivering further controls.

The Government believe that this way forward is preferable to a statutory ban. It represents action on advertising and promotion which is in proportion to the available evidence on the possible impact of advertising on smoking behaviour. What is important is reducing smoking and meeting the targets set out in "The Health of the Nation"—we agree on that much. We shall continue to focus on effective measures to ensure that we do so, and I commend the Government's policy to the House.

1.16 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and hon. Members on both sides of the House on sponsoring this Bill. It is not only a public health measure; it is a child protection measure. It can be targeted at and easily attributable to assisting children not to become involved with tobacco and other substance abuse. It is also a measure that will assist parents who do not smoke to encourage their children not to become involved in such abuses. The banning of advertising would reinforce that positive measure.

Before I comment on the Bill, I must tell right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House that this is the first occasion I have had since I had tuberculosis that I have spoken from the Dispatch Box. I thank all those who sent me letters, cards and telephone messages—they were much appreciated by my wife and me. I thank hon. Members for their concern and interest.

I hope that, by the end of May, I will be fully back in action, fit and raring to tackle the Minister's activities. The Minister was more subdued than his usual boisterous attempts to defend Government policy. I am sure that all hon. Members were surprised by his low-key attempt to defend the Government's policy in this morning's debate.

With my Glaswegian accent, I may not be associated with cricket, but I recognise a tail-end batsman being put in on a sticky wicket by the captain. He must hang around for some time in the hope that things will improve the following day. The Minister did exactly that—and he did it somewhat better than perhaps the evidence of his case suggested.

It is clear from this debate that there is a desire and a demand for further positive action to end the scandal of the smoking epidemic. When the Minister was at the Dispatch Box a few weeks ago, he used an analogy about Wembley with regard to statistics. It was effective in terms of his case, although I did not agree with a word of it. I thought that I had better add that in case I was misquoted, in the way that the Smee report has been misquoted by Government Members in the debate.

I thought of using the Minister's analogy to bring home in graphic terms the imbalance not only in terms of advertising, but in the resources which are being used to discourage and to encourage children to become involved in smoking. We could fill Wembley stadium one and a half times each year with the number of people who die from smoking-related diseases in Britain. If we add our European partners, we can fill Wembley seven times.

Every time a match is played at Wembley, 20 of our fellow citizens will have died because of tobacco products, and two babies will have been admitted to hospital by the time of the final whistle.

Most staggering of all is the £1 billion a year which is given to tobacco growers in the European Community. That is equivalent to a subsidy of £1·25 million to every single one of the 80,000 seats in Wembley. The Government are spending £5 million on publicity to

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prevent children from smoking; that is equivalent to buying four seats at Wembley out of a capacity crowd of 80,000.

The Government's announcement on Monday, which the Minister has again trumpeted, was that they were to target parents and adults during the next three years to assist in health education to prevent smoking. The figure of £12 million during three years is equivalent to 11 season tickets for Wembley over three seasons for a capacity crowd of 80,000. That shows the lack of investment and the inequality in the debate with regard to trying to prevent young people and adults from being involved in the abuse of tobacco.

Dr. Mawhinney: We should not leave some mistaken idea in the minds of hon. and right hon. Members, much less the public. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will also mention the figure of more than £30 million a year which we give to the HEA. I hope that he is also going to mention the millions of pounds which we give in health promotion payments to general practitioners to address the issue. There is a variety of other means of expenditure, which are not part of the advertising budget but which are crucial to the delivery of the aim that he and I share, which is to reduce the number of people who die from smoking.

Mr. McCartney: I am glad that the Minister referred to the HEA. The authority, and all who work with it, support the Bill. The Government are investing that amount of money to take advice and to assist in activities to prevent smoking. I should have thought that, if they are investing that kind of money, they would support the conclusions and recommendations of the HEA. It has said that banning advertising is a positive incentive to reducing the involvement of children in smoking in the first place.

Prevention is better than cure and there is a spirit of all-party co-operation on the issue which has been made clear by the quality of the debate. The spirit is so overwhelming that there should be no further prevarication about what we need to do.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McCartney: I will give way in a minute.

That is not just the view of Conservative Back Benchers, or of right hon. Members who were previously in the Government but are now Back Benchers: it is also the view of members of the Cabinet.

I will quote from a letter of 16 November from the President of the Board of Trade to the Prime Minister. The letter had this to say in respect of the Government's current policy, which was reinforced by the Minister this morning:

"I am persuaded by the medical evidence, acknowledged in Virginia's paper, that a ban on tobacco advertising would not only further reduce smoking but would contribute to the improvements in people's health and avoid the damaging economic burdens which the consequences of ill health place on business . . . if the Governmnent really wishes to demonstrate its commitment to achieving the Health of the Nation targets and to inspire confidence in its actions on reducing smoking and illegal sales, an outright ban instead of some half-way house of severely constrained advertising is the credible way forward."

That was the view of a frontline batsman, not someone sent in to defend the case between now and the close of play.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the comment of the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron)—I hope that I quote him correctly—"There is no fundamental right to advertise; it is a privilege"? If he agrees, who will give that privilege and take it away? Does that square with the right of free speech?

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman's comments are a red herring. The comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley were clear and specific, and I support them. He rightly said that hon. Members on both sides of the House were frustrated that, having given the privilege and freedom to the tobacco industry to act responsibly, its record shows that it has targeted children continuously, and sought to encourage them to smoke. It has targeted people in poor environments in the north of England, in areas which are already deprived of health and social facilities.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McCartney: I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman may be an apologist for the tobacco industry, and I will not give him any further time in the debate.

Mr. Hendry: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to refer to me as an apologist for the tobacco industry when I sought to intervene as someone whose father died of cancer when I was a teenager, and who refused to work on a tobacco account when I was asked to do so?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I heard the hon. Gentleman say "may be", but it is not very helpful to make any assertions.

Mr. McCartney: I certainly said "may be": you are absolutely right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech in his own time. I will try to ensure that he and others are able to do so.

Mr. Robert Banks: Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry). Surely this is an occasion for an apology to be made.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman is wasting the time of the House. The position is clear.

Dr. Spink: Be generous.

Mr. McCartney: I have been generous, and I am continuing to be generous to hon. Members on both sides of the House. But I become extremely frustrated, as other hon. Members do, when we have before us a piece of legislation that so clearly would save hundreds, if not thousands, of lives, and hon. Members make snide, quickshot remarks and points of order which are irrelevant. We are in the business of saving countless lives. Let us remember what the debate is about.

Hon. Members will say that the Bill should be seen as an isolated measure. Yet hon. Members who support the Bill also support the concept that the Minister of State outlined earlier—that the policy on smoking is a family of measures.

The Bill is part and parcel of a preventative health strategy designed to discourage and dissuade people from smoking and prevent people starting to smoke. It includes health education programmes to encourage those who smoke to stop. Any measure within that family of measures

clearly has a health gain. I cannot understand for the life of me why the Government do not seize it with both hands and run with both Opposition and Conservative Members who support the Bill.

We must take measures to stop people starting to smoke, and assist people to stop smoking. More importantly, if that is to succeed—this is the kernel of the argument—we must change the ethos and culture of smoking in society. The banning of advertisements changes that concept dramatically. We can then argue for a non-smoking, tobacco-free society. We can link death and ill health with tobacco, and fitness and leisure with not smoking. That is important.

Why do tobacco companies advertise? It is simple. They have to replace the 300 customers a day that the product kills. Increasingly, mature adults recognise the dangers of smoking and, once they have given up, do not return to the habit. Therefore, the tobacco companies have to turn to the vulnerable. That vulnerable community is our children—not only 11 to 15-year-olds, but older children.

Advertisements are designed to link smoking with sport and good images. They use peer pressure and undermine the family's messages to children about smoking. It is therefore vital for us to make it clear that advertising is about recruiting new customers for an industry which kills its customers because of the nature of the product that it sells.

Is it not incredible that 50 million packets of cigarettes are sold each year in the United Kingdom to children between the ages of 11 and 15? Those sales raise about £96·5 million in taxation for the Treasury, but only £5 million is spent on smoking prevention work with children. Is not that an indictment of our society and of the tobacco culture that advertising continues to promote and enhance?

Those facts cannot be disputed, but we can dispute why the Government will not give the Bill a fair wind.

Mr. John Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman speaks with great passion. He mentioned sports. Would he therefore give us an absolute guarantee that those Opposition Members who share his views—he has given the impression that all Members on the Opposition Front Bench fully support the Bill—will not accept the hospitality of tobacco companies at sporting events they sponsor, or at which they take a hospitality tent? Will he also guarantee that Opposition Members will not attend sporting events that are sponsored by tobacco companies?

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman is a master of subterfuge. I shall come to sports sponsorship in a minute, because I am chairman of the rugby group in Parliament. When I go to Wembley to watch my favourite team, I do so despite tobacco advertising. I go to watch sportspeople, as do many families. The sooner we can get rid of tobacco advertising at such wonderful events the better.

I shall now point out a few statistics that the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) failed to give the House during his many interventions. The statistics are interesting and important and concern his constituency, where 138 people died last year because of smoking; 503 people were admitted to national health service hospitals because of illnesses caused by smoking; and 12 hospital beds have to be kept vacant or used to deal with the ill effects of smoking on his constituents, at a cost of more than £0·5 million to his local NHS trust.

In the hon. Member's constituency, both male and female deaths from coronary heart disease, strokes, lung cancer, pulmonary disease and other diseases attributable to smoking are staggering. If the hon. Member for Luton, North intervenes again, he should do so on behalf of those of his constituents who have been killed by the tobacco industy that he seems so intent on protecting.

The Minister for Health spoke in his statement on Monday about the setting up of a new scientific committee on tobacco and health. In his press statement the emphasis was on the "new"—it was in quotations and underlined. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would care to listen for a moment, instead of talking to his Parliamentary Private Secretary, as this is important.

When the Minister launched the new committee on Monday, he failed to say in the press release that in fact the committee was not new. Previously, it was under the chairmanship of Sir Peter Froggatt, when it was called the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health. The Government have taken out the word "Smoking" and substituted the word "Tobacco".

The committee last met in 1988, when it recommended to the Government, in the report that I have here, the need to take further stringent measues on tobacco smoking. The Government did not announce the closure of the committee, but, when members' terms of reference ended in 1988, they did not reappoint those members or appoint new members, but allowed it to wither on the vine.

We have lost five vital years of independent scientific evidence and advice on this issue. It is simply not acceptable for the Minister to announce, in this debate or on Monday, a new scientific committee when he destroyed the previous committee and its work. Let us hope that the new committee—or this reinvention of the old committee —will be given a fair wind and a fair opportunity. It should be publicly accountable, its recommendations should be brought forward more quickly than the Smee report, and there should be no attempt to suppress any of its work or evidence in support of further restrictions on the use of tobacco products.

On sports sponsorship, I am almost unique in the House, in that, as well as being party spokesman on health, I also chair the parliamentary rugby group. Indeed, I am one of the founding members of the group, whose constitution is to enhance and protect the game of rugby league. The parliamentary group unanimously supports the Bill, and I shall explain why. We think that it is an insult to the concept of sport as an effective means of maintaining mental and physical well-being to allow a product with such devastating consequences to our very being to use sport as a vehicle to hide its lethal effects.

In an average rugby league match, players run 5,000 m, and give or take 40 tackles. A 16-stone forward can run 100 m in 11 seconds. Contrast that with the image of smoking, emphysema, bronchitis, heart disease and the emaciated 31-year-old weighing six stones at the time of his death.

Only a few months ago, my personal friend, John Tierman, died at the age of 31 of cancer in both lungs through smoking. In his younger years, he was dedicated to sport and playing sport. He was over 6 ft tall, articulate, with a family and a future. He was interested in public life as a councillor, and was loved and respected in his community. He died an emaciated six-stone man because of smoking as a child of 13.

We cannot allow the tobacco industry to use sport and sporting personalities as a deliberate and cynical ploy to

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encourage positive images of its deadly product. The industry recruits 300 new customers a day because it has killed 300 people the previous day. Sport, especially rugby league, must never be bound hand and foot to the tobacco industry.

My sport recognises that changes are necessary and will go along with those changes. The sport will survive but, more important, thousands of young children in Britain will survive with it. That is the biggest health gain that we could ever have in this country.

By banning tobacco advertising, as part of a package of measures, we could save countless lives of young people and protect the well-being of their families. That goal is not only worth striving for, but is within the grasp of this House. I appeal to hon. Members to support the Bill.

1.37 pm

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): I have listened to this debate with great interest and do not doubt the sincerity of hon. Members who have argued for a ban on advertising. But I am worried that this could be, as other hon. Members have said, the thin end of a long wedge.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) made the revealing comment that he would support any measure in favour of a health gain. I understand that, but the danger of such an approach is that it can be used to justify bans on advertising and, indeed, bans of other products in the future.

In recent years I have watched with growing concern the amazing intolerance that people show towards smoking and smokers. I have no desire to smoke and do not find it attractive in others. We run the risk of showing a greater intolerance towards smokers than towards other parts of society. We should resist that trend. Once those who have adopted an intolerance towards smoking get their way, they will, in my view, move on to something else, whether it be alcohol, fatty foods or whatever. We should watch with great concern those who set themselves up as the health police of this country.

Mr. Tony Banks: The reason why people—as I am —are so bitterly opposed to smoking is that it affects non-smokers. I do not care what the hon. Gentleman wants to do in private, because that has nothing to do with me, but when it starts impacting on my health and makes my clothes and hair stink, I have a right to say that I do not want someone smoking around me.

Mr. Congdon: I am grateful for that intervention, because I was going to mention later passive smoking. I shall mention it now.

One of the disturbing things about intolerance, I have to say with great regret, is the way in which certain members of the medical and scientific establishment are prepared in many ways to distort the evidence and present passive smoking as though it is a great certainty. I share the concern of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West that, if one goes into a pub and everyone is smoking, it can affect one's eyes. That is an issue and I am delighted to see that some pubs and restaurants are restricting the level of smoking. But there is a difference between that and having a complete ban on smoking.

In relation to the wider issue of passive smoking, attempts have been made to portray it as though there is a clear and significant link between passive smoking and cancer. Indeed, the Government's own publication repeats that statement. An article by a doctor in *The Times* the other day casts doubt over that [redacted]. I am not a medical man, but he advised that there are two types of cancers. He said:

"The commonest are squamous and oat cell cancers . . . The second are adenocarcinomas".

The evidence shows that those who have cancer and have smoked have the first type of cancer cell present, but that non-smokers who have had cancer have the second. His view is that it is pretty unbelievable to suggest that the causes are identical.

That needs to be borne in mind, even though I share the concern of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West on the general issue of passive smoking. More research must be undertaken into exactly what the effect is. The most serious issue obviously is the individual's smoking and its impact on their health. Of course, they must be crazy to smoke. They know by now that it kills. I do not dispute that. I believe firmly in a free society and, if one wishes to smoke, the right to end up killing oneself. That is a right and a freedom that one should have.

I take issue with the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), who is the promoter of the Bill. I agree with much of what he said, but he said that advertising is a privilege. I totally reject that view. In a society that depends on the marketing of goods to survive, it is crucial that advertisers have the right to advertise products unless those products are illegal or restricted.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Of course my hon. Friend is right that we should think carefully about limiting freedom of expression, but we do that in various ways. There are existing Government-imposed bans on advertising; we do not permit freedom of expression such as to incite religious or racial hatred; and we limit the freedom to breach personal confidence. The principle is not absolute.

I put it to my hon. Friend that it is beyond the bounds of what we should tolerate in a free society that vastly powerful corporations should use all the modern techniques of advertising to pressurise the immature and the impressionable into taking up a habit that is probably lethal to themselves, injurious at least and vastly costly to society. What kind of freedom of expression allows the powerful to pressurise the vulnerable into the "unfreedom" of addiction, that allows people to suffer ill health from passive smoking? Surely the issue is not so much freedom of expression as the abuse of power.

Mr. Congdon: I respect my hon. Friend's views, but the way in which he presented them is revealing. I do not regard the use of advertising in a free society to influence people to use a particular product—or not to—as an abuse of power; it is their decision. It is nonsense to suggest that advertising somehow forces innocent people to go out and buy a packet of cigarettes.

Dr. Spink: While accepting the principle of freedom, my hon. Friend believes that it carries with it a certain responsibility. What action does he propose to prevent young people who do not make responsible decisions from taking up smoking in the first place?

Mr. Congdon: An obvious answer is law enforcement. Ultimately, reducing smoking will depend on educating youngsters, but we will not succeed in all respects; we cannot do so, in a free society.

I, too, am worried by the fact that young people are still smoking too much. We know that smoking kills: hon. Members have rightly paraded the statistics today. Everyone who smokes now knows the effects of what they are doing. We must ask ourselves what action would have the greatest impact of smoking. My hon. Friend the Minister said that a 10 per cent. price increase would affect consumption by between 3 per cent. and 6 per cent. I applaud the Government's decision to increase tobacco taxes each year by 3 per cent. in real terms: according to the report of the Select Committee on Health—of which I am a member—price has the most significant effect on the prevalence of smoking. I do not endorse the seductive argument that advertising in itself would have a conclusive impact.

I question the extent to which a "voluntary code" is in fact voluntary, when the threat of possible legislation to tighten it is always present. I would support an advertising ban if it could be shown that we could not meet the health education targets in any other way; we should take all possible measures to meet those important targets.

We have heard much evidence today about the impact of bans in other countries. One of the most revealing features of the Smee report—which was designed to come up with some conclusive evidence in one or other direction—was the inability to demonstrate a conclusive link between smoking and advertising.

Mr. John Marshall: Tobacco consumption was very high in the former Soviet Union. Does that not suggest that communism, rather than advertising, drives people to smoking?

Mr. Congdon: I am sure that it can. I understand that it also drives people to drink a lot of vodka.

The Smee report is not as conclusive as some would suggest. We have been told that bans have been introduced in many countries, but the only countries that seem to be prayed in aid in favour of a ban are Finland, Norway, Canada and New Zealand. It is true that there has been an impact on tobacco consumption in those countries, but the scale of that impact has been disputed. Indeed, it is fair to say that in each of the countries other measures were introduced before or at the same time. It is difficult, therefore, to isolate the direct effect of an advertising ban.

Mr. Bayley: Does the hon. Gentleman concede that, in his report, Dr. Smee said that, in each of the four countries, "the banning of advertising was followed by a fall in smoking on a scale which cannot reasonably be attributed to other factors."

Mr. Congdon: That must be read in the context of the whole report. I accept, unlike the tobacco industry, that there is a link between tobacco advertising and consumption.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My hon. Friend mentioned Canada. Does he agree that one of the most difficult problems facing it is the vast amount of smuggling across its border with the United States? It took measures directly to reduce consumption, but all that that did was to increase smuggling.

Mr. Congdon: I am happy to bow to my hon. Friend's knowledge of Canada.

I have listened at great length to the tobacco industry's argument that it is trying to affect only the market share of its brand. I have always thought that that argument is nonsense. Other advertisers certainly try to sell more of their products and, if possible, increase their market share.

Mr. Hendry: Does my hon. Friend buy petrol when he does not need to do so because he has seen an Esso advert? Does his wife buy washing powder when she does not need to wash his clothes because she has seen an advertisement for Daz? Does he buy toothpaste when he does not need it because he has seen an advert for Mentadent P? Consumers of such products switch loyalty and the same applies to tobacco companies.

Mr. Congdon: The difficulty is whether demand for the goods is, to use an economic term, elastic or inelastic. Demand for tobacco is elastic, whereas, unless one unnecessarily drives around the block 10 times, one will not buy more petrol than one needs.

I emphasise that I believe that there is a link, but the issue is its scale and whether, in a free society, it justifies banning tobacco advertising. Experience in the four countries quoted shows that the range of reduction, even if one accepts the figures with all the qualifications, is between 4 per cent. in Canada and 9·4 per cent. in Norway. It is possible to conclude, therefore, that an advertising ban might reduce consumption by between 4 and 9 per cent. I must emphasise, however, that Smee did not attempt to estimate the effect of an advertising ban in this country.

The figures need to be considered in the context of the reductions that we must achieve to reach the "Health of the Nation" targets, which require a reduction in consumption of 35 per cent. for men and 29 per cent. for women, and in the context of the amazing reductions that we have achieved in consumption in the past 20 years.

I accept that we must be cautious when considering the impact of advertising on young people. I share hon. Members' concern that the reduction in tobacco consumption among young people has been lower than that among other groups. The reason for that is probably peer group pressure. I am less convinced that advertising is the key to the problem. Indeed, we have already heard that if parents smoke it is more likely that their children will smoke. The link is significant. That is obviously a cause for concern.

Ms Glenda Jackson: One of my constituents, who is a senior child psychotherapist, has written to me, arguing that children and young people who are emotionally vulnerable are especially sensitive to the pressures that advertising places on them—rather more so than to peer pressure—because cigarette advertising presents to young, vulnerable people the image of a lifestyle that they themselves are not capable of creating. It is not peer pressure that attracts them; it is not even the cigarette. Young people are influenced by an image of sophistication, of the ability to cope with life's problems, of being themselves beautiful and attractive. Great pressure is thus exerted, solely by advertising.

Mr. Congdon: If one follows that line of argument, where does one stop? Does one ban the advertising of alcohol? Does one ban the advertising of fatty foods? Does one ban the advertising of dangerous toys?

Ms Jackson: Of course.

Mr. Congdon: Does one ban the advertising of many things? That is the problem. It is possible to justify banning

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anything. One can justify the ban on anything on the grounds that it might or might not affect some young person living in some constituency. We should not throw out of the window the arguments for freedom so easily and so casually.

Mr. John Carlisle: We have heard a catalogue of opinions from the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson), who has obviously been answering her constituency post for most of the morning—to the delight, perhaps, of some of us. She has given individual opinions. Perhaps we should take more notice of a totally unbiased, non-political census that was made by the Office —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) shouts at me, but I am sure that he would agree that the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, which I think he has quoted on previous occasions, concluded in its article "Why Children Start Smoking" that advertising was not one of the primary seven reasons, many of which have been paraded in the House. The glamour factor that the hon. Lady described—rather incongruously, I thought —was not one of the reasons that were mentioned by children in that context.

Mr. Congdon: I welcome that intervention. Research shows that, although advertising leads to greater awareness of tobacco among young people, the evidence in terms of consumption among them is less than conclusive.

If at any stage we go down the road—I would not wish to do so—of banning advertising, it should be a decision for this Parliament and we should not be influenced by the suggestion of a European directive on the subject. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] If subsidiarity means anything, it must mean the right to decide whether we ban the advertising of tobacco. I emphasise the argument that was made earlier; we do not need lessons from Brussels when the European Union is subsidising tobacco to the tune of £1 billion per year.

I know that not many hon. Members have had the opportunity this morning to speak against an advertising ban. I recognise that we are in a minority, but it is important to stand up for the freedom of people to advertise a legal product. I oppose the Bill.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A press release was issued by the Department of Trade and Industry this morning, on which I seek your guidance because it could imperil the future of many jobs in my constituency. It was announced that an entire agency, the Accounts Services Agency, is to be put out to public tender. Those jobs are precious. They involve billions of pounds of public money and the ethics of the public service should be continued in that organisation. Has the DTI asked for a statement to be made in the House so that we can question that decision?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair has had no request for any statement.

1.59 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): It has been a long morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have just listened to 21 turgid minutes with a number of interventions. That is an extraordinarily selfish attitude when lots of hon. Members want to get in on an important debate. I was going to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), but I do not have time for that. It was an excellent speech and it is an excellent initiative. Let us hope that we all have the sense to support it.

The House will remember that, three years ago, I introduced a measure designed to protect children from smoking by limiting their access to cigarettes. The Bill was called the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill. It was an excellent Bill whose intention, unfortunately, was nearly totally sabotaged by the Government. It got on the statute book, but with very little result. My Bill would have laid a clear duty on local authorities to prosecute in cases where the law on tobacco sales had been broken. That, however, was not acceptable to the Government, who seemed to be concerned about the cost of imposing such a firm duty on local authorities.

The legislation finally passed by the House gave local authorities far too much discretion about what action, if any, they should take to curb illegal cigarette sales. The result, as the Home Office reported this week, is that only one third of local authorities in England and Wales have brought prosecutions, even though statistics prepared for the Government by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys show that every week, 250,000 children under 16 are sold illegally a total of 17 million cigarettes. Here we have a considerable gap between the pious hopes expressed by the Government—and I quote:

"The Government is concerned to see that local authorities make proper and effective use of their powers"—

and the realities of the situation. I do not think that they really meant that. The considerable gap between that and the reality of the situation was the ineffectiveness of the intentions of my Bill.

We have the same gap between pious hopes and reality in the Government's obstinate support for the voluntary code on tobacco advertising. The Government admit the principle that bans on tobacco advertising are necessary to protect children. Why else do we have the ban on television advertising? The very existence of the voluntary code is an admission that young people must be shielded from tobacco advertising. The Government admit that further bans would be beneficial—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps hon. Members would do me the courtesy of listening, as I have waited all morning.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Faulds: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman or to anyone else.

The Government admit—I shall repeat the sentence in case it was missed by anybody—that further bans would be beneficial. The Secretary of State has suggested that at least 1,100 lives a year could be saved. The Government admit the need to improve the present position. Health Ministers say that they "see scope"—I am sure that the Minister will contradict me if I am wrong—for tackling poster advertising, shop front displays and cigarette advertisements in women's magazines. But then comes the fatal flaw—that gap, again, between pious hope and reality.

The Government continue to believe that voluntary agreements with the industry are the best way in which to control tobacco advertising. What pious nonsense, and they know it is. Ministers know what sort of industry they are dealing with. It is an industry which creates death. Why are they so reluctant to try to control it? We all know the answer. It may be unpopular to make this comment, but it is a fact. The Conservatives' electoral campaigns are

funded to a considerable extent by the tobacco industry. Surprise, surprise that there should be such reluctance to do anything about restraining that industry's advertising.

The Secretary of State, who regrettably is not here this morning—apparently she has better things to do—has been quoted as saying that the tobacco industry would find ways to "wriggle round"—her phrase—a statutory ban on advertising. But the voluntary code is negotiated between industry and the Government. Does not the Secretary of State think that the industry will wriggle even harder during those negotiations and only agree, when pushed, to something that it already plans to undermine by taking a different approach?

What scope is there in all those secret negotiations for the views of parents and of others concerned with children's health to be heard? The voluntary code is an abject failure, and we all know it, because the public have no voice in its devising and find it almost impossible to understand once it is drawn up. Even professional trading standards officers, when approached by concerned members of the public, find it hard to tell whether an advertisement for tobacco is in breach of the code—if, of course, they can get hold of the code in the first place.

Do hon. Members realise—I am sure that they do not. I am sure that they do not realise——

Mr. Fabricant: Prompt.

Mr. Faulds: I am giving a moment's contemplation —I rarely needed prompting and certainly not from that bunch. I was a real professional then and I am a real professional now. I am so relieved that I have managed to gain the attention of the House; perhaps I can retain it for a few minutes more. I do not want to hear the conversation of Conservative Members. I want them to hear my conversation.

Do hon. Members realise that the committee set up to monitor the working of that mish-mash of a voluntary code does not even have its own telephone number? If one rings directory inquiries and asks for COMATAS—perhaps it should be more properly called comatose—the Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship supposing——

Mr. Couchman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The annuncators are saying "Points of Order". It has seemed to be a remarkably long point of order from the hon. Gentleman, who has been speaking for the past 10 minutes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair is not responsible for the annunciator.

Mr. Faulds: As so often is the problem with Conservative Members, the fellow is not even numerate. He has his figure wrong. It is not surprising.

Mr. John Carlisle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would you enlighten the House, as dark rumours are abounding that you may be considering allowing the motion to be moved in the not-too-distant future? There are still a number of us who are waiting to speak. Our anxiety is that, in your wisdom——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair never discloses what the Chair is thinking.

Mr. Carlisle *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No more points of order.

Mr. Faulds: The hon. Gentleman, if one can use the term, has made a speech about five times over this morning.

The Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship, if one knows that mouthful of words, is not listed if one asks the telephone inquiries service. How effective it must be and how easy for the public to make their comments. In fact——

Mr. Robert Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Are you aware that there have been long speeches in the debate and a statement and that, if a closure motion were to be moved, the House would have to be reminded that only two hon. Members have spoken against the Bill? That is wholly unfair——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The matter of closure is nothing to do with the number of Members who speak for or against any Bill. The closure motion is a matter of judgment for the Chair.

Mr. Leigh: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What is a matter for you is to ensure that there is balanced and fair debate. I know that—*[Interruption.]* I know that you have a difficult task because every hon. Member who has wished to speak from the Opposition Benches has, naturally enough, wanted to support the Bill.

That has meant, as my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) said, that there have been two speeches against the Bill and eight in favour. During my 10 years in the House, I have never attended a debate in which eight hon. Members have been allowed to speak for a Bill and only two allowed to speak against it. That is absurd. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member should reflect that the Chair does his or her best when making a judgment. The Chair does not know who will speak about what—some hon. Members change their minds. Speeches have been very long today; the length of some hon. Members' speeches has meant that others have not managed to contribute to the debate. Perhaps that fact will be borne in mind on future occasions.

Mr. Barron: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems unlikely that the debate will continue much further in an orderly manner. Therefore, I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 227, Noes 17.

Division No. 120] **[2.11 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene	Bennett, Andrew F.
Ainger, Nick	Benton, Joe
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Berry, Dr. Roger
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Betts, Clive
Allen, Graham	Blair, Tony
Alton, David	Blunkett, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Boateng, Paul
Ashton, Joe	Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Austin-Walker, John	Bradley, Keith
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Barnes, Harry	Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Barron, Kevin	Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Bates, Michael	Burden, Richard
Battle, John	Byers, Stephen
Beggs, Roy	Callaghan, Jim
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Bell, Stuart	Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Campbell-Savours, D. N.

Canavan, Dennis
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fabricant, Michael
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fry, Sir Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spink, Dr Robert
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Tipping, Paddy
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Hugh Bayley.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bendall, Vivian
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Cash, William
Couchman, James
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Leigh, Edward
Mills, Iain
Neubert, Sir Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Atkinson and
Mr. Charles Hendry.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put accordingly and agreed to.*

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Sale and Supply Goods Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

2.22 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Despite its length, the Bill is simple and, I hope, uncontroversial. It is intended to tidy and clarify one of the more antiquated corners of the law and at the same time update and strengthen consumer rights. Essentially, it will implement the recommendations of the English and Scottish Law Commissions in their report on the sale and supply of goods published in 1987.

Hon. Members may find it convenient if I say a few words about the historical background to the Bill and then summarise some of its provisions. English and, indeed, Scottish law relating to the sale and supply of goods is of considerable antiquity. It is an area of law which to this day remains largely untouched by statute. Instead, over the centuries, certain common law principles emerged.

Among them were the principles that goods sold by way of trade or business must be as described, must be fit for their purpose and must be of merchantable quality. Those principles were codified but not significantly altered in the Sale of Goods Act 1893. That Act was consolidated but not significantly altered in the Sale of Goods Act 1979. The result is that purchasers' rights when buying goods are essentially those conferred under the common law as it developed in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is not surprising that those rights have become a little antiquated in the light of modern trading conditions.

It was for those reasons that the Law Commissions were asked to look at the matter in 1987. While they saw no need for radical reform, they did conclude that one of the central principles of present law—the doctrine of merchantable quality—was out of date, and that the definition of what constituted acceptance of goods was both untidy and unclear. They accordingly made a number of recommendations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd South-West (Mr. Jones) introduced a Bill to implement the recommendations in 1989, but for various reasons it failed to reach the statute book. I hope that I may be a little more fortunate.

Clause 1 implements the most important of the Law Commission's recommendations, which was that the outdated phrase "merchantable quality" should be replaced by a phrase more in tune with today's trading conditions. The Law Commissions suggested "acceptable quality", but the present Bill follows its 1989 predecessor in preferring the phrase "satisfactory quality", which I think is better.

A non-complaining buyer might decide reluctantly that goods he bought were of acceptable quality, even if by objective standards the quality was not satisfactory. The Law Commissions then went on to list some of the aspects to be taken into account in judging whether goods were of the required quality. These included fitness for purpose, appearance and finish, freedom from minor defects and safety and durability, and those are duly included in clause 1.

Clause 2 tackles the question of acceptable goods. Although it does not substantially modify the existing law in this area, it does clarify it and, in particular, makes it clear that in judging whether a buyer has accepted goods, account must be taken of whether the buyer has had a reasonable opportunity of examining the goods to determine that they are in conformity with the contract. The clarification is important, as there is considerable uncertainty over the extent of a buyer's right to reject faulty goods. A tidying-up operation is overdue.

The rest of the Bill can be dealt with quickly. Clause 3 provides that if a buyer has accepted some of a batch of goods he does not thereby lose the right to reject the rest if they are not in conformity with the contract. Clauses 4 and 5 provide that where a buyer is not acting as consumer, he may not reject goods if the breach of contract is so slight that it would be unreasonable to do so. Because English and Scots law is slightly different in that area, separate provision must be made for each country; hence the need for two clauses.

Clause 6 provides for the introduction of provisions equivalent to part I of the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982 for Scotland. That was a separate recommendation of the Scottish Law Commission which was taken aboard in the two Commissions' 1987 report. It does not substantively change Scottish law in that area, but is a useful clarification and will bring Scots law relating to the supply of goods into line with that of the rest of the United Kingdom. Differences in terminology between English and Scottish law mean that the new law needs to be set out in full, and that is done in schedule 1.

Finally, clause 7 calls up schedule 2 which makes a number of necessary consequential amendments to other legislation, and schedule 3, which makes some consequential repeals. Clause 8 deals with short title, commencement and extent.

To sum up, the Bill is intended to bring about a long-awaited amendment to an area of law which, although it does not have a high public profile, nevertheless governs every transaction that we make. In a sense it is historic, in that it represents a serious attempt to modify by statute what has hitherto been, to all intents and purposes, the preserve of the common law. The Bill is not intended to bring about any major shift in the balance of rights and obligations as between a customer and a supplier, but by updating and clarifying the law I believe that it will be of benefit to both. I therefore commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Have you received any notification from the Secretary of State for Health that she intends to make a statement to the House about whether she intends to introduce an urgent review of ambulance services in the west midlands——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I shall take the hon. Lady's point of order after we finish the Bills.

Building Conversion and Energy Conservation Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and question proposed, That the Bill be now read a second time.—*[Mr. McAllion.]*

2.29 pm

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): This is a most appropriate time to be discussing the Bill. It is a great pity that the House has not had the opportunity to make any comments about it. It is most important that the Bill receives sufficient debate, that any conclusions are drawn and that we move to the Committee stage.

The Bill is to allow the insulation of dwelling units provided by the conversion of existing dwellings, and for connected purposes. It is something that we should seriously consider——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed upon Friday 25 February.

Remaining Private Members' Bills

EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION (GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS HEADQUARTERS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 May.

INSHORE FISHING (SCOTLAND) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 25 February.

Points of Order

2.31 pm

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that a press release has been issued in conjunction with a review of the ambulance service across the west midlands by the summer. I recently had an Adjournment debate in the House in which I asked that the contract for patient services in north Staffordshire should be withdrawn and relet. Will you inquire whether the Secretary of State is prepared to come to the House so that the ambulance service thoughout the west midlands, including North Staffordshire, can be taken fully into account in the review that is about to take place?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not even a matter for the Chair, as the hon. Lady presumably knows.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point of order is certainly a matter for the Chair. I seek your advice and guidance. I see that we have on the Order Paper an extraordinary business motion—an omnibus business motion. It sets out in detail the timetabling of a series of debates next week. Although I have no interest in some of the debates, I have a particular interest in the debate on the motion in paragraph (ii)(a). As you will see, it provides two hours to deal with some of the most controversial legislation that is likely to come before the House.

I do not know how long other hon. Members may wish to speak on the matter, but it would take at least two hours to set out the case for a separate Cornish Euro-seat, let alone the case for Plymouth to have its own Euro-representative. I note that the Leader of the House is not here to listen to my comments. My difficulty, and the difficulty facing the House, is that I understand from the guidance that I have been given so far that if I objected to that specific item in the extraordinary omnibus motion, the whole business for next week would fall and we would presumably have to call the Leader of the House to come before the House again on Monday to set out a new motion.

Is it not an insult to the House, first, that we have an omnibus motion throwing together so many important motions, secondly, that the Leader of the House is not here to listen to the comments of hon. Members and, thirdly, that such controversial legislation would be dealt with in two hours? That is an example of extraordinary contempt for the House.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The matter is not debatable. The hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler) has put his point clearly. I regret to say that the hon. Gentleman, like all hon. Members, occasionally has to make a decision. He knows that, and he must make his own decision.

Business of the House

Ordered,

That—

(1) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall—

(i) at the sitting on Monday 14th February—

(a) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew relating to the draft Airports (Northern Ireland) Order not later than Seven o'clock;

(b) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew relating to the draft Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order not later than one and a half hours after their commencement;

(c) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Brooke relating to Cultural Objects not later than one and a half hours after their commencement; and

(d) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Lang relating to Housing (Scotland) not later than half-past Eleven o'clock;

(ii) at the sitting on Tuesday 15th February—

(a) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Howard relating to Representation of the People not later than two hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion;

(b) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the names of Mr. Anthony Nelson relating to Financial Services, Banks and Banking and Building Societies, and of Mr. Secretary Heseltine relating to Insurance not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion; and

(c) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Redwood relating to Local Government Finance (Wales) not later than half-past Eleven o'clock; and

(iii) at the sitting on Wednesday 16th February—

(a) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary MacGregor relating to Channel Tunnel not later than one and a half hours after their commencement; and

(b) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Lilley relating to Pensions, Social Security and Terms and Conditions of Employment not later than Ten o'clock;

and the above Motions may be proceeded with, though opposed, after the expiry of the time for opposed business; and

(2) at the sitting on Monday 21st February, in Committee of the whole House on new Clauses committed thereto in respect of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, the Chairman shall—

(i) not later than three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such new Clause relating to capital punishment; and

(ii) not later than three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such new Clause relating to the age of consent for sexual acts between men in Great Britain, respectively, put—

(a) the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause which has been read a second time, the Question on any Amendment to such a new Clause which has been selected by him and which may then be moved and, thereafter, the Question that the Clause, or the Clause as amended, be added to the Bill); and

(c) any Question necessary to dispose of any other new Clauses and Amendments thereto, which have been selected by him and which may then be moved.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On 25 January, the House gave me permission to introduce my Bill, which is listed No. 4 on today's Order Paper, by a majority of 222 to 69. The measure would allow people at Government Communications Headquarters, GCHQ, to belong to a trade union. Someone objected to my Bill. Will the identity of that Member appear in *Hansard*? It is wrong that an hon. Member can object to a measure without being identified in the official records.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If my memory is correct, the hon. Member is a member of the Procedure Committee, which suggested that that should not happen.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Robert Jackson be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. Richard Tracey be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Ellesmere Port (Explosion)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

2.35 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): This is a serious matter, but I am sure that I and other hon. Members who are detained this afternoon regret that we were unable to travel to Rotherham for the memorial service of the late Member for Rotherham, Mr. Jimmy Boyce.

This matter affects several hon. and right hon. Members with constituencies near mine and needs to be seriously aired. At 20.40 on Tuesday 1 February, the fire brigade received a call to attend an incident at the Associated Octel plant on Oil Sites road, Ellesmere Port. The name of that road will give the House some sign of the nature of that part of my constituency.

The first crew took six minutes to arrive. On arrival, fire crews were met by a leak of ethyl chloride. One member of Associated Octel's staff had been overcome by fumes from the substance and was promptly taken to hospital. Two crews of firefighters, dressed in chemical protection suits, attempted to isolate the leak via two valves. Although the valves were closed off successfully, a large amount of the product continued to leak. Crews withdrew and, shortly afterwards, the leaking material flashed over, causing the whole plant to catch fire.

Attempts were made to extinguish the blaze, which was burning out of control, and at about midnight the officer in charge decided to withdraw firefighters due to the risk of failure of vessels within the plant.

The main concern was over a container known as the slops tank, which contained up to 30 tonnes of ethyl chloride. Firefighters then regrouped and mounted a major foam attack, using two foam tankers and another foam tanker belonging to the Shell company. The attack was conducted in extremely hazardous conditions and firefighters' actions prevented a serious situation from escalating.

Local residents in Elton, in my constituency, and in the Helsby area, which is in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), were invited to stay indoors and to close windows. That was done by public address systems on fire appliances and by the local radio station. The Minister may ask his colleagues why no public address facilities are available to the police in such an area.

Although the fire had lessened, a serious fire was still burning, which took several hours to bring under control. A total of 225,000 litres of foam were used and the Cheshire fire brigade was supported by the Clwyd and Merseyside fire and civil defence authority. The all-clear was given to residents at 6 am, and motorway and rail links were opened shortly afterwards. Throughout the incident, constant air monitoring was undertaken.

Nearby industrial premises, including ICI Organics, Cabot Carbon, Kemira Fertiliers and the northern part of the Shell refinery were evacuated.

The process undertaken in the plant was the mixing of ethyl chloride and hydrochloric acid, which is used to make the anti-knock compound for petrol, tetra-ethyl-lead. A number of firefighters were treated as a result of exposure to the chemicals.

The details that I have just put on record were largely provided by the Cheshire fire brigade and are matters of

fact. I must stress that the emergency services were absolutely magnificent and I have no doubt that, had it not been for the fire crews' skill and bravery, we would be discussing a major disaster today. My rusty chemistry tells me that one of the combustion products of ethyl chloride is phosgene, so a serious risk could have ensued.

Many lessons can be learnt from that incident. The Health and Safety Executive investigation is now under way and it would be wrong for me to speculate on the outcome of that inquiry. However, I shall make a few observations. First, should any prosecutions result from the inquiry, they would be small beer compared with the economic effect on the company, which will lose millions of pounds in income. The loss will also have a major impact on our balance of trade. Last year, the plant exported some 92,000 tonnes of tetra-ethyl and tetra-ethyl-lead worth some £240 million.

Secondly, once the cause of the accident is known, further studies will need to be made on the plant's design and location. For instance, if it is determined that the plant can be safely located at the same site, can the slops tank be relocated away from the reactor vessel? That tank had a two-hour fire retardant in the form of an intumescent coating. The fire brigade was so concerned at the height of the fire because those two hours were up. Nobody can put his hand on his heart and say that that vessel was safe. Even the volume that it contained was unknown, as the instrumentation had been destroyed at an early stage of the fire.

Thirdly, had the tank gone up, what would the resultant risk have been? The fire brigade was gearing up to evacuate its teams, but would it have been possible to evacuate residents down wind?

Fourthly, did the Cheshire fire brigade and all the emergency services have sufficient resources at their disposal to combat that second eventuality? As it was, 181 firefighters were involved in the incident. Many constituents share my view that the financial allocation for emergency services in such a high-risk area is inadequate. Was the Seveso directive implemented?

Fifthly, had a decision been taken to sound sirens in the area, would those sirens have been adequate? Why were obstacles put in the way when the fire service argued for retaining the previously Government-controlled air raid warning systems in the area, which could be used to warn the public in the event of a chemical incident?

Sixthly, what would have happened if, at the same time, another serious incident had occurred? For example, could a house fire or chemical spillage on the M6 have been adequately covered?

Many far-reaching issues arise from the fire. Questions must be asked and answers are needed, and the public should have access to that information. My purpose in bringing the matter to the attention of the House is to ensure that commitments which I, along with 135 other hon. Members who signed early-day motion 528, have made are met in full by the Government. Incidentally, I am horrified that one hon. Member—the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth)—has chosen not to sign the motion to date. If he disagrees with an aspect of it, he can seek to amend it, but perhaps he has better things to do with his time.

Many of the issues to which I have referred go far beyond the remit of the HSE. They cover at least two, and possibly three, Government Departments: the Home Office, the Department of the Environment and, to an extent, the Department of Health. In no way do I criticise the work currently undertaken by the HSE. I recognise that its statutory duties preclude the Minister from responding on any aspects of its work that may have a bearing on whether there will be prosecutions.

To sum up, we are dealing with an area in which the petrochemical industry is an integral and extremely important part of the local economy. Many people from an extended travel-to-work area are engaged in the industry, which contributes massively to the national economy, but there is understandable disquiet as a result of the Octel incident. The need for a public inquiry is, in my view, irrefutable. I have made the Minister aware of the concern in and around my constituency. The decision lies firmly with him.

If the Minister ignores the reasonable demands of residents in that part of the country, which contributes so much to our export capacity, his inaction will be denounced. He must agree that the public interest is best served by a public inquiry, in a format that allows the cross-examination of witnesses, investigates what went wrong at Octel and whether such accidents can be avoided in the future and, if so, how. It must also examine whether the emergency services' resources and procedures are adequate in the event of a major incident.

Finally, in my view, the Minister has a duty to the people in my area—the residents, workers and companies who contribute so much to the export effort—to ensure that the facts are in the open in the way that I have described.

2.45 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) on raising this most important matter on the Adjournment and I welcome the attendance of my right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) in the debate. I know how concerned both are about the serious incident at Associated Octel.

I very much regret that the hon. Gentleman's concern has prevented him from being able to attend the memorial service for the hon. Member for Rotherham. Jimmy Boyce was a fellow Scot, who believed passionately in his socialism and was never happier than when giving me and my Government colleagues a hard time from the Opposition Benches. It is very sad indeed that his time here should have been cut so short so soon after becoming a Member of the House, and at such a young age.

The hon. Gentleman paid tribute to all the emergency services. I join him in praise for all those involved in successfully containing this extremely serious incident. Thanks should also go to the Octel employees for their prompt action in implementing the emergency plan and summoning the emergency services, and to the works fire brigade.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, which I share, to discover the cause of the accident as soon as possible and to take steps to avoid a recurrence. As he knows, the Health and Safety Executive has started its investigation. It has two main strands: first, to establish why the leak and subsequent fire occurred and gather eye-witness statements while memories are still fresh; and, secondly, to determine how the emergency was handled in relation to the emergency plans and whether the plans were sufficient.

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that it is a complex technical investigation. It is still at an early stage. The cause of the leak and the source of the ignition have yet to be determined. The HSE investigators have the full range of its scientific and technical expertise at their disposal. The 14-strong team is led by Dr. Roger Nourish, who is head of the HSE's special hazards unit, and includes specialists in chemical, mechanical, electrical and process safety engineering, and scientists who specialise in fire, explosion and metallurgy.

Dr. Nourish has already met several representatives of local residents, including a councillor, to give them the opportunity to share their concerns at an early stage of the investigation. As is its normal practice, the HSE will make its findings public. That form of technical investigation by the HSE means that any changes needed can be identified and introduced with the minimum delay. The hon. Gentleman said that he would prefer a public inquiry. I share his and my right hon. Friend's concern for those who live and work locally. They deserve to be reassured that the highest possible standards are maintained.

However, we really must await the HSE report. That report will go to the Health and Safety Commission, which is a tripartite body and with powers under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to conduct a public inquiry. Ministers can set up such an inquiry and also have powers to direct the HSC to do so. The HSC has a good reputation for ensuring the highest standards of health and safety; it will want to ensure that lessons are learnt from this incident and put into practice.

I am aware that, according to press reports, the plant was "20 minutes from disaster". That was because the intumescent coating on the vessel was designed to provide a minimum two-hour protection from a fire surrounding or engulfing it. The reports ignored the fact that the vessels were equipped with additional protective devices.

Mr. Miller: I accept that the coating was designed to provide protection for a minimum of two hours. No doubt the Minister will agree, however, that the chief fire officer was acting on the best advice available at the time. Given his understanding that the protection was designed to last for two hours, his anxiety at about midnight—and his consequent decision—were justified.

Mr. Forsyth: I am not criticising the chief fire officer's judgment in any way; on the contrary, I am trying to explain that reporting of the incident which suggested that, after a further 20 minutes, the vessel might have exploded arose from a misunderstanding of the nature of the intumescent coating.

As I was saying, the reports ignored the fact that the vessels were equipped with additional protective devices, including pressure relief valves, designed to prevent a rupture and explosion. The intumescent coating was only the first line of defence. In fact, it held up well after the two hours had elapsed; and, having been brought under control, the fire was allowed to burn itself out safely.

The HSE has advised me that "20 minutes from disaster" was a gross exaggeration; nevertheless, it is examining the vessels and samples of the intumescent coating. That investigation should provide a clearer picture of the effects of the fire on the vessels and any lessons learnt will be acted on quickly. The HSE has also told me that, even if the vessels or the reactor had exploded, the off-site effects would have been minimal. I well understand the concern of local residents and businesses, but, according to the HSE, they were never in danger and the safety provision and plans are designed to ensure that. People downwind of the site, however, were advised to stay indoors as a precaution against smoke inhalation.

The hon. Gentleman has suggested that local residents should have been evacuated. To be fair to him, he has not done so today, but I understand that he has done so previously; if he has not, others have. I apologise if I have misquoted the hon. Gentleman, who is now shaking his head vigorously.

Evacuation would not have been sensible. The correct response is for residents to stay indoors with their doors and windows closed. Leaflets giving that advice had already been given to local people as part of the information required under the Control of Industrial Major Accidents Hazards Regulations—CIMAH—which are our way of complying with the Seveso directive.

Throughout the incident, teams of Octel employees and the emergency services were touring residential areas downwind of the site, but detected no danger from hydrogen chloride fumes. I am also advised that phosgene was never released and that, even if matters had proceeded further, it is unlikely that that would have happened.

Mr. Miller: My comments about phosgene—like my comments about the safety of the slops vessel—derived from the best advice that was available to the fire brigade at the time of the incident. The brigade was working on its own; its instruction sheets show that, in certain states of combustion, phosgene can be a product of a fire of that type. It was using the best possible judgment at the time.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Neither of us, I suspect, is particularly expert in this area. The advice that I have given has come from the Health and Safety Executive. In so far as it will provide reassurance to his constituents, I am sure that he will welcome it.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the design and location of the plant. The Health and Safety Executive requires plant to be built to the latest standards and will ensure that it is at Octel. That is the assurance which the hon. Gentleman sought. Moreover, the prohibition notice currently in force requires the firm to provide evidence that hazards have been properly assessed and appropriate precautions taken.

The HSE does not believe that isolation of the slops tank would be either viable or desirable. The tank is an integral part of the ethyl chloride plant, but I shall ask the HSE to consider the hon. Gentleman's concerns carefully.

On the location of the plant, the CIMAH regulations aim to minimise the rise of a major accident and to limit the effects of any accidents that occur. Clearly, even after all reasonable steps have been taken to comply with health and safety law, the risk of accident cannot be removed altogether. We must await the results of the HSE's investigation before considering what more might need to be done. I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's point about whether conditions could ever arise in which phosgene is generated is addressed.

Mr. Miller: The point on which my constituents would like clarification is whether the Minister has ruled out, in absolute terms, a public inquiry into the incident.

Mr. Forsyth: The Health and Safety Commission has powers to call a public inquiry and Ministers have powers to direct it to set up an inquiry. We can also, off our own bat, establish a public inquiry. I should like to read the Commission's report to see how it proposes to handle the report that it will receive from the executive before reaching any view. I am not ruling out the possibility, but it would be wrong to address that matter until we have seen the results of the executive's investigation and report and of the consideration by the commission.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether there were sufficient resources for the fire brigade and other emergency services. As he knows, the Cheshire fire brigade classified the incident as a major fire and 263 firefighters were involved. I gather that, in future, as a result of plans to withdraw two emergency rescue tenders from service, the heavy rescue equipment formerly carried on them will be carried on 16 front-line pumping applicances. A dedicated crew will be allocated to the chemical incident unit, which will move to Crewe. That is in addition to the unit based at Ellesmere Port fire station.

I understand that the chief fire officer of Cheshire fire brigade has said that the brigade's firefighting and rescue capability will be enhanced by those measures.

The hon. Member may be aware that the changes require the approval of the Home Secretary. It is my right hon. and learned Friend's practice to grant such approval only where he is satisfied that nationally recognised minimum standards of fire cover will continue to be maintained. I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's concerns are brought to his attention so that he can take them into account.

I should mention how the work of emergency planning units on sites covered by the CIMAH regulations is funded. The regulations allow local authorities to charge site operators for providing such services. They are not covered by the civil defence funding arrangements.

I shall now discuss the concerns about arrangements for warning the general public. The off-site warnings are provided for in the CIMAH arrangements. I understand that there are two sirens on the Octel complex; one is used to warn of fire and the other to warn of gas escapes. Those sirens can be heard up to two and a half miles away. On the night of 1 February, both sirens were sounded at 20.32. The gas warning siren remained on until 01.15 on 2 February; the fire warning siren stopped at 21.00.

In addition, a fire brigade rescue tender toured the Ellesmere Port area adjacent to the M53 to alert the public by loudhailer. Two other fire brigade vehicles were sent to Helsby and Hapsford to assess off-site effects. They reported negative effects and so local hailers were not deployed. The villagers of Ince, Elton and Helsby were warned by television and radio.

I know that there have been complaints from residents in the area who were worried that they were not warned, but I understand that they lived in areas upwind of the incident, so there was no need to warn them.

In the light of representations made by local people, I will ask the Health and Safety Executive to consider the adequacy of the off-site arrangements—indeed, I understand that it already plans to do so.

The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston mentioned worries about whether the emergency services could have coped with another incident in the same area. For large incidents, plans exist for Cheshire fire brigade to supplement its front-line fire appliances with others from neighbouring brigades. On that occasion Clwyd and Merseyside assisted. The plan required the most important fire stations in Cheshire to be manned by moving other appliances from the surrounding area to backfill behind the appliances that were called in to the Octel incident. In the event of a second incident in the Cheshire fire brigade area, those supporting appliances would have been used. Cheshire is well placed to receive substantial support, if required, from Merseyside fire brigade.

I am grateful for the positive approach that the hon. Gentleman has taken to the matter, especially in his discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and myself. I have asked the Health and Safety Executive to keep me in touch with developments, and will keep the hon. Gentleman informed as well.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 14 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

Ordered,

That Mr. Richard Tracey be discharged from the Committee of Selection and Mr. Andrew MacKay be added to the Committee. —[*Mr. Lightbown.*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Tourism

1. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the Welsh tourism industry.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): Despite difficulties for the tourism industry as a whole and a reduction in overall visitor numbers, expenditure by visitors to Wales has remained constant at around £1.3 billion in recent years.

Prospects for growth in the overseas market are good. The Wales tourist board's new Tourism 2000 strategy, to be launched later this year, forecasts a significant rise in overseas visitors to Wales.

I am sure that, with the benefit of current efforts to improve marketing and to provide better-quality attractions and training and the industry's concern to ensure value for money, the prospects for Welsh tourism are excellent.

Mr. Coombs: I thank my right hon. Friend for that most helpful answer. Is he aware that, under the five-year development strategy for Welsh tourism which ends next month, the private sector has invested £150 million in response to public investment of £22 million? What targets does he feel would be appropriate under the new Tourism 2000 strategy to continue that excellent work?

Sir Wyn Roberts: My hon. Friend is right. Section 4 grants have certainly attracted a great deal of private sector money. In 1992-93, for example, some £4.9 million spent on 489 projects attracted £27 million-worth of investment. I cannot reveal the details of the new strategy, but I can tell my hon. Friend that it is estimated that it will mean an extra 10,000 visitors to Wales by the year 2000.

Dr. Howells: The Minister will be aware that in tourism first impressions are important. He will know that most people coming to south Wales come up through the Taff gorge, just to the north of Cardiff, and that Redland, which owns an extensive quarry there, plans to add an asphalt plant to a skyline already cluttered with industrial ruin. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the company does not build that asphalt plant on the skyline and does the best for Welsh tourism by spending a little more money on that plant and concealing it?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would also like to consider the employment aspects of the Redland development. Moreover, he will realise that, in the first instance, this is a matter for the local authority to consider.

Mr. Llwyd: Given that tourism is by far the largest single employer in Wales, may I ask whether the Welsh Office has undertaken any survey into the likely effects of the further downgrading of railway services in Wales—especially as railway lines are vital to the rural economy in areas such as Aberconwy and the Cambrian coast? May I urge the Welsh Office to undertake such an investigation as a matter of top priority?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman knows that the services provided are a matter for British Rail. I am sure that BR takes into account its capacity to take tourists and deal with the regular influx into Wales by rail at various points.

Public Bodies

2. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the political affiliations of those people he appoints to public bodies in Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): Some of the people whom I appoint to public bodies in Wales have well-known associations with individual political parties—the chairman of the Welsh Language Board, for example. Information is not, however, available on the views of all such appointees and is not collated centrally by my Department.

Mr. Griffiths: Does not the Minister realise that, with all the attendant unfavourable publicity about the sleaze associated with many of the quangos to which public appointments are made, it is about time he recognised that in Wales those from his own party appointed to quangos outnumber by at least 5:1 those appointed from other parties in Wales? I refer only to the known political affiliations. He should come clean, have a proper list of political affiliations, where known, and make arrangements as soon as possible for all those quangos to become democratically accountable.

Mr. Redwood: I resent the implication that there is sleaze or that the wrong people are appointed. The chairman of the Welsh Development Agency was appointed for his business skills and is a fine asset to Wales. I hope that the Labour party will get behind his work.

The Labour party forgets that, when it was in power, the Wales tourist board, for example, had two Labour parliamentary candidates as successive chairmen and that the first WDA chairman was a former national executive member of the Labour party. The Labour party forgets the many Labour and Plaid Cymru representatives whom we appoint to public bodies in Wales, where we think that their presence would help. What about the four councillors on the Cardiff Bay development corporation, the two Labour

councillors whom I have recently announced as having been appointed to the Land Authority for Wales, and many other appointments? There are fair shares for the other parties, but, above all, we appoint people who are right for the job, regardless of their political affiliation.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, irrespective of people's political views, where there is incompetence—financial incompetence or even a lack of accountability—it should be exposed and condemned? Will he join me in condemning the remarks at the weekend by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), the shadow Secretary of State for Wales, in seeking to defend the incompetence of the Labour leader of the South Wales police authority?

Mr. Redwood: I quite agree. It is for the House and Ministers to set out the standards of conduct that we expect. In the case of quangos, it is for the accounting officers to be responsible for regularity. In the case of local authorities, it is the Labour party's duty to ensure that it enforces proper standards in every authority that it controls.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does not the Secretary of State accept that a disproportionate number of any political party's supporters on public bodies in Wales diminishes the reputation of Welsh public services? Will he consider the establishment of an independent commission along the lines of the Civil Service Commission to deal with all appointments to public bodies in Wales so that we can be sure that jobs are matched to talent, not to opinions?

Mr. Redwood: It is a novel idea for the Liberal party to have another quango to deal with what it sees to be the problem with quangos. That is typical of the muddled thinking of the Liberal Democrats. I will not set up such a body. We have advertised and invited the people of Wales to write in with their suggestions for those bodies. Officials are involved in sifting through the talent. They produce recommendations to Ministers which, of course, we look at carefully. The purpose of those recommendations from the official system is to ensure talent and the right skills for the job. We are looking not for a group of party placemen but for talented people who believe in Wales and do a good job for Wales. If Opposition Members want to help, they can be far more constructive and supportive when a good job is done.

Mr. Ron Davies: The Secretary of State might not look for party placemen, but he always seems to find them. Does he not realise that it is his party's abuse of the quango system for self-serving party political ends—the Conservatives are a minority party at that—that now makes the case for disclosure of political affiliation so overwhelming? The sleaze and corruption that are now the hallmark of his Government are poisoning Welsh public life.

I ask the Secretary of State publicly, will he accept the Labour party's offer of co-operation to set up new systems to ensure public scrutiny? Forty per cent. of the Welsh Office budget is spent by quangos. They must be subject to closer democratic control and not left to the whims of party political interests.

Mr. Redwood: The biggest budgets in Wales are controlled by Welsh local government, which is why the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) was relevant. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that Welsh public life is subject to sleaze and corruption, he must account for the fact that so much of the money is spent by Welsh local government. His remarks are a slur on Welsh local government, as they are a slur on the Welsh Office and on the many people working in Welsh public bodies and doing a good job.

Of course I wish to see high standards in Welsh public life. I shall offer leadership with that in mind and I ask for co-operation from all parties and from all those involved in Welsh public life to ensure that those high standards are upheld and maintained. It is the duty of each person on a board of a local authority or elsewhere to ensure that those standards are upheld. I shall, of course, look carefully at the hon. Gentleman's statement that he would like to co-operate. I am happy to talk to him privately if he wishes to co-operate in taking forward the issue.

Housing Grants

3. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on corruption in local government in Ynys Môn involving housing grants.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): It is for the police and the council's monitoring officer to investigate allegations of corruption or fraud.

Mr. Richards: Is my hon. Friend aware that the director of housing of Ynys Môn borough council has delegated powers from the housing committee to allocate large discretionary grants? Details of those grants, such as the names of applicants, the sites and the amounts, have been withheld from some committee members whereas other committee members are directly linked to beneficiaries of the decisions by the director of housing. All that is taking place with the full knowledge of the chief executive of Ynys Môn borough council. Does my hon. Friend agree, as I do, with the view of Ynys Môn council tax payers that that scandal has now been dubbed Angleseygate?

Mr. Jones: I can appreciate the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend. It is, of course, for local authorities to set their own powers of delegation. I would trust and expect the council's monitoring officer most carefully to consider all such allegations.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Does the Minister agree that any allegation of corruption against any local authority must be thoroughly investigated by the proper channels? Those allegations have been circulating privately since 10 January. The people of Ynys Môn would take them far more seriously if they had been made openly, without delay and without the cover of parliamentary privilege. To prevent political manipulation of the file to which the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) referred, will the Minister ensure that the allegations are handed over by the Welsh Office to the appropriate statutory authorities so that if they are proved they can be dealt with properly?

Mr. Jones: I agree with the hon. Gentleman about ensuring that these allegations—any such allegations—are thoroughly investigated. Any evidence that is available can

be given either to the police or to the monitoring officer. I am sure that that would greatly assist either or both in pursuing the allegations.

Welsh Development Agency

4. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in relation to the post of chairman of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have received one letter from a member of the public.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that, as we now have more quangos in Cardiff than there are gondolas in Venice, it is high time that Conservatives agreed with us and gave assurances to the House that they can now clean up their act as regards appointments to these top jobs? Does he agree that the Secretary of State has been exceedingly badly damaged by what has happened over the appointment of the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency? That is, no doubt, why he has asked his junior Minister to answer this question.

Does the Minister agree, therefore, that it is time that he gave us an assurance that there will be no political croneyism or nepotism in appointments to the posts of chief executive, finance director and, if there is a vacancy, deputy chairman of the Welsh Development Agency? That would assure us all that, from now on, quangos in Wales will not used as a dumping ground for those who cannot win elections in Wales by normal democratic means.

Mr. Jones: No, I certainly do not agree with the thrust of the hon. Gentleman's question. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State sought to respond earlier this afternoon on that very issue. He has not been damaged by the allegations. It is the sleazy who perceive sleaze in everything. My right hon. Friend always seeks to appoint the best person to the job.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the most recent figures for unemployment in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The December 1993 seasonally adjusted figures show 126,100 unemployed—7,900 fewer than in January 1993.

Mr. Luff: What does my right hon. Friend think would do more to continue the reduction of unemployment in Wales—the continuation of the Government's policies of open markets and free trade, resistance to the imposition of the social chapter, which would have done so much to boost inward investment in the Principality, or the continuation of the rather unpleasant witch hunts of quangos in Wales that we have seen from Labour Members and the implementation of proposals in the European Socialist party manifesto?

Mr. Redwood: That was not too taxing a question. I agree that it is the continuation of our policies of low interest rates, low inflation, going for growth, backing Wales and believing in Wales that will deliver the jobs that we need and the prosperity that we want. It is exactly the failed policies that we hear from Labour Members that will cause trouble, run Wales down and do damage. The European Socialist party manifesto would destroy hundreds of thousands of jobs across Europe if it were ever adopted.

Mr. Rowlands: Although many good things have been done in the valleys initiative over the past five years, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that during that period there were 3 per cent. fewer people in employment in the valleys, although the number went up by 4 per cent. in Wales as a whole, 6,400 fewer manufacturing jobs and more than 20,000 fewer mining jobs? Whatever good has been done, much more needs to be done. What will the right hon. Gentleman do to improve the situation in our communities?

Mr. Redwood: I agree that more needs to be done. The hon. Gentleman would also agree that there has already been a massive transformation in the valleys and that the employment position is a lot better than it would have been without those initiatives and without the action that we have taken over several years. I have launched the next phase of the valleys initiative. I wish to see more land cleared, more investment attracted and more action taken to create jobs in those valleys communities, and that is exactly what I pledge to continue doing.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Secretary of State accept that one of the most important factors in attracting more jobs to Wales is to maximise the benefit that we get from the European Community? In that context, does he recall the article in last Monday's *Glasgow Herald* in which it is reported:

"Among his other nutty notions is a fancy for shutting down the Wales European Centre"?

Can he give a categorical assurance that he has no intention whatever of closing down the Wales European centre in Brussels?

Mr. Redwood: I agree that we need to get the most out of our membership of the European Community. I certainly have not asked to close that centre, which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will visit later this week.

Mr. Murphy: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, during the past year, more than 1,000 of my constituents have lost their manufacturing jobs at Parke Davis, Du Pont, Royal Ordnance, Ferranti and Lucas-Girling? Does he realise that the prospect of those people returning to full-time employment has been dramatically reduced by his Government's planned tax increases in April, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already admitted will damage the British economy and, therefore, the Welsh economy?

Mr. Redwood: The Treasury has forecast good growth for the United Kingdom as a whole and, within that, for Wales. Of course, those figures took full account of the tax rates that will apply across the year of that forecast. The good news is that Wales and Britain are leading Europe out of recession. We are growing when other countries are not growing and we are generating jobs when they are not generating jobs. I regret any loss of jobs and I am sorry for the hon. Gentleman's constituents, but we are creating new jobs to replace them. There are good signs, and the best news of all is that since 1986 long-term unemployment in Wales has fallen by 40 per cent.

Employment

6. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to increase the percentage of the Welsh work force who are in full-time employment.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The best means of increasing employment in the longer term is through low inflation and sustainable growth, which are being achieved by the Government's economic policies.

The number of full-time employees in employment in Wales increased between March and September 1993 by 3,000. The number of self-employed people in Wales increased by a massive 14,000 over the same period.

Mr. Flynn: How will that process be helped by the decision at the weekend to throw to the wolves and auction off to the highest bidder the jobs at the Accounts Services Agency? In the darkness, not of the implications but of the proof of the sleaze and corruption in Welsh society, why are the Government commercialising an agency that handles £10 billion of public money? Why do they persist in wrecking the civil service and vandalising and degrading the civil service ethic, which can never be replaced once it is destroyed? It is not "back to basics" but forward to degradation. Have the Government gone mad?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman discussed the matter with me last week, and we also discussed the Patent Office and other matters concerning his constituency. Not once during that encounter did the hon. Gentleman refer to sleaze in Wales or attribute any possible change in the status of those establishments to such factors. He knows, as well as I do, that matters concerning the Accounts Service Agency are for the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the percentage of women and men in the work force in work throughout the UK, particularly in Wales, is high? Is it not probably the second highest percentage in the European Community? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that comments about sleaze in Welsh employment will do nothing to create jobs in Wales?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I whole-heartedly agree with my hon. Friend's final point. He is absolutely right in saying that women play a far more important role in the work force than they did formerly. We have seen a transformation in the economy in Wales and, as a result of the new economy, women are more prominent in the work force.

As for Gwent, a great deal is being done in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). The Imperial Park development is in his constituency, and the WDA is also active there. There has been investment of some £925,000 in the urban programme and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has allocated some £1.9 million for next year under the strategic development scheme. There is no doubt that the economy in Wales is recovering and the pace is quickening.

Mr. Ron Davies: There is really no excuse at all for the Government's complacency on the matter. There are 150,000 fewer men in employment this year than when the Conservative party took office. Does not the Minister understand that the cost of lost production and the tax and insurance revenues forgone through the Conservatives' basic policy of high unemployment are themselves holding back economic recovery? Taking into account indirect taxes, the average family in Wales will be paying £14 a week more in taxes from April this year and will be paying a total of £19 a week on unemployment alone. How does the Minister expect the Welsh economy to recover when it must shoulder such waste?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh economy is recovering, and the hon. Gentleman need only read the business section of this morning's *Western Mail* to see that there has been yet another forecast of the quickening pace of recovery.

I well remember 1979 when the Conservative party came to office. One of our major concerns at that time was the number of people who were in jobs in Wales and who were subsidised in those jobs. As for taxation, it is absolutely clear from what the hon. Gentleman says that his Government would increase spending, and that the day would come when they would have to increase tax to pay for that spending.

Mr. Flynn: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I give notice that I wish to raise this subject on the Adjournment because of the amnesia of the Minister of State.

Madam Speaker: I do not need any reasons from the hon. Gentleman, but I have taken his point.

Religious Education

7. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on religious education in Welsh schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I shall shortly be issuing a circular on the provision of religious education and collective worship in schools, which incorporates guidance on new measures introduced by the Education Act 1993 and consolidates guidance issued since 1989.

Mr. Greenway: Did not Dylan Thomas, Gwyn Thomas and other Welsh writers—[HON. MEMBERS: "George Thomas."]—and not forgetting George Thomas, teach us that the Baptist Chapel, the Church of Wales and the Roman Catholic Church were the heart of religion in Wales and that Christianity should be central to children's religious education in Wales? Does my right hon. Friend agree that a whirlwind tour of the major world religions, in an attempt to teach children aged between five and 16 about five or six of them, would leave them knowing nothing about anything?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Of course I agree with the poets and those whom my hon. Friend has mentioned, some of whom were great friends of mine. Let me remind him that the statutory requirement is clearly set out in the Education Reform Act, which states that the syllabus

"should reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain."

Of course we shall place proper emphasis on Christianity when we issue our circular in Wales.

Housing

8. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been his Department's expenditure on housing through the basic credit approval for each of the last five years; and what proportion has been directed to disabled facilities grants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Between 1990-91 and 1994-95, the total provision for housing provided through basic credit approvals amounts to over £283 million. The provision for disabled facilities grants for the same period will be £35.9 million.

Mr. Wardell: What advice does the Minister have for people throughout Wales who are being discharged from hospital back into their homes without basic provisions such as showers, toilets and handrails? What advice does he have for them to ensure that the deprivation that they face will end?

Mr. Jones: I hesitate to give direct advice to individuals in the hypothetical situation that the hon. Gentleman has described, but I draw his attention to the action that we are taking in the forthcoming financial year to increase the amount of money available for mandatory renovation grants and the other steps that we have already put in place. We expect to see more people being helped and more grants being given to those who need them and our provisional target for the year is 9,600 further grants.

Inward Investment

9. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest estimate of the level of inward investment in Wales in the past five years.

Mr. Redwood: In the past five years, there have been 800 inward investment projects, creating or safeguarding 70,000 jobs and accounting for more than £4,000 million of investment.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that firms come to Wales because they have access to the European Community, without suffering the handicap of a national minimum wage, a social charter or the suggestion of a four-day week? Does he agree also that another attractive factor is that corporate taxes in Wales are lower than in other European Community countries?

Mr. Redwood: That is absolutely right. Firms come to Wales for the low taxes and the good environment for carrying out business activity and because they welcome the flexibility and skills of the Welsh work force. They have always told me that. It is the absence of the sandbags that the Labour party would place on the Welsh economy which is particularly attractive to them. That just shows how important it is to carry on with our methods for greater progress.

Mr. Ainger: Does the Secretary of State accept that, if the hypothesis of the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) was correct, the county of Dyfed, with the lowest earnings in the whole of Wales—some would argue that it has the lowest earnings in the United Kingdom—would be filled with Japanese factories? It is not. Is not it a fact that the communications problems of rural Wales and its problems with rail and motorway links, are a disincentive to inward investment and that, over the past few years, the Government have failed lamentably to improve those communications?

Mr. Redwood: People do not come for low earnings; they come for good value from the work force, unencumbered by high social taxes and other impositions. They certainly would not come if there were a special tax on being Welsh, imposed by a Welsh assembly. It is important to bear that in mind.

However, I accept that more remote regions need special assistance, especially help from the Government in improving transport links. That is exactly what I intend to provide.

Mr. Biffen: What is the most recent assessment that my right hon. Friend is able to make of the likelihood of the New Zealand firm Fortex establishing a meat processing plant on the Montgomeryshire-Shropshire border?

Mr. Redwood: I have no recent intelligence, but I was aware of the project some weeks ago. I believe that discussions are continuing.

Training and Enterprise Councils

10. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received regarding the resources allocated to training and enterprise councils in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have received no recent representations on that matter.

Mr. Jones: The Minister will be aware of the contents of the London School of Economics report on the future of training and enterprise councils in England and Wales. Is he also aware that although the budgets of TECs have remained broadly the same during the past few years, the proportion allocated for direct training has been cut for three or four years? Will it be the Government's policy to ensure that direct training programmes are properly funded? Will the Minister persuade his colleagues in the Government to change the rule whereby newly unemployed people receive training in the first six-month period but not after six months have expired?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that my right hon. Friend announced a training and enterprise package of more than £147 million for next year. That compares favourably with the planned figure for this year. This year, the outturn will be rather greater and that is in part because of the Budget measures. I assure the hon. Gentleman that sufficient moneys will be allocated to meet the youth training guarantee. We also want better-quality training. There will be money for engineering apprenticeships and an extension of the youth credit scheme. I remind the hon. Gentleman—I am sure that he will be aware—that the numbers of people entering training are now decreasing because more young people are staying on at school.

Tax Increases

11. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of the tax increases due in April on economic recovery in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I share the judgment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who calculated that the recovery in the economy that has been under way since the middle of 1992 would not be prejudiced by the tax increases that are necessary to bring the public finances back into balance in the medium term.

Mr. Williams: In the context of the Government's "back to basics" policy, does the Minister agree that one of the basic virtues should be honesty? The Prime Minister said in the 1992 election campaign that there was no need to raise value added tax and spoke of tax cuts year on year. How does that square with the tax increases that are due in April, which will cost the average family £10 a week—the largest tax increase in our history? Were those promises at the time of the last election just lies?

Mr. Jones: I will take no lectures on honesty from the high-taxing, high-spending Labour party. It would not come clean with the electorate at the last general election. It still will not come clean with the electorate. It will never be believed on that subject.

Mr. Roger Evans: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a simple explanation for the necessary tax increases in my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget—a recession which went on a great deal longer and was much deeper than anyone forecast, including every Opposition Member?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The taxation that we are imposing is the minimum necessary because only the Conservative party is committed to the lowest possible level of taxation.

Mr. Llew Smith: Does the Minister accept that the recession referred to by the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) was created by the Conservative Government?

Mr. Jones: I am amazed. There speaks a Member of the European Parliament. One would expect someone who travels so frequently outside his country at public expense to know that it was a world recession.

Roads

12. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total spending by central Government on roads in Wales since 1979; and how many miles of motorway and trunk roads have been laid since that year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 1979, total spending by central Government on the roads programme in Wales is over £2.4 billion, including £434 million transport grant. Twenty-five miles of motorway and 154 miles of trunk road have been completed. Ten major improvement schemes totalling almost 30 miles are under construction.

Sir David Knox: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the level of road building in Wales since he became a Minister almost 15 years ago. What are his plans for the coming year?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that a start on the A40 Llandeilo northern bypass is being made today. Tenders have also been invited for the A470 Pentrebach to Cefn Coed bypass and the A5 Glyn Bends schemes. We are also active with the A40 Whitland bypass and four new starts are expected using transport grant: the third Dee crossing, the Rithland bypass, the Swansea valley dualling of the A4067 and the Bridgend cross-valley link.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Freemasonry

29. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with other Departments regarding freemasonry in public life; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): My officials have consulted other Departments about the way in which codes of conduct in the wider public sector deal with freemasonry.

Mr. Mullin: Is it asking too much from Ministers who say that they believe in open government to require magistrates, police officers, civil servants and local government officers who are freemasons to declare that fact? How is it possible to maintain public confidence in public institutions when members of those public institutions belong to a secret society, one aim of which is mutual self-advancement?

Mr. Davis: As the hon. Gentleman knows, when the civil service code was revised in May, it required freemasons and to disclose their membership when there was a conflict of interest. Specifically with regard to the police, police rules make it clear that private interests should not conflict, or be seen to conflict, with the impartial performance of duty. That message is reinforced by specific reminders from some chief constables that officers should consider whether freemasonry and perceived impartiality are compatible. Ultimately it is for individuals to decide, so long as there is no breach of police discipline.

Mr. Meacher: Is not the basis of corruption that decisions are taken in public life, not on arm's-length merit, but because of hidden and partisan relationships? If so, why are the Government so feeble about all this—whether it is freemasonry in public life, or banning tobacco advertising, or gongs and honours for secret services rendered, or the award of large foreign contracts to a small clique of favoured companies without tender and subsidised improperly by the aid and trade provision? Is not that because the finances of the Tory party, and so much of the power of this Tory Government, are built on a wholesale corruption machine?

Mr. Davis: If I can find my way through that little homily to the question, I assume that the hon. Gentleman is asking whether we should have some kind of legal requirement.

Mr. Garrett: On what?

Mr. Davis: On the disclosure of freemasonry. If that is the case, I cannot agree that a legal requirement for disclosure would help. It would simply create a vast bureaucracy and legislative framework which would be avoided by precisely the people whom we are trying to catch—those who are corrupt or misusing public office or public money.

Mr. Burns: Has my hon. Friend had any discussions on this subject with local authorities? For example, has he had any discussions with Derbyshire county council?

Mr. Skinner: That should get me in.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) tempts me. I suspect that there are fewer freemasons in the Government than there are members of the hon. Gentleman's family on the payroll of Derbyshire county council.

The local councils have guidelines that cover this matter.

Mr. Skinner: One of the problems about freemasonry, even more so than in the past, is that, as the Government are running organisations on the basis of quangos, patronage and preference, it is pretty clear that thousands and thousands of jobs that used to be done by councillors accountable to the public will now be done by people nominated, in the main, by the Tory Government and their local apparatchiks. The net result will be even stronger freemasonry. That is why Members of Parliament who are freemasons should have their membership recorded in the Register.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman is wrong—again. Since 1979, the number of quangos has been reduced from about 2,100 to about 1,400. The hon. Gentleman is adding all sorts of bodies, such as the boards of grant-maintained schools, which are now more, rather than less, accountable to the public than they were previously. As for appointments to quangos, we hear much heckling from the Opposition Front Bench, particularly from the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), who, if I remember correctly, was appointed to the West Midlands Enterprise Board—a Labour placeman on a quango that has done nothing but lose the public more than £6 million in the past few years.

Citizens Charter

30. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much his Department intends to spend in 1994-95 on publicity publications and public relations relating to the citizens charter.

Mr. David Davis: The charter unit has no separate publicity budget. Media, production and distribution costs for projects carried out by the charter unit are expected to be just over £1.6 million in this financial year. The budget for 1994-95 will be finalised shortly.

Mr. Raynsford: On the day when thousands of my constituents and millions of people throughout the country suffered long, cold waits and delays— presumably, once again, because the wrong type of snow was falling on our railway lines— will the Minister admit that what is required is investment to improve our public services, rather than the production of yet more charter brochures, which, as everyone knows, are simply not worth the cost of the paper on which they are printed?

Mr. Davis: Since the hon. Gentleman has raised the question of British Rail, rather than take his view, I shall take the view of Michael Patterson, the secretary of the British Rail passengers watchdog body, the Central Transport Consultative Committee. Mr. Patterson has said:

"The charter is definitely a good thing. The right to claim refunds when trains are late, or the giving of discounts on season tickets on lines where trains are unpunctual wouldn't have happened without the Charter."

That puts pressure on the management of British Rail to run the service properly and to make sure that trains are on time.

Mr. Dickens: Was not it the Conservative party which gave workers their rights, tenants their rights, parents their rights, passengers their rights and hospital patients their rights? This is the only party which has had the guts to come up with legislation to ensure that people are provided with the services to which they are entitled.

Mr. Davis: As ever, my hon. Friend is exactly right. I should add that the Labour party is always happy to talk about rights, but is never happy to do anything about delivering them. These charters give information about the rights that people, in their dealings with public services, can expect. They encourage improved performance and they are worth the very small amount of money that goes into supporting them.

Mr. Winnick: In view of the Conservative Government's appalling record—an all-time low—what will the hon. Gentleman's Department do to improve their reputation? Bearing in mind the fact that the Department is responsible for public relations, may I ask why it has so miserably failed the Prime Minister?

Mr. Davis: As ever, the hon. Gentleman is even less well-informed than members of his own Front Bench. We are not responsible for public relations.

Science and Technology White Paper

31. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps have been taken so far to develop proposals set out in the science and technology White Paper.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): The orders for the new research councils have been approved and I have appointed all but one of the new chairmen and chief executives. Sir John Cadogan has started as Director-General of Research Councils and, on his advice, I have allocated £15.5 million of the science budget in 1994-95 for special initiatives in support of White Paper policies. The Council for Science and Technology has met twice. I expect shortly to announce details of our technology foresight programme. The first forward look of science and technology policy will be published in April.

Mr. Day: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the importance of that White Paper to my constituency, with its deep involvement and that of surrounding constituencies in high technology industries. Does he agree that the recent speech by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee set out clearly the Government's commitment to the future of science and technology as set out in the White Paper? Does he further agree that it is vital to industries not only in and around my constituency but throughout the country that the White Paper and scientific and technological development are successful in future?

Mr. Waldegrave: I firmly agree with my hon. Friend. My right hon. Friend's important speech to the

Parliamentary and Scientific Committee was well received. There is general all-party agreement that we need to apply science and technology more effectively to wealth creation and to the improvement of our people.

Mr. Miller: When will we see real progress with the foresight programme? The Minister says that there is broad agreement for the need to make progress, but we really need action. Otherwise, the right hon. Gentleman will just go down as being the Minister for the "foresight saga".

Mr. Waldegrave: The technology foresight programme must involve real consensus among its partners from industry, academia and Government. I shall announce towards the end of this month or early next month the conclusions of the widespread consultations that we held. The programme will be in action this year.

Science and Technology

32. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps are being taken to give prominence to the national week of science and technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: My office is providing funds to the British Association for the Advancement of Science to promote the first national week of science this March. More than 1,000 events will take place throughout the United Kingdom and I am sure that many right hon. and hon. Members will want to take part and to help make the week a success.

Mr. Knapman: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his excellent initiative to improve public understanding of science. Does he agree that is a basic objective of the excellent White Paper that he published last July?

Mr. Waldegrave: One point that came across most strongly to me when I talked to scientists at the bench was that they did not begrudge the expenditure of a little money from the science budget for that purpose. At the weekend, we saw the publication of the rather depressing results of a European Commission poll, which showed that Britain's population is less well-informed scientifically than any other in the European Community. I take that with a pinch of salt, but it was depressing news. There is much work to be done.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: While Britain has 118,000 research scientists and engineers, Japan has 583,000. Japan has twice our population but five times the number of research scientists and engineers. Although the number of British students in higher education has increased from 122,000 to 200,000 since 1987, only 3,000 of them are studying science. Does the Minister agree that there is a manpower problem—and, if so, what is he doing about it?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have put in place perhaps the most fundamental series of reforms, including the national curriculum reforms, to improve the position. The overall comparison between this country and the average for OECD countries shows that we score pretty well for scientifically and technically qualified people. However, there is no room for complacency. I accept the hon. Gentleman's argument that we must do better.

Next Steps Agencies

33. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what number of civil servants are now employed in the next steps agencies; what was the figure a year ago; and what forecast has been made for the next 12 months.

Mr. Waldegrave: More than 346,000 civil servants, 60 per cent. of the total, are currently employed in executive agencies or other organisations working on next steps lines. That compares with 298,000 a year ago. Functions covering a further 88,000 civil servants are under consideration for agency status.

Mr. Martin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the next steps programme is probably the most radical reform of the civil service for about 100 years? Will he continue to emphasise not only the value for money, but the ways in which accountability is improved, especially in the devolving of decision-making nearer to those affected by decisions?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am a strong supporter of the principle of devolution to decision-takers nearest to the action. That is the principle involved in the agencies. I believe that the agencies are a great step forward and they will be shown to provide better service for people who rely on their services and better value for money for the taxpayer.

Mr. Flynn: Is not the problem that the next step after these next steps is privatisation, contractorisation and management buy-out—the effective destruction of the civil service? As there are 31,000 civil servants in Wales, with more in my constituency than in any other Welsh constituency, will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster consider what is happening at DVOIT—the Driver, Vehicles and Operators Information Technology agency—and at the Accounts Services Agency? While those firms are offered to the highest bidder, will the right hon. Gentleman give a guarantee that if they are bought out, they will not be relocated in other parts of the United Kingdom, or in Dusseldorf or Taiwan? Will he make it a condition that if those jobs are sold off, as is currently happening, they cannot be relocated out of Wales?

Mr. Waldegrave: Where better service can be provided more cost effectively, it is right for the Government to look to outside contracts and, where it is right, to privatisation. The Government have been right to pursue that course. I do not believe that it would be legal in the European Community directive to specify where the work should be done when a job is put out to contract. However, the efficiency of many of the organisations in Wales to which the hon. Gentleman refers means that they will be strong competitors for work where it is market tested.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend recall that we are currently looking at the next steps possibilities for AEA Technology in Winfrith in my constituency? Will he reassure my constituents who are employed there that an early decision will be made? That early decision would enable the firm to create more jobs and to expand its excellent science base.

Mr. Waldegrave: Any decision on the future organisation of the Atomic Energy Authority would be aimed at securing a wider market for the very skills to

which my hon. Friend refers. Those skills are great and may, although I do not want to pre-empt any decision, gain from being allowed to compete in a wider market.

Civil Service (Market Testing)

34. **Mr. Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the savings from market testing civil service functions.

Mr. David Davis: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster made clear to the House on 4 November, provisional figures for the Departments indicate that savings are considerable. That is why we are pressing ahead with a further programme. Full details and savings from the "Competing for Quality" initiative are being compiled and will be published shortly in the citizens charter second report.

Mr. Garrett: Will the Minister confirm that those savings never include the departmental costs of preparing for market testing and that, for example, the Department of the Environment spent £250,000 preparing to market test its information technology section and has since dropped the idea? Will he also confirm that the largest single contractor under market testing, EDS, which has taken on the Inland Revenue information technology and computing facilities, is demanding an extra £50 million to pay for the proposed redundancies?

Mr. Davis: The original savings did not include the EDS Scicon report. My understanding is that the savings are net of the redundancies and the attributable market test consultancy.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Will my hon. Friend remind the House of the overall benefits of market testing and state how many more posts will be market tested?

Mr. Davis: The first benefit of market testing is a £100 million saving this year, which could be used to provide some 10 schools or a couple of hospitals or 50,000 primary school places, all of which are important. It also ensures that we have persistently high quality. In all the cases that we surveyed, the quality was at least as good as it was before and, for 30 per cent. of cases, it had improved.

Duchy Council

35. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to make the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster more representative of the population of Lancashire in terms of gender, race and social class.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Council of the Duchy of Lancaster acts as an advisory body to me, as Chancellor of the Duchy, as it has to my predecessors. Members of the council are selected for their specialist expertise in the matters on which their advice is sought.

Mr. Prentice: Has the Chancellor seen early-day motion 599? It calls on him to open up meetings of the council, which are currently held in secret, and to publish minutes and make them publicly available. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is faintly ironic that the Minister for open government should preside over secret meetings? Is not it about time that he let some light shine in on this murky, shady corner of the establishment?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is foolish language, which I think would offend the many distinguished members of the Labour party who have held my office on exactly the same terms. The council advises me and I am accountable for the decisions that are made.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr Prentice) appears to have a bee in his tam o' shanter in regard to the Duchy fund? Have not the citizens of Lancashire done a great deal better from the fund than did the citizens of Hammersmith when the hon. Gentleman was leader of that council and lost a lot of money?

Mr. Waldegrave: It does not behove me to give advice to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr Prentice), but I urge him—as a Scotsman and as a former distinguished leader of a London borough council—to go a little slow on telling the people of Lancashire how to behave until he has my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) a bit more onside.

BILL PRESENTED

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS (GIBRALTAR)

Mr. Jeff Rooker presented a Bill to entitle residents of Gibraltar to vote as electors in an English constituency in elections to the European Parliament; to amend the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 April, and to be printed. [Bill 47.]

Airports (Northern Ireland)

3.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tim Smith): I beg to move,

That the draft Airports (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 9th December, be approved.

The principal purpose of the order is to enable the Government to privatise Belfast international airport. It also takes the opportunity to introduce certain amendments to current Northern Ireland airport legislation to bring it broadly into line with that which already applies in Great Britain. I shall deal with the two elements in that order.

The privatisation provisions are contained in part V, which, when enacted, will enable Belfast international airport to be sold into the private sector. The Government believe that the airport company, as a public body trading on a consistently successful basis over a number of years, should now be allowed to develop further, free of public-sector financial constraints and with the ability to grasp the opportunity offered by private-sector markets for capital and other resources.

Over the past 18 months—since the Government announced their intention to privatise—we have been working to ensure that, in legal and commercial terms, the airport is sold in a manner that will bring the maximum benefits to both the taxpayer and the travelling public. In that respect, Belfast international airport will follow in the footsteps of the former Government-controlled Great Britain airports which were sold in 1987 as part of the successful British Airports Authority privatisation.

Part V provides for the creation of a wholly owned Government company—a successor to Northern Ireland Airports Ltd., the public body which operates Belfast international airports—clears the way for the trasferred assets and liabilities to be sold on the private sector. Those powers are contained in articles 51, 54 and 58. The Government intend to privatise by means of a trade sale.

Before the sale takes place, however to ensure that there are no contingent tax liabilities as a consequence of privatisation, the property rights of the airport will be restructured in such a fashion as to avoid any adverse tax consequences. I draw the House's attention to articles 52 and 53, which deal with this necessary and important reorganisation scheme.

The remaining provisions of the order update current Northern Ireland airport law, largely to match the position in Great Britain. The new provisions also reflect developments that have taken place in the Northern Ireland airport industry over the past 20 years. The existing statutory responsibility of the Department of the Environment to promote the provision of airports in Northern Ireland is to be repealed.

That duty was considered necessary when the Aerodromes Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 was introduced, but, with the privatisation of the main regional airport and the emerging growth of other airport facilities in Northern Ireland, it is no longer considered necessary. The full list of repeals is contained in schedule 10 to the order.

There are a number of provisions in part II of the order dealing with land, which afford certain rights to airport operators, for example, in relation to compulsory purchase and the protection of property. Part II also updates the present law in relation to certain aspects of airport safety.

Part III has a number of important features in relation to the management of airports, including improved arrangements for the making and enforcing of airport byelaws. I draw attention specifically to article 20, a new provision whereby certain designated airports will be required to provide facilities for consultation with airport users, the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, district councils and other interested parties. The system of airport consultative committees at mainland airports has evolved from similar legislative provisions introduced earlier in Great Britain and the committees have proved a successful forum for interested groups to discuss airport issues and problems with the operators.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): There is, unfortunately, rarely agreement about Northern Ireland issues among the political parties. Is it not odd, therefore, that when there is unity the Government seek to undermine it by pressing ahead with a privatisation measure which is greeted with little enthusiasm by the parties representing the Northern Ireland electorate?

Mr. Smith: We shall have to wait and see, but, even if the hon. Gentleman is right, I believe that the arguments for privatisation in Northern Ireland are as strong as those in the rest of the United Kingdom. In this particular case, privatisation will bring two particular advantages. The first is that management will have much greater freedom to manage and will be free from the interference that automatically comes with Government control. The second is that airport management will have access to private capital markets to gain further investment, a facility not at present available to them.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Minister is a Minister with a difference because he has —if I might put it this way—matured politically on the Public Accounts Committee where he has spent much of his time criticising the Government for the failures of privatisation and the way in which it has been handled. Will he assure us that he will apply all the lessons that he learned in the many hundreds of hours of deliberations and that this project will not come before the PAC in the future with a critical report?

Mr. Smith: I hope that the PAC will continue to examine all privatisations with not only a critical eye but a constructive approach to suggest ways in which we might do better in future. All the lessons learned by the PAC have been fully taken into account in this privatisation. Hon. Members and others have queried whether we should tackle the issue by way of a flotation or a trade sale. I have examined the circumstances extremely carefully and concluded that, in this case, the taxpayer will get the best value for money if we proceed by way of a trade sale.

Part III of the order contains a number of important features in relation to the management of airports, including improved arrangements for the making and enforcement of airport byelaws. I draw specific attention to article 20, a new provision whereby certain designated airports will be required to provide facilities for consultation with airport users.

Article 19 enables the new owner of the airport to obtain authority from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to appoint constables. The Secretary of State may grant this authorisation subject to such conditions as he may think fit. In effect, the existing Northern Ireland airport police will

transfer en bloc to the employment of the new owner. Under current arrangements, the airport constabulary is under the direction of the commercial management of the airport. That will continue to be the case post-privatisation.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock) *rose——*

Mr. Smith: I should like to develop the arguments before giving way. I am about to explain why we think that these are the appropriate arrangements.

There are precedents for those arrangements. When, for example, the Port of London Authority and Tilbury docks were privatised their respective police functions were retained without any loss of effectiveness. The key point is that the present arrangements work well in practice. For 23 years, the airport constabulary has operated successfully as a discrete organisation under the exclusive control of a commercially driven management, and the Government see no reason why privatisation should be a catalyst for change.

Finally, and very importantly, I have taken into account the views of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and of other Government security advisers, who are satisfied with the proposed arrangements for airport policing after privatisation. Hon. Members should note particularly that members of the airport constabulary are already trained by the RUC and will be continuously monitored for performance by the RUC as part of its regular review of security arrangements at the airport. Should policing standards not be maintained to a satisfactory level, powers are available, under aviation security legislation, to allow the policing role at the airport to be taken over quickly by the RUC.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): Is not the Minister a little confused about how the force is currently looked after? As the airport holding company is a public company, is not the police force under the control of the Secretary of State? We cannot compare the present position with what will happen in the future. Is the Minister saying that the present position will continue? Will the Secretary of State still have a responsibility for the airport police?

Mr. Smith: I am saying that privatisation will not have any practical consequences for the policing of the airport. The key argument is that the constables will be employed, as they are at present, by the airport and will continue to be trained and supervised by the RUC. They will be closely monitored, as they are at present. Furthermore, if the Secretary of State, on advice, is dissatisfied with the arrangements, he will be able to step in and deal with the matter promptly.

Mr. Mackinlay: Will constables have to be resworn on the vesting day of the private company, when they will become its employees? What is the Northern Ireland Airport Police Association's view on the privatisation proposals?

Mr. Smith: The police will not have to be resworn, because there will, I believe, be continuity of all employment arrangements, but I will look into the matter. I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's other question when I reply to the debate.

Airport constables who are already authorised to be armed will continue to carry sidearms when the airport is privatised. The Government are satisfied that continuation of that arrangement raises no significant or insurmountable difficulties. The important point is that the RUC is content with the proposals.

The history and reputation of the airport constabulary are satisfactory and, for all practical purposes, its responsibilities and capabilities will remain unchanged by privatisation.

Part IV of the order deals with the economic regulation of airports. It includes new provisions that mirror the system that has operated in Great Britain since its introduction under the Airports Act 1986. The relevant articles are drafted with the twin purpose of ensuring fair competition between airports and fair trading within them. Airports, unlike most service providers, are recognised as having certain monopolistic characteristics in the provision of air transport services in their region. For obvious reasons, those services are not likely to be duplicated on the site next door.

The Government are concerned to ensure that such monopolies should not be exercised to the disadvantage of airport customers. Airports trading above a certain threshold—in this case, a turnover of £1 million—will have certain requirements on the levying of charges placed upon them. That new system will be handled by the Civil Aviation Authority and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, as it is in Britain. It will effectively be identical to the regulatory model that applies to all other United Kingdom airports.

Let me touch on the responses received by the Government during the draft order consultation period. The process prompted 32 formal responses. As a result, a number of minor changes have been made. They include the additional requirement now contained in article 20 that designated airport operators consult the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland. Following representations by the Belfast harbour commissioners, it was also decided to tighten up certain provisions relating to compulsory purchase of land by airport operators.

The consultation period promoted lively debate about the method by which Belfast international airport should be privatised, with some support for the flotation option. The Government reconsidered that matter most carefully and concluded that the arguments in favour of privatisation by trade sale remained more compelling and offered the most cost-effective method of disposal.

Curent forecasts suggest that there will be significant growth in air traffic over the next decade and beyond. I believe that a privatised Belfast international airport, freed from the constraints of Government, with greater freedom to manage itself, will be in a position to grasp more effectively the exciting opportunities thus offered. I commend the order to the House.

3.45 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): It is ironic that, if the proposed legislation applied to anywhere else in the United Kingdom, we should be having a Second Reading of a privatisation Bill, followed by a Committee and Report stage, Third Reading and consideration in the Lords. I make no apologies for saying yet again that this is the most undemocratic way of dealing with a major piece of Northern Ireland legislation.

The Order in Council procedure is the most unsatisfactory way imaginable of dealing with important issues in Northern Ireland. However, as Ministers have

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pointed out over the years, the democratic deficit in Northern Ireland will not be restored until the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland can agree on some form of devolved power; I hope that that will happen sooner rather than later.

I note that the Finance Bill, currently being debated in Committee, contains clauses relating to the privatisation of Belfast international airport. The Minister will no doubt be aware that that Bill has been guillotined, which means that, if the debate on stamp duty, which precedes the debate on the privatisation of Northern Ireland's airport, is protracted, the guillotine will fall before that debate is reached, again depriving hon. Members of a chance to debate and interrogate the Government about the reasons for privatising the airport. In short, we have before us a thoroughly unsatisfactory state of affairs.

The order provides for the privatisation of Belfast international airport and gives rise to a series of important questions to which I hope the Minister will reply. The hon. Gentleman will know that the explanatory note issued by the Northern Ireland Office says:

"The Aerodromes Act imposed a duty on the Department to promote airport development and extended the powers of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company enabling it to establish a subsidiary company."

The order represents a total abrogation of that responsibility. The very fact that Northern Ireland sits on the periphery of the European Community should lead the Government to play a full and active role in promoting airport development and developing transport links with the rest of the United Kingdom, the island of Ireland, the European Community and the north Atlantic routes.

The Minister pointed out that, to date, the record of Northern Ireland Airports Ltd. has been a good one. Operating profits at Belfast international airport soared to almost £4·5 million in 1992-93—an increase of 71 per cent. on the previous year's profits. Given such a glowing testimony, it seems crazy that the Government should be seeking to jettison one of the few economic success stories of their 15 years in office.

In the Government's desperate attempt to claw back some of the deficit that they have accumulated, they appear to be flogging off the last bit of family silver. The hon. Gentleman, in his consultation paper, believes:

"It is no longer considered necessary for the Department to have a statutory duty to promote and provide airports

I invite the House to consider one point. It might not be considered necessary now for the Government to have those powers, but that was not their view when they were accepting taxpayers' money from the European Community for investment in the infrastructure of Northern Ireland international airport. From 1990 to 1993, a total of £7·5 million of grant aid was received from the European regional development fund transportation programme, all of which will now benefit the private company that takes over the airport.

During the debate in another place, the Minister, Lady Denton, stated:

"There will be no clawback of the grant on ERDF. That has been confirmed by Brussels."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 31 January 1994; Vol. 551, c. 1166.]

I wrote to EC Commissioner Bruce Millan last year, when it was clear that the Government would go ahead with the privatisation of the airport, suggesting that, on privatisation, there may well be a clawback of the grants that the Government received. For greater accuracy, I have photocopied the Commissioner's letter for the Minister. It says:

"The question of clawback could arise in the event of privatisation. It has been reported recently that the government intends to dispose of the airport by a trade sale. If the purchaser paid the full market value of the business, the proceeds accruing to government would represent the full grant-aided assets, including ERDF aid, and in those circumstances the Commission might seek to clawback a proportion of the aid from the Government."

That is a different story from what was said in the other place. The letter emphasises that the purchaser would have to pay the full market value of the airport. Although the Labour party does not like what the Government are proposing, I hope that that is the case.

We know from recent experiences, however, that to get their hands on fast cash, the Government are perfectly happy to sell Britain's public assets at bargain basement prices. Will the Minister therefore outline any assessment that his Department has undertaken to ascertain the market value of the airport? Will he further assure hon. Members this evening that his Department will only sell Belfast international airport at its full market value?

The Minister has a problem. If the airport is sold at its full market value, the European Commission may want some of its money back. If the Government sell it at less than its market value, the Minister may well be accused of doing that in order to avoid paying the Commission its money back. He has a problem on both those counts. Whatever price the airport eventually fetches, it is clear that the people of Northern Ireland will not benefit from the sale.

We oppose the privatisation of Aldergrove airport. If the Government truly believe that the offer is attractive and that the sale will benefit the people of Northern Ireland, why is the Minister not letting them share such a golden opportunity? Selling the airport by means of a trade sale will do nothing to extend the share-owning democracy that the Conservatives have so often hailed in the past. Yet again, we witness the Government favouring big business above the individual, and private profits above public interest.

The Minister may be aware that I, along with the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) and representatives of the airport police, met his predecessor to raise a number of important issues relating to the future of police operations at the airport. I regret to say that the outcome of that meeting did not allay our concerns or those of the airport constabulary.

I understand what the Minister has said about the police at the airport, but I believe that most members of the public in Northern Ireland and elsewhere will be asonished to learn that the Government plan to vest police powers in a private operation at Belfast international airport. We support the request from the airport police that they should retain their operational independence. Especially in the Northern Ireland context, it would be highly dangerous for security and policing levels to be decided by managers who were motivated by profit.

Mr. Winnick: What my hon. Friend has said is much appreciated by Opposition Members. Does he know of any Northern Irish political party represented in the House of Commons that favours the order?

Mr. Stott: My information is that there is none. I have no doubt that we shall be able to reinforce that point later when we divide the House on this important matter.

I was talking about the problems faced by the police and about their operational independence. Can the Minister explain what specific policing requirements a successor company to Northern Ireland Airports Ltd. will be asked to meet? Section 2.6(e) of the explanatory document states that the authorisation to appoint airport constabularies

"may be granted subject to such conditions as the Secretary of State sees fit."

I should be obliged if the Minister would enlarge on that matter.

Will the Minister tell us whether the requirements include minimum police levels? If so, what are those levels to be? Will they be regularly monitored and reviewed by the Secretary of State or, once the airport has been privatised, will policing become a matter for the successor company, although that company's raison d'etre is maximising profits? Despite the independence of the police at Aldergrove airport, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as the Minister has pointed out, plays an important role in training the officers at the airport. How will the sale affect the present working relations between the two groups? Who, if anyone, will be responsible for assessing training and safety standards, especially with regard to firearms?

The police, who have done a marvellous job at Aldergrove airport for the past 23 years, have asked their elected representatives to pursue the matter. We have given them our support in their wish to maintain their operational independence and their integrity. They are very concerned about the transfer of the airport to a private company whose motivation will be rather different from that of the current holding company.

What about the other workers at the airport? Will their current terms and conditions be honoured by the new company? Will the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 still apply? Will their pension provisions remain the same? Will their trade union recognition and negotiating rights be acceptable? Those issues are important to everyone who works at Belfast international airport.

Last week in another place, my hon. Friend Lord Williams of Mostyn, together with many of their Lordships, questioned Lady Denton about the implications of the privatisation of Northern Ireland international airport and how it would affect the current defence and security systems. Security at airports on this island is provided by county forces or regional police forces. At Aldergrove international airport, the position is more complicated, because the security facilities are shared with the airport authority and the Ministry of Defence. Regrettably, there still remains a continuing need for that sort of high-level security to be provided. Therefore, one needs to be satisfied that that level of security will continue.

One is bound to ask two simple questions. First, who will be responsible for security at the airport once it is sold? Will it be the new company, the Ministry of Defence, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, or a combination of all three? Secondly, who will be responsible for paying for that security once the transfer has taken place? Clearly, security is an expensive operation. Will the cost be borne by the new owners, or will taxpayers be asked to pay, as they do already because of the problems that we have in Northern Ireland? There are two questions that the Minister must address: who will pay, and who will have the overall responsibility for security at Belfast international airport once the sale has been effected? I am sure that the Minister will appreciate that those extremely important questions deserve an answer today.

Earlier, I said that the Labour party is opposed to the order and will oppose it in the Lobby tonight. I could not put a better case for our opposition to the order than was put by Lord Cooke, a native of Northern Ireland, speaking in another place last week at column 1161. He said:

"We have in place at Belfast International Airport a management"——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must paraphrase. If he is quoting the Minister, it is perfectly in order, but if he is quoting a Back Bencher, he must paraphrase.

Mr. Stott: The noble Lord was saying that we have a good international airport in Belfast. It is well managed, and makes a good profit. If the Treasury is concerned about the public sector borrowing requirement, Lord Cooke felt that methods could be arranged whereby the airport, under its current ownership, could have the right to borrow money on the commercial market. I agree with him. All those things could be put in place—all those things could happen at Northern Ireland international airport.

The only reason why this matter has been brought to the House today, and the only reason why the Government are privatising Northern Ireland international airport, is the incompetent way in which they have managed the affairs of this country over the past 15 years. They must flog off every bit of public assets. They are putting up taxes to reduce the deficit that they created. That is why they have come to the House and asked for parliamentary permission to sell this valuable asset. It is not for any operational reason, or any other reason; they want the money to get themselves out of the mess that they created. That is why I ask my hon. Friends to join me in opposing this appalling measure.

4.3 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): It is the policy of our party to consider each privatisation proposal on its merits. If we find that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, we will generally support the proposal. Of course, if we find that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages, we will oppose the proposal.

From a personal point of view, the order has certain advantages. If it is passed, at least we will have one fewer quango in Northern Ireland. However, we are totally opposed to the way in which this vital legislation is going through the House—by order. That alone would perhaps push us into opposing the order. I agree with the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Scott) that the matter is not getting a fair crack of the whip in the House, and it is also not getting a fair crack of the whip in Committee on the Finance Bill. That surely cannot be good for democracy.

Before considering the contents of the order and the principle behind it, I wish to thank publicly the officials in the Department of the Environment who are looking after the privatisation for their co-operation and their consideration of my views during the consultative period. I also thank the former Ministers who saw myself and the hon. Member for Wigan earlier. I should like that to be put

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on the record because hon. Members certainly criticise departmental officials and, out of courtesy, we should thank them when that can be done.

Belfast international airport is of great importance to Northern Ireland. Lord Cooke—one of the original board of directors, if I can put it in those terms—certainly made that clear in another place. He also stated that the airport was to be run for the benefit of business and ordinary passengers, but in a commercial manner. The view of the former Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, has been justified over the years.

The airport is the main gateway into Northern Ireland, even taking into account the ports and so forth. The number of people who travel through the international airport suggest that it is the main gateway. The people of Northern Ireland believe that it should be left in their hands.

It would be possible to change the control of the airport from the present quango situation to a different system, which would put it under the democratic control of elected representatives. Those representatives would be responsible to the voters each time they went forward to be elected. Such legislation would be acceptable, even if it did go through by Order in Council of the House, because it would provide a little more democracy.

As has been said, millions of pounds of European and Treasury money have gone into the airport. That has been matched by the high standards of service and the hard work of the staff in the airport, which reflects great credit upon them. I refer to the workers at all levels, and the citizens of Northern Ireland are proud of the valuable asset which we have in that airport. That asset should be left in the hands of the people of Northern Ireland. It certainly should not be sold to what we suspect will be the highest bidder, particularly when the economic situation is at such a low level. We may not get the exact figure that we would be looking for in the best circumstances.

The airport has been run efficiently and economically, and the security service has been given high importance. Sadly, profit will be the paramount motive under privatisation. While I agree that investors should expect a return on their investment, I must condemn the undue haste in auctioning off Northern Ireland's resources.

The privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity is a sorry example. It was presented by the former Minister, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), as essential to lower electricity prices in Northern Ireland. Now even large users of electricity—the only ones who supported the Minister in privatising Northern Ireland Electricity—all Opposition parties and all Members of Parliament for Northern Ireland totally oppose the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity. We now know the truth about whether we will have lower prices.

I do not accuse the present Minister. He has only just been appointed to his position, but, unfortunately, he has the job of steering the measure through the House.

At least there was a share flotation in respect of Northern Ireland Electricity and shares were bought by Northern Ireland citizens. Unfortunately, although share owners have profited because the share price is quite high, those who were too poor to buy shares still face very high electricity prices. Belfast international airport is now in line for privatisation, and next in the wings is Belfast harbour. They are some of our assets in Northern Ireland.

We disagree with the decision to refuse to issue shares, but, as a Member for the area, I see a ray of sunshine showing through the Tory ideological mist—that is, the management-worker buy-out offer. I hope that it proceeds. Each of us should wish the application well. If it is successful, people who have worked for years to make the airport such a successful operation might reap some reward for their hard work. Of course, it will also retain Belfast international airport in local hands.

Why was it necessary to include an airport official in article 18(3)(i)? Such matters should have been left in the hands of a constable of police. Article 20, which refers to the consultation of which the Minister made such a point, states that there will be

"adequate facilities for consultation with respect to any matter concerning the management or administration of the airport which affects their interests."

Why are the four words "which affects their interests" needed? I should have thought that they would not be required. Does that mean that internal airport matters cannot be discussed, even when they indirectly affect the interests of people using the airport?

A consultative committee is only a consultative committee; what sanctions does such a committee have in respect of getting things done and resolving problems at the airport?

Can the Minister tell us whether a new pension scheme will be introduced? If so, will sufficient funds be transferred to ensure that members enjoy a full pension when the correct number of service years have been achieved? Is there a surplus in the pension fund? If there is, how will it be handled? Will it be used to give a pension holiday to the new company, as happened in the case of Harland and Wolff? Have the present pension fund members been consulted about the proposals to set up a new pension scheme? Have the present fund pensioners and deferred pensioners been kept informed? What arrangements have been made to give pensioners and deferred pensioners a say in the present or future schemes?

As a member of the Social Security Select Committee, I assure the Minister, the scheme members and the Department that the Committee views such matters very seriously indeed.

I shall now discuss airport policing—not security, but airport policing, because there is a distinct difference between security at the airport and policing at the airport. As the hon. Member for Wigan said, we met the Minister. We were accompanied by members of the Belfast Airport Police Association, and we discussed the worries of the association. As the constituency Member of Parliament, I look after the interests of all airport workers, but, having been specifically asked by BAPA to look after its members' interests, I wish to make several arguments to the Minister.

First, the BAPA should remain under Northern Ireland Office control. The Minister almost convinced me that that would be the case, because he said that the Secretary of State would be ultimately responsible in certain circumstances. I also explained that the association was at present under the Secretary of State's control.

For about 22 or 23 years, BAPA members have successfully policed the airport and defended it from terrorist attack. Several members have received honours for gallantry; others have received honours for dedication to duty. As the Minister said, they are trained to Home

Office standards by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and the association is rightly regarded as a responsible, professional organisation.

However, under the proposals, in spite of all of those facts and all the nice things that have been said about the police and about the association, federated status and rights of representation are still refused to the association.

It does not follow that 22 or 23 years of co-operation between the present public company—for that is what it is—and BAPA will necessarily continue under any new company. If a private company is in control, conflicts may arise between policing and profit.

For instance, I ask the Minister whether, in a scenario that I shall suggest, the company could force a policeman to admit a key worker if that worker has no identification. There could be an immediate conflict of interest between policing and the ownership of the airport. Because of his instructions, a policeman may say that no one can gain admission without a pass. If the policeman receives a phone call from management saying,"That is a key worker and he must get in to do his business or we will lose money and our profit, so you will admit that man," there will be a conflict of interest. Under such a conflict of interest, will the company be able to discipline the constable?

Will policing and security under a private company be maintained at the very highest level? I am sure that the Minister will say, "Of course it will", but I ask that anyway. Specifically, will the Secretary of State retain the power to make a direction requiring owners to meet security standards? More important, will that be incorporated into the conditions of the sale?

Will the proposed security committee, which has not been discussed yet, so I suppose that we should not really debate it at great length, have its recommendations enforced by the Secretary of State or with the support of the Secretary of State? Will those recommendations continue to update and improve the present security standards at the airport and on the approach roads? Will the Minister assure me that, as the constituency Member, I will have a right of access to that committee? Will he take this opportunity to announce the name of the chairman of the security committee?

If the order is approved, will the Minister tell us what title he has selected for the present force when it is taken over by the new owners? Will he confirm the undertaking given to me by his predecessor in a letter 20 October 1993, in which he said:

"I will ensure that the airport company, at the appropriate time prior to privatisation, enters into a formal agreement with the Association"——

that is, BAPA——

"recognising its rights to represent the employment interests of its members"?

I await the Minister's reply on that issue.

As the order replaces the Aerodromes Act (Northern Ireland) 1971, I want to draw the attention of the House to the lack of an airports policy in Northern Ireland. The Minister and his predecessors have made no effort to ensure that Northern Ireland airports are complementary and not confrontational to each other. For example, I am very concerned about the position of Belfast city airport. Over a short period, there has been a tremendous growth of 40 per cent. in passenger traffic at that airport. In 1993, passenge traffic rose from 600,000 to 840,000. The company confidently predicts that it will increase to 1·2 million in 1994.

In view of those figures, will pressure be exerted on the airport authority to relax the current self-imposed flying curfew which prevents aircraft from landing or taking off between 9.30 pm and 6.30 am? It is almost certain that noise levels will rise, so the whole situation will have to be examined. I hope that any examination will be undertaken in the context of the recommendations made by the inspector who conducted the inquiry arising from the local plan for Belfast harbour for the period 1990-2005. Those recommendations were aimed at containing airport growth on the basis of noise parameters.

Inevitably, every increase in the number of flights over that densely populated area raises questions of civil aviation safety. It must be remembered that the houses around the Belfast city airport were there before the airport. I am quite sure that the quantity of aeroplane fuel being dispersed over the area will give rise to concern about the health and other effects of such emissions.

It is hardly necessary to draw anyone's atteiton to the difficulties with regard to road access to the city airport. Perhaps some hon. Members do not know about them, but everyone in Northern Ireland certainly does. The situation can only get worse. If the problem is not addressed we shall have a major road hazard on our hands. It would prejudice the safety and convenience of traffic on the Sydenham bypass. Indeed, press reports are already calling attention to the danger.

I have here two cuttings from the *Belfast Telegraph*. One of them is headed

"Lights plea as bypass crash fears grow".

Jim Rodgers and Ian Adamson, who are Ulster Unionist councillors for the area, have written to the Department of the Environment, and Mr. Rodgers is reported to have said:

"Drivers simply can't cross this road during the rush hour to get in and out of the airport. People are taking terrible risks, and someone will be killed if something isn't done immediately."

Hon. Members hearing those words may conclude that roadworks are necessary. The point is that if the airport has to cope with more flights, passengers and road traffic than were envisaged at the time of the inquiry the problem lies in the lack of an airports policy in Northern Ireland.

Another edition of the *Belfast Telegraph* carried the headline:

"Concern grows over traffic tailbacks at City Airport entrance: hazard fears on bypass".

A person who drove to the airport to drop off a passenger is quoted as having said:

"People were having difficulty getting into the airport, and the traffic was tailing back out on to the Bangor-bound side of the bypass."

Another man, who regularly travels on the Sydenham bypass on his way to work, is reported to have said that he often saw cars tailing back from the airport out on to the road. One of the newspaper articles says that there have been several car pile-ups outside the airport; that passengers, having waited up to half an hour to cross the bypass, have missed their flights; and that taxi drivers are reluctant to go to the airport because they cannot get in or out.

These reports, as well as rumours about airlines setting one airport against another with regard to costs and discussions with airlines, highlight the confrontation that is caused by the lack of an airports policy. What we need is a policy through which the airports would complement each other. We have an international airport right out in the country, away from built-up areas. It has magnificent facilities, provided by public money. Why should not we

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have a policy to ensure that the airports complement each other and that each concentrates on what it is best equipped to do? Only in that way will Northern Ireland be best served by its airports—and the taxpayer will get a proper return on the grants provided for a co-ordinated, complementary system.

I object to the way in which this order to privatise Belfast international airport is being considered by the House. The Minister is new to the job, but I travel more in hope than in certainty that, one day, the House will treat Northern Ireland like the rest of the United Kingdom in respect of legislation.

The proposed privatisation has more disadvantages than advantages for the citizens of Northern Ireland. Accordingly, I shall recommend to my parliamentary colleagues that they vote against it.

4.20 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I apologise to the Minister for missing the first few minutes of his speech. If I ask a question on a point with which he has already dealt, I hope that he will forgive me. The reason for my lateness is germane to the debate, in that aeroplanes waiting to land at Heathrow were considerably delayed by two or three centimetres of snow on the runway. Snow ploughs were clearing those few centimetres of snow all morning. We had no such problems in Northern Ireland—everything was in order at Belfast international airport when we left there.

In common with most Northern Ireland Members, I wonder whether it is worth while participating in a debate such as this. It is like sending for the doctor to attend the wake. Nothing that we say today will influence the decision that the Government have already reached, which is being made law by the infamous Order in Council procedure. From time to time, the Government give reasons why that mechanism must be used—such as trying to bring together the political parties of Northern Ireland to debate their legislative future, but that is not a valid reason. Bills on other matters affecting Northern Ireland are properly presented to the House, and are subject to a Committee stage so that they may be open to detailed debate and amendment. Often, sensible proposals are taken on board and incorporated before a Bill is passed.

However, we are unable to change by one iota the content of this measure. None of the good advice that the Minister will be given this afternoon—mainly from this side of the House—will impinge on the order. Debate is ended, the door is closed and nothing can be changed. Anything that we say today will be retrospective to the consultation that ended some time ago. None the less, one must put down a marker of one's objections.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I support the hon. Gentleman's remarks. He and others who participated in the group talks and in the major consultation that ranged over three years became familiar with the phrase, "Nothing will be agreed until everything is agreed." Apparently, now that we have all agreed, it is not to be done. In other words, the phrase is meaningless.

Mr. McGrady: I shall not be trapped into making a political statement on an order relating to Belfast international airport. The Government have simply decided that they do not require the agreement of the parties in Northern Ireland. Procedures of the House are necessary to deal with matters of grave importance, such as the privatisation of the public assets of Northern Ireland and it should have been done in a Bill. There was a Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, a Northern Ireland Employment Bill and others. It is not the fault, as is sometimes alleged, of the Northern Ireland parties that such methods are used.

As the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) said, the political talks were about institution and arrangements and were not about the subject matter of the various orders. We are all doctors prognosticating the life span of a dead body.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Social Democratic and Labour party, let me say that I am totally opposed to the privatisation. Therefore, I welcome the conversion of at least one wing of the Conservative and Unionist party to the anti-privatisation lobby today. Perhaps the conversion will gain momentum in that party in the foreseeable future. It was unfortunate, however, that it supported many of the previous privatisations.

We are opposed to the privatisation of the airport and of other assets of Northern Ireland because it is putting into private ownership that which we believe is essential to provide good service to the people of Northern Ireland. Such assets should be retained in the public sector, to be fully accountable to the public and to avoid the excesses which profit making is inclined to drive the sector towards —cost cutting, safety cutting, security cutting and many other aspects which have been mentioned.

A second reason for opposing privatisation, which has been touched on, is the question of real competition. It has been said that Belfast international airport is the gateway to Northern Ireland. That is true, without in any way looking down on the other points of access, be they airports or harbours. Belfast airport is the main thoroughfare through which most of the economic relationships with the rest of the world are conducted. It is the vehicle through which most of the Northern Ireland tourist business is conducted and it is important that it should remain in public hands so that the best possible facility, our window to the world, can be sustained in a fashion that makes it attractive and not the subject of unnecessary cost cutting from a profit motive point of view.

The third reason why I am concerned about privatisation of the airport, as with the other assets, is the question of lack of competitiveness. The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) referred to the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity. It has been a scandalous failure from beginning to end. The Committee which dealt with the Bill was told time and again that competitiveness and alternative supplies would increase and that prices would be cut, not only for the industrial consumer, but for the private consumer as well. That has not happened. It was pointed out at that time that competition was not possible and would not occur. The fact that it was admitted that there would be no other distribution agency made competition impossible.

No matter where one looks, it is the same. For example, in Northern Ireland, we have no alternative but to buy our telephone services from BT. We must buy our electricity from the privatised Northern Ireland Electricity company. Again, we have no alternative—apart, perhaps, from chopping wood. We were promised the safeguard of a

regulator, but I do not think that regulators have been very effective in other fields; certainly they are no substitute for the ability to shop elsewhere.

Over the past few years, Belfast international airport has received substantial capital investment and has been much improved: that has made it one of the most attractive airports that I, at least, have visited in many years. As the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) pointed out, its friendly atmosphere would be difficult to replicate. I, as a constant user of the airport, have noticed that atmosphere; but first-time users have also remarked on it.

The value of its ethos to Northern Ireland cannot be measured in purely monetary terms. The first impression gained by visitors to Northern Ireland—industrialists, investors, tourists and ordinary travellers—is that of an important "window", and the way in which that window is dressed is also important. I do not believe that a private company will be able to sustain the airport's ethos, or will even care about it, given that it will not put coins into the till at the end of the day.

There was mention of the possibility of a clawback of the public funds used for the redevelopment and refurbishment. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's reply; it is evident that substantial amounts were invested well after the decision to privatise was made public.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Gentleman shares my view that the Government seem to see a conflict between the public accountability of an airport and its economic success. Belfast international airport is publicly accountable; it is also very well managed, and is proving very profitable. The same applies to Manchester international airport: it, too, is very well managed, hugely profitable and publicly accountable—because it is owned by the city of Manchester and the 12 district councils, one of which is mine. I see no conflict between public accountability and profitability in an effectively managed airport.

Mr. McGrady: The hon. Gentleman has emphasised my point, perhaps more eloquently than I could have done. Belfast international is a first-class airport whose profits have risen over the past three or four years as a result of its refurbishment at the taxpayer's expense. Now the fatted calf is ready for slaughter at the altar of privatisation. We shall await the outcome with interest: if it follows the lines of the "parallel 2" privatisations that have taken place in Northern Ireland so far, customers and cargo traders can anticipate a much less satisfactory service.

I should like to know more about the method of privatisation. The Department set its face against flotation or management buy-out at an early stage, without giving any good reasons. Some of the reasons advanced in favour of flotation seemed reasonable to me—for instance, the improvement in the company's profitability since the original decision to privatise. It was suggested that that would encourage wider share ownership in Northern Ireland, or encourage local involvement in a management buy-out. The prospect of improved trading and sales was well established.

The Department—including the Minister's predecessor—fell back on the argument that the company was too small to be floated. Can the present Minister—who is also a chartered accountant—explain how Belfast international airport can be too small to be floated as a public company? I see no bar to such action. It must have been decided at some stage that there was a line above which a company could be floated, and below which it could not, on economic grounds. Where was the line in this case?

In a press release issued on 12 August 1993, the Minister's predecessor stated:

"Whilst it is hard to define precisely the floor below which a flotation becomes inadvisable, I am satisfied that this company is too small to float satisfactorily."

Note the wealth of argument and debate in that sentence; note the step-by-step logical process that brought that Minister to his conclusion! In fact, he did not give a single reason for his decision.

I know that the Minister perceived certain inconveniences in flotation, which turned him away from that course. I should be interested to know what value he places on the company; it appears from what was said to justify the decision against flotation that the Government will sell at bargain-basement prices. The Minister continued:

"there are two complications; first, the number of shares to be issued would mean either that many applicants received none, or that each allotment was very small . . . Secondly, because the company is relatively small"—

this is like hiding behind a bush and shaking it at the same time—

"the aftermarket in its shares would be low in volume and hence difficult to manage; selling shares in the company would not be an easy or straightforward process. Again this would disenchant shareholders. Overall, whilst I totally support the general policy of broadening share ownership, I believe in this specific case that the flotation of the company would not serve that policy well."

I am sure that the Minister took good advice on that. I note from the same handout that several consultants were appointed to give that advice, and wonder whether they are putting their names to the statement. I refer to Touche Ross, Alan Burnside Communications and Citigate Communications. It would be interesting to know, incidentally, whether competitive tendering was involved, or the old boys' network. Competitive tendering has been forced on everyone else; why not force it on the Government?

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: In the event of a management-worker buy-out, would shares be offered to management and workers? Would there be no share issue even in those circumstances?

Mr. McGrady: In any flotation, trade sale or management buy-out involving a shareholding company, shares will be involved. They will be passed to the new owner—whether that owner is a corporate body, an individual or a group of individuals, as would obtain in a management buy-out. I see nothing in the Minister's statement rejecting flotation that justifies his decision.

I do not pretend to have a detailed knowledge of this particular case and there may be genuine reasons which can be qualified and quantified. It would be interesting if the Minister gave us the figure above and below which it was decided that a flotation would or would not have succeeded. Will he tell us that, because of X, Y and Z, there should be a trade sale rather than a sale to, as it were, the people of Northern Ireland—either directly to shareholders or through a management-employee buy-out? A sale to the people of Northern Ireland would at least mean that the airport would continue to be operated by the people in the interests of the people.

I read again from the Minister's predecessor's press release and frame a question from the quotation. In relation to encouraging local interests, the press release states:

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"whilst I will not in any way rule out bids from outside Northern Ireland, I am announcing today"—

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"that I will be asking all bidders to include in their proposal what plans they have for local management and control, were they to acquire the airport."

What has been done by way of asking possible bidders about their proposals for local management control were they successful in buying the airport?

Another issue that has taxed and will continue to tax many hon. Members is the problem of policing and security. Those more experienced than I in this respect have already articulated their grave concerns. I have no detailed knowledge, but I know that changes have already taken place. At one time, all airport security was carried out by the airport police. As recently as last summer, the airport police controlled the periphery and the building itself was controlled by a security firm. I do not know whether the security firm has the same rights as the police to stop or hinder me in my progress without my claiming diplomatic or parliamentary immunity, or whatever it is that one does. It is sometimes perplexing to know who is in control of what.

The airport police rightly have responsibility for the security of access to the airport, but, as one trundles through the access gateway, one finds that a security firm takes over responsibility. At the end of the day, however, someone controls those patrolling the area, which was one of the most interesting questions asked by the hon. Member for Antrim, South. He wondered whether there would be a private company police force in addition to the security firms which have sprung up all over the place. Will there be a private company police force that is not accountable to anyone? This is the crunch question that must be answered, but the Minister dealt with it only in passing.

The Minister has made much play of the good relations and efficient service at Belfast airport, and I can certainly vouch for the courtesy of the airport police. The Minister appeared to say that the transition would not cause any problems vis-a-vis the police. Last summer I spoke to a couple of policemen; I did not do so in an official capacity as I was merely passing through. One of them told me that 23 of his colleagues had applied for early redundancy because of the changes, because of their total dissatisfaction with their lot and with the security companies being brought in and because their future was a wholly unknown quantity. It is important that this aspect of the order is explained before we are asked to pass judgment.

Belfast international airport has a good reputation. It is an attractive, easy and open place and has all the things which an airport should have but which many of them do not have. If the order is passed, I fear that all that is good about the airport will be lost to the people of Northern Ireland for the sake of a balance sheet exercise by a company that is interested only in making a profit.

The airport is a public utility. No matter what legislation is passed, it can never be a private concern. If privatised, it would be a public utility run by a private company, and a public utility must always take account of the needs of the people. The privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity was a mistake because it failed the people, as did privatisation of British Telecom and other privatisations. I fear that that will happen in this case, and for that reason, I and my colleagues in the Social Democratic and Labour party will oppose the order.

4.55 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I, too, hope that the House will reject the order. In the coming minutes, I hope to explain the objectionable nature of the order, which has serious implications not only for the people of Northern Ireland but for everyone in the United Kingdom in relation to employment rights and policing.

It is nonsense that we should examine extensive and detailed legislation in this way. This must be the only country in western Europe in which major legislation can be passed after only a brief debate in the legislature without hon. Members having the opportunity to amend or scrutinise it. I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) who drew attention to article 18 which has serious implications for civil liberties and also empowers an airport official—not a policeman—to act in such a way as to put him in danger.

In addition, it is simply bad policy. If the legislation were to receive a proper Second Reading or Committee stage, either here or in some devolved Assembly, we could not only probe the Minister's thinking but perhaps persuade him to accept amendments. However, that is not possible because of the crackpot way in which we deal with Northern Ireland legislation. If the order is passed, we shall be making bad law and we shall not be serving the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland.

The order will permit or trigger the sale of Belfast international airport. I oppose the sale in principle because the airport is the gateway to the Province. It is a public utility and should be legitimately exploited on behalf of the economy and the people of Northern Ireland and retained in public ownership. I have been pleasantly surprised by the amount of pride felt in Northern Ireland for the airport, which is a prestigious enterprise.

Other hon. Members have referred to the lack of an airport policy for Northern Ireland. I can only say, "Hear, hear," but it fits in with the absence of a coherent airport policy for the rest of the United Kingdom. It is crazy that there are no plans for the growth of airports in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. That absence reflects the Government's general lack of interest and will create problems not only in my part of the country—the south-east of England—but in Northern Ireland.

Belfast city airport is a growing enterprise and there will soon be a prestigious and worthwhile development at Derry. I wish both projects well. The growth in airport provision, however, must be planned if it is not to cause problems for users and workers. To let airports grow willy-nilly is profoundly foolish. The absence of a coherent strategy will cause difficulties.

Madam Speaker, the order is a precursor to the sale of Belfast harbour seaport, which is provided for under the Ports Act 1991. I fear that, relatively soon, we shall have a similar debate in which we shall protest about the arbitrary way in which the Government will trigger the sale of the seaport without any examination by Parliament of the ramifications for workers and the community of Northern Ireland and its effect on the economy of the United Kingdom and of Ireland. I regret that. Even at this

stage, the Government should consider introducing a substantive Bill that includes their proposals for the sale of the airport and the disposal of the seaport.

Madam Speaker, the Minister——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he has referred to me as Madam Speaker rather a lot. It is gracious of him, but I am a Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mackinlay: I apologise. Such was my anger and passion that I had failed to notice that you had occupied the Chair, Madam Speaker—*[Interruption.]* I mean Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Minister prayed in aid the sale of the port of Tilbury, which is in my constituency. It will not surprise hon. Members to hear that I know something about the history of the legislation that led to that sale and its consequences for the port's work force and police officers. The Government preferred and encouraged a so-called management-employee buy-out. They said that, even if they received a bid that was superior to that of the management and employees, they would, within certain limitations, discriminate in favour of the management-employee bid.

Subsequently, there was a management-employee buy-out at the port of Tilbury and, under the same legislation, a similar sale occurred across the river at Medway. The work forces of those ports were given shares, as part of the supposed "democratic process" of encouraging people to have an interest in the enterprise of their company. They were also encouraged to purchase further shares. I see that the Minister is acknowledging that that is probably what the Government also have in mind for the sale of the Northern Ireland international airport.

Many of the workers who purchased shares have since been made redundant. They feel deceived because, under the provisions of the sale and the ground rules on the purchase of shares, they had to sell them back immediately on redundancy, despite the fact that some had borrowed and others had invested their savings to acquire the shares. If the Minister believes that I am wrong to suggest that that strategy may be followed for the sale of the airport, he should give an assurance that if employees buy shares in Belfast international airport, and leave its employment or are made redundant, they will continue to hold the shares under a scheme created by the order.

The Minister said that the order would bring practices at the Northern Ireland international airport in line with those at airports in the rest of the United Kingdom, which had been disposed of some years previously. That assurance does not extend to policing. Policing at airports under the private ownership of BAA is still provided by public agencies. BAA is required to purchase the service of the police. At Heathrow airport, the service is provided by the Metropolitan police, at Gatwick by the Sussex constabulary, at Stansted by the Essex constabulary and at Glasgow by, I understand, Strathclyde police.

Mr. Stott: What about Greater Manchester?

Mr. Mackinlay: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who reminds me that Greater Manchester police provide policing at Manchester airport, which used to have a separate constabulary. It was deemed proper—I agree with this as a matter of public policy—that it should be merged into the Greater Manchester police because, for security reasons and to maintain the operational independence of the police, it should not be controlled by people who had a commercial interest in promoting airport enterprise.

The Minister is not bringing policing of the international airport into line with that at other airports but, unfortunately, he will bring it into line with the position at the port of Tilbury. The Port of London Authority police, a proud force and the second oldest police force in this country, which used to police the port of Tilbury, was privatised and is now under the ownership and control of the Port of Tilbury company. That was most distressing to police officers. I know from conversations with officers at the Northern Ireland airport that the suggestion that they should be sold like chattels and a piece of airport equipment is repugnant to them. They are proud of their public office of constable. It is barmy and wrong as a matter of principle that they should be controlled by a private company.

Officers at Northern Ireland airports have seen what has happened at the port of Tilbury and realise that they will lose out in terms of pay and conditions. After a year or two, the Port of London Authority police lost their linkage with the pay and conditions of service of the county constabulary. The pay and conditions of service of the Northern Ireland airport police are linked to those of the RUC. As night turns into day, I am sure that that link will be lost. I hope that the Minister will reassure the police in Northern Ireland that I am wrong and that pay and conditions of service will continue to be linked to those of the RUC.

The Government have totally disregarded the work force of Belfast international airport and its police officers. There has not been any meaningful consultation. Discussions have been prompted by and held under the auspices of the hon. Member for Antrim, South and my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), who took the initiative of taking police officers to see the Minister to discuss the matter. So far as I am aware, however, there was no direct consultation of representatives of the police apart from that discussion. Moreover, from what I can ascertain, there has been a total absence of consultation with the trade unions representing the work force at the airport.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is no plan to include on the new security committee any representative from the police association at the airport?

Mr. Mackinlay: I am, indeed, aware of that. Even if the Government are determined to privatise the police force at the airport, I find it amazing that they do not propose to allow police association representation on the security committee. Moreover, so far as I am aware, the chief officer of police will not be an ex officio member of that committee. I find that both breathtaking and profoundly foolish.

There is one other matter that I believe would have been examined in greater detail had the contents of the order been taken as a Bill; indeed, I suspect that the Government might have reflected on it and amended the legislation. I refer to the position of the representative body of police officers. At present, the Northern Ireland airport police officers have an association. They have sought the status of

[Mr. Mackinlay]

federation but, for reasons which I do not understand, the Government have declined to grant it in statute. That is bad enough.

By the same token, however, the Northern Ireland Airport Police Association does not have the status of a trade union. There is, therefore, a massive void in respect of not only the status of the police officers' representative body but its legal position and capacity to protect and promote the interests of its members collectively and individually. I suspect that the Government are not being malevolent in this; they are simply incompetent. The parliamentary draftspersons and Ministers have not examined the issue sufficiently. I fear that a degree of arrogance may be involved as well. It is wrong that these police officers should have the protection neither of a federation nor of a trade union. I suspect that that situation is unique not just in the United Kingdom but among advanced western democracies.

It is within the Government's capacity to give the airport police proper status, preferably as a federation.

The Minister implied that the Royal Ulster Constabulary was happy with the policing arrangements. I venture to suggest that that is not so. I think that the RUC was asked, "If the police force at Northern Ireland airport is privatised, will you help to monitor police standards to ensure that they are adequate?" One would expect the Chief Constable to say, "Yes, I will do my best." But there is no evidence to suggest that the RUC considers the privatisation of a police force to be a good thing. It is a breathtaking suggestion.

Every police officer in the land—from constable to chief officer—is appalled at the suggestion that any police force should be privatised. It is bad in principle; it is bad as a matter of public policy; and it misleads the public who, not unreasonably, assume that someone in a police uniform is a public servant and independent. Any police officer in the United Kingdom would regard privatisation as a regrettable departure from the traditions of British policing, which have endured for 170 years. The police will fear that the privatisation of the police at the port of London in Tilbury and at Northern Ireland's international airport constitutes a dummy run for the privatisation of other police functions elsewhere in the United Kingdom. That is a real danger, and I believe that that will be the view of police officers everywhere.

The Minister has not told the House—but I will—that the chairman of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland, which represents the RUC, wrote to the Minister's predecessor in June 1993:

"My Central Committee have voiced concern about the future of the Belfast Airport Police with the prospect of an armed and trained Police service coming under the control of a civilian Board of Directors . . . Once privatised, the Airport will be completely commercially driven in its priorities and, not unnaturally, we cannot help but be anxious about the maintenance of the quality and scope of the Police service at the airport."

That sums up the legitimate fears not just of police officers in Northern Ireland but of any sensible member of the public, who would be horrified to know that a privatised police service was armed. We are being run by a barmy army, which proposes to privatise an armed police force in an area that is critical in security terms. Will the Minister even now pause to reflect on whether the order should be withdrawn so that the issue of policing can be the subject of further consultation and consideration?

Who will decide what is the correct operational strength and rank structure for the force at the airport after privatisation? Will it be the company or the RUC? How will that structure be enforced? I understand that, at present, the Northern Ireland airport police can check out vehicles via the police computer. They do not have direct access but can go through the proper channels at the RUC. Will the airport police still have comparable access to the police computer after privatisation? If so, I am not sure that it is good public policy. If not, how can they police properly? Either situation is undesirable and reinforces my argument that we should not privatise the police and that they should remain independent of the airport operators.

I have already referred to the police officers' pay and conditions of service. Unfortunately, there is evidence to show that there will not be protection. Will the pay and conditions of police officers employed in the force continue to be linked to those of the RUC?

I asked in an intervention whether the constables would have to be resworn. That is not an insignificant point. Article 19 of the order states:

"An airport operator authorised in that behalf by the Secretary of State may appoint any person employed by the operator to be a constable on the airport managed by that operator."

That seems to suggest that existing police officers, who are proud of their office of constable and many of whom have given lengthy service to the police force at the airport and to the RUC before, will suffer the indignity of having to swear again when the privatised company takes them over as part of the airport furniture and fittings.

The draftsmen have not taken account of that point. I suspect that, unless the provisions are clarified, embarrassment may arise and the powers of police officers who act as constables after privatisation may be challenged if they have not resworn. That illustrates the clumsy and sloppy way in which the order is presented to the House. There is certainly no clarity on that point. I am told that, as part of the exercise leading up to the order, there was a so-called "keypoint" survey to examine what should be the policing needs in terms of location, numbers and costs at the airport after privatisation.

I realise that, by definition, such a document must be kept confidential, but I had hoped that the Minister would make that document available to the Northern Ireland Airport Police Association, because its officers and members will have to fulfil the policing functions. That is a further area where a moral obligation is not being fulfilled by the Government—to consult the people who will have to carry out the policing functions at the airport. It is wrong that there has been no disclosure at least of some of the main points in that survey to the police officers' representative body.

There is a danger with the method of sale that the Minister prefers. Although I am opposed to privatisation, I believe that a floatation would have been more appropriate, because at least the people of Northern Ireland would have had a slice of the action. One could argue that, after a flotation, the airport would still be partly within the ownership of the people of Northern Ireland. Under a sale, which I think the Minister proposes, there is no guarantee that there will be a maintenance of any Northern Ireland interests in the ownership and control of that airport. What is more worrying is that we have no idea who will purchase the airport.

I have expressed some concern and scepticism about so-called management-employee buy-outs, because my

experience at Tilbury is that the employee part of the buy-out is really a sham or a cosmetic exercise and not worth a bag of beans. Many people painfully found that they lost their jobs as well as their shares after a while. Nevertheless, such a buy-out has some continuity and identity with existing arrangements. At Belfast, things might not work out as the Minister intends. Some other enterprise or entrepreneur without loyalty to Northern Ireland, this country or western Europe might purchase the airport. What guarantee is there about the people who might purchase or own and control the airport? If it is purchased initially under the auspices of a management-employee buy-out, it could be sold again in the not-too-distant furture to another party.

The recurring theme of the debate this afternoon is about what will happen to the police. Heaven forbid, a Robert Maxwell type could purchase the airport. I would not want him to have ownership and control of a police force. One can think of other people. The mind boggles at the idea that they should be able to control and maintain a police force. Quite apart from the dangers of impropriety and undue pressure put on police wishing to maintain their independence, there is also a danger that they will be demeaned and abused, for instance as little more than commissionaires, as a front to the enterprise rather than as professional police officers.

What the Minister has so far rejected—I think that he should reflect on this—is that there are alternatives to the sale of the police force. The alternatives are to maintain the force within the ownership and control of the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment and for the officers to be leased out, as happens at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Glasgow and Manchester. They should stay under public control—Government control—and the costs should be charged to the new airport operators, thus maintaining their independence.

The airport police could have been absorbed into the RUC. Parallels occurred some years ago at Heathrow when the British Airports Authority police merged with the Metropolitan police and at Manchester when the airport police merged with the Greater Manchester police. The Government have spurned those alternatives. I hope that, even at this late stage, the Minister will reconsider and see that that is in the interests of the Government, the people of Northern Ireland and the proud police officers who feel insulted about the way in which they will be treated should privatisation go through.

I return to a point which concerns me and other hon. Members. If the Government glibly sell off the professional police officers at Tilbury in Essex and in Northern Ireland, who are proud of their office, are those not dummy runs for the sale of police officers' functions elsewhere in the United Kingdom, such as the motorway police? Would not there be a replacement of police officers in public control by static security guards elsewhere? The Minister cannot pretend that that fear is not being uttered by police officers throughout Britain. There is a profound fear that that will happen unless the Government are prevented from going ahead with privatisation of the police force under the order. For those reasons, I hope that either the Minister will take the order back or that the House of Commons will throw it out.

5.25 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): But for world war two, the part of the airfield that was vested from my grandfather would have eventually passed to me. That might, in certain circumstances, have meant that I would have had to declare an interest. Now my hands are clean. I am not the landlord of the airfield. I hope that that does something to relieve the anxieties of my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe).

I derive some satisfaction from article 17 of the order, which no doubt echoes the Aerodromes Act (Northern Ireland) 1971. The article confers on district councils various powers, such as the acquisition of land, planning restrictions on structures in line with flight paths and—this is important—providing or improving road links.

I know that the present Minister, whom we are delighted to welcome to the Northern Ireland debate, even if it is only on an Order in Council, will not mind my mentioning that a predecessor of his in 1977 gave a solemn undertaking on behalf of the then Government that the missing link to the present airport would be completed within some six months. That was when the original road was closed for security reasons. It was not until my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South took over that area from me —and, therefore, represented it far more effectively—that the Department of the Environment got round to constructing the link after all those years.

I do not know whether the Minister has been there ceremonially to open it, but he would have been able to drive along it on the way to the airport. It is commonly known as the Killeen bypass. It is a great consolation to know that the district councils will have an important role, if not all the say, in providing and improving the road links.

Article 20 brings district councils into the picture, because it specifies and interprets the meaning of a district council in terms of the order. Article 20(2)(c) says:

"the district council in whose district the airport or any part thereof is situated or whose district is in the locality of the airport"

will have certain roles to play in the consultation at least. If consultation is to be effective, that means that adjacent district councils will have some input into the working of the airport under the new management. I freely concede that that will mainly mean Antrim borough council. However, may I put in a commercial for my Lisburn borough council which, like Newtownabbey borough council, is covered by the phrase

"or whose district is in the locality of the airport".

I suppose that Lisburn and Newtownabbey could claim that they are under the flight path. Aircraft taking off from either set of runways pass over those two districts in a short time, even before they retract the undercarriage. My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South does not have a monopoly on consultation here.

Article 20 deals with consultation. I have mentioned the district councils and the Minister mentioned the provision for consultation with the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland. I am especially interested in article 20(2)(a), which refers to consultation with "users of the airport". That might seem to be a very natural concession because without users, it would be difficult to justify the existence, never mind the policing, of an airport. However, we are setting up a body that in some ways resembles the controlling authority at Heathrow; it is not an exact replica,

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

but it is near enough for the purpose. My next point has a direct bearing on the effectiveness or otherwise of consultation with users.

I sought to engage in consultation when the Belfast lounge was moved from gate 49 to gates 8 to 10, which is a much more remote location in the Heathrow complex. At the time, only one little insignificant sign was provided to indicate where the new Belfast lounges and gates were. Such was the volume of complaints from constituents—my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South and others had a similar volume of complaints—that I wrote to the authority pleading that signs be provided similar to those indicating Glasgow, Edinburgh and Manchester, which was not an unreasonable request.

I received a rather high-handed reply which stated that it was considered that the signposting was adequate, but that, in the light of my representations, it would be reviewed. It was reviewed and the result was that the one remaining sign was removed entirely, leaving no signs—a situation which still exists. In the spirit of Christmas, I volunteered to purchase 20 posters if the airport authorities would put them up. They declined that offer and we still have no indication for first-time travellers of where they can find the aircraft heading for the airport that we are now discussing.

The British Airports Authority, as a result of other representations made by the Aldergrove airport authorities, various institutions and trade organisations in Northern Ireland, retaliated by making the situation worse. I do not imagine that the British Airports Authority will bother to read *Hansard*. If it does, it will take a delight in ignoring the wishes of the majority of users. However, I hope that the consultation process provided for Aldergrove airport will be much more effective. I hope that the Minister and his Department will ensure that the users' wishes and views are not ignored as they are currently being ignored at Heathrow.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) apologised for his late arrival. I had the problem of being delayed for a few hours this morning. Others of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues may be late and some of my colleagues will be late. A telephone message from my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) was passed to me a few minutes ago. He was engaged this morning in consultations about the draft Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 and left shortly after lunch to get here.

All those hon. Members have been delayed because of what I can only describe as imaginary snow at Heathrow. My flight was delayed for nearly two hours and we were told that the delay would last until the Heathrow runways were cleared of heavy snow. Hon. Members can imagine our surprise as we descended from west of the airfield and we saw that all the roads, even little country roads, were absolutely clear, as was the M25.

What sector of that cumbersome, incompetent authority decided, with no justification, to cancel flights, to divert flights and to delay flights, thus throwing the whole pattern of the day into utter confusion? I imagine from the signals being transmitted in various parts of the Chamber that a little confusion has also affected various Whips Offices.

We can only hope that the equivalent authority created by the order will be more realistic, more competent and more considerate of users than is the present Heathrow body. We can hope—I hope not in vain—that Aldergrove's reputation for efficiency and user friendliness will not be damaged by the legislation which we are being asked to endorse, but which we shall not willingly endorse.

5.35 pm

Mr. Tim Smith: We have had a useful and constructive debate——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he needs the leave of the House to speak again.

Mr. Smith: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. With the leave of the House, I wish to respond to the debate.

We have had a constructive and useful debate. I have listened with great care to all the contributions. I understand that some hon. Members oppose privatisation in principle. There have also been a large number of detailed questions which I shall do my best to address. If, when I examine the *Hansard* report in more detail, I find that I have not addressed any specific questions, I shall write to the hon. Member concerned.

I share the reservations that have been expressed about this procedure. I share the reservations about the fact that we have to consider a privatisation measure by means of the Order in Council procedure. I share the concerns about the consequences that flow from that and about the fact that it is not possible for hon. Members to table amendments, which makes it difficult for us to discuss matters of detail. However, I am afraid that it is not practical in every case for the Government to introduce Bills to cover such provisions. I am sorry about the fact that it is just not a practical proposition.

The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) talked about airport development in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland, with its population of 1·5 million, is remarkably well served. We could have a rather interesting debate about whether Belfast city airport and Belfast international airport are complementary or in competition. I suspect that there is an element of each in the service they afford to customers. The provision for a population of 1·5 million is rather satisfactory and offers customers considerable choice.

The hon. Member for Wigan was concerned about the European regional development fund money. I had not seen the letter from Bruce Millan, although I have now read it with care. On the face of it, it appears to conflict with the advice that we have received from the Commission. I believe that the explanation is as follows. The ERDF grant was paid at the rate of 50 per cent., which is the rate that is paid to private sector operators. It will be open to the airport to claim grant at that rate when it is privatised. In practice, although there may be a potential threat, I do not believe that there is any real threat of the money being clawed back by the Commission. I hope that that explanation is helpful.

The hon. Member for Wigan talked about the market value of the airport. That value is what someone is prepared to pay for it in an open market. We have had 10 serious expressions of interest, so there is no shortage of interest. What we cannot do is to meet all the different concerns that have been expressed. Price will obviously be very important. I was pressed earlier by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who said that we

should get the best value for money for the taxpayers and that, if we did not, we would be in trouble with the Public Accounts Committee.

Other hon. Members pressed me on other considerations, such as the need to ensure that there is a local interest and consideration of a management-employee buy-out. We shall have to weigh up all the different factors and make the best decision. I should like a bid to succeed which has some local interest. We have encouraged a management-employment buy-out to the extent of providing it with some help. That bidder will be considered along with all the others.

We have heard a lot in the debate about policing. At present, policing levels at the airport are determined by management. They will continue to be determined by management when it is privatised, but under the supervision of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. There cannot be any question of management suddenly deciding to make a 50 per cent. cut in policing at the airport. That would not be acceptable to the RUC, which will continue to have a supervisory role.

The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. MacKinlay) suggested that there may be a conflict—that perhaps an instruction given to a police constable may be based not on the best policing but on the convenience of management. Frankly, if that sort of thing happened, the RUC would take a considerable interest in it. If it continued, the Secretary of State would have to step in. As I said, he has considerable powers to step in and, indeed, take over policing of the airport if necessary. The existence of that sanction, and the knowledge that it exists, will deter any private sector operator from behaving in that arbitrary way in the first place.

Mr. Mackinlay: The scenario described by the Minister does not protect the individual police officer. At the moment, if he is given an unlawful or improper instruction he is put in a most invidious position. As I said, police officers do not have protection that is comparable to that of other workers—a federation or a trade union. The Minister is not providing the capacity for an individual police officer to behave with the utmost propriety, as is his wish, if an employer wishes to give an improper instruction.

Mr. Smith: I understand that, but it is the situation which prevails at present. It would be equally possible for the present management to behave in that way, but they do not do so because they know that it is not acceptable—it would not be acceptable to the RUC. I do not believe that a policeman is likely to be put in that position, for the reasons that I have given.

The hon. Member for Wigan asked about other workers at the airport. The answer is that the TUPE provisions will apply and their pension rights will be preserved. They will be transferred when the company is privatised.

The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) asked about pension arrangements, so perhaps I can deal with that matter now. There is a small deficit in the pension fund at present which is being made up by increased contributions from the employer. The pension scheme will be transferred to the new company and the pension rights of existing employees will be preserved in the process.

The hon. Member for Wigan asked who has the ultimate responsibility for security at the airport. The answer is that the airport operator has responsibility at present, and will do so when the airport is privatised. The hon. Gentleman also asked who will pay for security. The answer is that the airport operator pays for security at present, and will be required to do so in the future. There cannot be any question of the airport operator cutting back on security costs simply for commercial reasons in an attempt to increase profit. That will not be acceptable. The operator will have to provide the level of security that is agreed with the RUC.

The hon. Member for Antrim, South was good enough to thank my Department's officials and, indeed, my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), for the detailed discussions that have taken place and I am grateful for what he said. He wanted to know whether we would simply sell the airport to the highest bidder. As I said, price will obviously play an important part, but there are other considerations, and one of the most important is the question of a local element. A management-employee buy-out will be considered carefully, together with all the other bids.

The hon. Gentleman referred to some specific provisions in the order, including article 18(3)(i), which refers to an airport official or a constable requiring a person to leave the airport. That is a repetition of what we already have in law both in Northern Ireland and Great Britain, so there is nothing special or peculiar about that. It applies to all airports—there is nothing special about it in this case.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to article 20(2)(c) and the words "which affects their interests". One should not read too much into that. Obviously, we want to establish good consultative arrangements with everyone who has an interest in the operation of the airport, whether it is the users or the district councils representing those who are affected by its operations. We want to find the best way forward, and it will be for the airport operator to establish satisfactory relations. Obviously, it will be in the operator's interest to have good relations with all these interests. That is not particularly limiting because, obviously, people will be put on bodies because they represent specific interests in the community.

I have dealt with the questions raised by the hon. Gentleman about the pension scheme. Perhaps I can move on to his points about policing and the control exercised by the Northern Ireland Office. He talked about a conflict. As I said, a conflict could arise at present. However, I do not believe that it will arise, for the reasons that I have given. The hon. Gentleman asked whether security will be maintained at the highest level. It will be maintained at the level necessary to ensure that the airport is properly protected, just as it is at present. In that sense, I do not believe that there will be any change in the arrangements.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the Secretary of State would have power to direct the owners to meet security standards. Effectively, I believe that that will be so. Indirectly, the Secretary of State will have that power. The hon. Gentleman asked whether he might have access to the security committee. The answer is yes. I cannot give a lot of details about the security committee, but, certainly, the hon. Gentleman will have access to it. I do not know what the committee will be called. The question about the name did not apply to the committee—it applied to the name of the police force. I am not able to say whether there will be a new title for the police force; it will be a matter for the operator.

I was asked whether there will be a formal agreement with the union representing the airport police. The answer

[Mr. Smith]

is that there will be a contractual arrangement which will be put in the prospectus, so it will be a clear condition that any bidder must accept as part of making a bid.

Mr. Mackinlay: I am sorry to labour this point, but the police officers do not have a trade union or federation. Their representative organisation is the association, but it has no statutory base. The police have asked the Government to give the association a statutory base, but they have failed to do so. It is grossly unfair, inept and dangerous to the police and, ultimately, the Government and the airport operator.

Mr. Smith: I am sorry if I called it a union—it is the association. It will be protected in the way that I have described: there will be a contractual arrangement which will be set out in the prospectus, and any prospective bidder will have to accept it. That is how members of the association and their interests will be protected.

The hon. Member for Antrim, South asked about Belfast city airport. I understand that. Although it is not what we are discussing today, it is relevant. The hon. Gentleman was right to point to the success of that airport and the fact that it has forecast 1·2 million passengers this year—a substantial rate of growth.

Obviously, that airport has produced some problems. If there are problems with noise levels, we will need to look at that issue. Certainly, there are problems with road traffic and the hon. Gentleman described some of them to the House. The problems of access to the airport and so on are already the subject of discussions at an official level. We must consider precisely what we will do about that, because there have been problems with the traffic recently. Those who are responsible for roads are examining the problem to see what we can do about it.

Mr. Stott: On the subject of Belfast city airport, I am not pressing the Minister to disclose at the Dispatch Box whether the owner of the city airport, Bombardier, could be a potential bidder for the international airport. However, will the Minister state whether the bid would be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission if that were to be the case?

Mr. Smith: I can help the hon. Gentleman on that point. At one time, Bombardier considered making a bid, but it is not doing so. I think that it understood that it would have the kind of difficulties to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Before the Minister leaves the issue of the security committee, can he tell the House who the chairman of that committee will be?

Mr. Smith: I am unable to do so at the moment. I do not think that it would be appropriate to do so. [HON. MEMBERS: "Is he a Tory?"] One must be cautious with security issues. I will see whether I can provide more information on the matter for the hon. Gentleman later.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) was also concerned about the Order in Council procedure, which I have tried to deal with. He does not like privatisation either, and he said that Northern Ireland had not benefited from it. It is a little too early to judge the success or failure of Northern Ireland Electricity.

British Telecom was privatised in 1984 and subscribers in Northern Ireland have benefited from that privatisation, as have subscribers in the rest of the United Kingdom, even if there is no competition. Telephone bills have come down by 20 per cent. in real terms and further cuts were announced the other day. A result of those cuts is that the peak morning rate has been abolished. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) does not like good news, but this is good news for the consumer and it has come directly as a result of the Government's privatisation policy and increased competition.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Are the Government saying that electricity bills in Northern Ireland will go down by 20 per cent?

Mr. Smith: I am certainly not saying that——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before we continue, I should point out that this matter is not really germane to the debate. Passing reference to the subject may be made, but it should not make up the substantial part of the debate.

Mr. Smith: I am simply saying that it is too early to judge, as far as Northern Ireland Electricity is concerned. I will leave it at that.

The hon. Member for South Down also referred to the fact that the airport is first class, and that it had had major refurbishment. I agree with that, and it will be even better when it is privatised. Those involved will be even more concerned to provide good service to the customer, without which one cannot maximise profits. The airport will have access to private capital markets to increase investment, and there will be more management freedom. As a result, everybody who uses the airport will benefit from privatisation.

The hon. Gentleman was concerned about the method of sale and I understand that he would have liked a flotation. It was a difficult judgment to make, and we were concerned with the size of the proceeds of the sale. That will be examined carefully by the Public Accounts Committee. I could point to a number of trade sales—for example, Sealink and Royal Ordnance—which have raised considerably more than the Belfast airport is likely to raise. it is impossible to say exactly what the threshold is. A different judgment has to be made in each case. This case was carefully considered, and the judgment was reached that a trade sale was the most appropriate means in the particular case.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about consultants, and I can assure him that a competitive tender was engaged in for each appointment, as is always the case in such matters.

Mr. McGrady: May I refer to a matter to which I thought the Minister would return concerning security? He is aware that the police at Belfast international airport do not now service the building area, and that that has been taken over by a security firm. What responsibilities previously exercised by the police are now exercised by the security firm? Is the level of security the same where the police are no longer involved? Are the police or the security firm responsible to the present employers in exactly the same way?

Mr. Smith: The police are responsible for the security of the entire airport; that situation has not changed. It will not change following privatisation, even if a private firm is

operating in a part of the airport area. I will certainly provide the hon. Gentleman with more details on that matter if necessary.

The hon. Member for Thurrock talked a great deal about policing at airports in Great Britain, but I think that he misunderstood what I said. I did not suggest that arrangements would be the same in Belfast international airport as they are in Great Britain. I have gone to great lengths to try to explain why that is not the case. We have satisfactory arrangements, and all we are doing is transferring them during the privatisation. I am not in favour of change for change's sake. We have good arrangements, and they will be continued.

The hon. Gentleman was, on the whole, rather inclined to exaggerate the consequences of the matter. I understand his concern about the pay and conditions of people who work at the airport, and in particular the police. Those are presently matters for the management, as they will continue to be after privatisation.

The hon. Gentleman was also concerned that the association does not have trade union status. It does have negotiating status, and surely that is important. That negotiating status will come by virtue of a contractual arrangement, and its rights are enhanced by the order. If the hon. Gentleman looks at clause 19(5), he will see that that is the case.

The hon. Gentleman asked about future owners, and what would happen if the purchaser were to sell the airport to another owner. We have full protection. In the prospectus, we will have effectively a golden share, so we have control. It is vital for security reasons that we have that control.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) referred to the "missing link". I am glad that we have, as a result of his efforts, the missing link to the airport. He also talked about the consultation process and the importance in particular of consulting the users of the airport. I agree with him, and I sympathise with his experience at Heathrow. I hope that we will be able to do better at Belfast international.

It is in the interests of any airport operator that it should properly consult the users. They are, after all, the customers of the airport. Those customers have a choice of which airport to use on some routes, and we will want to ensure that users are properly represented on any consultative committee and that their views are properly considered.

I hope that I have answered all the points raised in the debate. The Government strongly support the concept of privatisation. In this case, it will bring great benefits to the customers of the airport. The airport will have access to the private capital markets, and it will have the freedom to manage. That will be in the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland, and of all those who use the airport.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 270, Noes 224.

Division No. 121] **[5.57 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers

Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm

Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Don Dixon.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Airports (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 9 December, be approved.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I regret to say that I missed the last Division and the reason for that is simple. My office is on the farthest point of Millbank and, as I came straight out of my office after the Division bell went, the lifts were not working properly. I had to walk all the way down the stairs. I came straight here, to find that the doors were locked. Can I ask you to inquire into whether it is practical for Members who have to come from Millbank to do so within eight minutes?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I sympathise with the hon. Member and anyone else caught in that way. I will ensure that that point is passed on to the proper authorities.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I also noticed that tonight two Members rushed through the counted Lobby when the doors were being closed on our side. As I was the Whip responsible for the counting on the Opposition side, the doors were closed, and therefore Members on the Opposition side were denied the opportunity to vote and made no attempt to walk through the counting area. I hope that the hon. Members who had gone through the counted area in the Aye Lobby were not included in the vote, because it denied the right to Members coming in late to the Opposition Lobby.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes. It is obviously not in my personal knowledge because I cannot see what is happening. If, however, doors are open and people walk through them, obviously they will have been included in the vote. I cannot make further comments without greater knowledge than I now have. I thank the hon. Member for mentioning the point.

Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland)

6.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tim Smith): I beg to move,

That the draft Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 9th December, be approved.

My noble Friend Baroness Denton, who has responsibility for health and personal social services in Northern Ireland, introduced the order in another place on 31 January and it is my pleasure to introduce it to the House this evening.

The purpose of the draft order is to enable health and social services trusts in Northern Ireland to carry out certain statutory functions which, at the moment, are the legal responsibility of the health and social services boards. The order is a local solution to a local problem. Hon. Members who were present at the Northern Ireland Committee debate on 20 January may recall that some of the issues involved were mentioned on that occasion.

It may be helpful to the House if I comment briefly on the background to the order and the present organisation of the services in the province. Both those points are important if one is to have an understanding of the need for the legislation.

In Northern Ireland, health and personal social services were integrated into one structure in 1973. We have therefore had an integrated service for more than 20 years. During that period, the services have been provided by four health and social services boards. That integrated system has served Northern Ireland well through 20 turbulent years and the people of the Province are—quite justifiably—proud of that unique service. The draft order seeks to preserve that integration and to enable services to continue more or less in their present form. It is needed only to remedy a weakness in the existing law and not because the present services are deficient in any way.

The Government's reforms for health and social services provided for the separation of the purchase and provision of services. The Health and Personal Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 redefined the role of the four boards as being responsible, primarily, for assessing the needs of their populations and commissioning services to meet those needs. The order provided for units to be established as health and social services trusts—fully independent of board management, but wholly in the statutory sector.

However, although the 1991 order enabled trusts to be established and allowed boards to contract with them for services, it did not permit trusts to carry out certain functions associated with those services, except for mental health functions, for which specific provision was made. Those functions flow from a range of existing legislation, such as the Children and Young Persons Act 1968 and the Adoption Order 1987. Some are sensitive powers, involving the restriction of civil liberties—the taking of a child into care, for example. That legislative weakness prevents some units, such as those providing personal social services, from becoming fully operational as trusts. The order is concerned with putting that right.

In bringing forward the order, we have aimed to provide a legal framework for the discharge of functions by trusts which ensures clarity about where responsibility lies and

[Mr. Tim Smith]

secures full accountability for the work undertaken by trusts. Within that framework, the order enables boards, with the approval of the Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland, to delegate certain statutory functions, which will be specified by the Department, to health and social services trusts. The functions involved were set out in the explanatory document published last summer, along with the proposal for legislation. A copy of the draft regulations dealing with them were placed in the Library when the order was laid on 9 December.

The order allows trusts to carry out those functions and makes provision for schemes to be agreed between trusts and boards on the way in which the functions are to be carried out.

Since the proposal for legislation was published last June, many people have voiced concern about its effect on services, particularly in relation to the protection of children. Some have expressed doubts about the accountability of trusts within the new arrangements. Questions about fragmentation and inequality of provision have also been raised.

My noble Friend Baroness Denton and her predecessor Lord Arran considered very carefully the concerns raised and devoted much time and effort to explaining the issues to people. It is fair to say that many of the concerns stemmed from a misunderstanding about the role of trusts and about the new role of the boards to which I have already referred. Perhaps I can clarify these points for the House.

Health and social services trusts are state bodies established firmly within the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland. They are fully accountable for all that they do and they are closely monitored by the Department and by the boards. They are not independent companies and are bound by the same guidance as governs the operation of boards at present.

For their part, the boards—freed from any involvement in the day-to-day management of the services—can concentrate on improving the health and social well-being of their populations through the contracts they agree with trusts and setting the agenda for them in terms of quality of service, standards of care and equity of provision.

The Government accept that people have anxieties and concerns. They are genuinely held, but they have not been ignored. Regardless of which side of the debate one is on, we have one thing in common: concern for the welfare of children and other vulnerable groups in our society.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will the Minister discuss the financial implications of the proposal? The matter has been raised in the Lords and it has also been raised by many people in Northern Ireland. According to the figures that we have been given about the 12 trusts, the chairmen of the trusts will receive £15,000 a year and each of the five board members will receive £5,000 a year. We have been told that that amounts to between £1 million and £2 million which will be required to finance the procedure. Would not that money be better used to keep the present structure, which has provided such a good service to the people of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Smith: I agree that the present structure has provided an excellent service to the people of Northern Ireland. However, there is always room for improvement. The right way to achieve that is by making a clear distinction between purchaser and provider. Of course, the members of those boards and the chairmen will be remunerated, but the costs will not be substantial when one considers the huge scope for securing improvements in value for money and better service delivery to patients. The figures quoted by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) must be placed in the context of total health spending in the Province.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Surely the point made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North should be pursued on the basis that the 12 new quangos are in addition to the existing personnel who will be retained in the various boards dealing with personal and social services? There must be an enormous increase in the establishment costs appertaining to this exercise.

Mr. Smith: I was not seeking to suggest that there was not an increase in costs. I accepted the figures given by the hon. Member for Antrim, North. However, I said that I thought that that cost was fully justified in securing better value for money and better quality of service for patients and other users of the social services. I strongly believe that to be true, just as it is true in the rest of the United Kingdom with regard to the Government's national health service reforms.

Before the interventions, I said that the thing that we have in common is our concern for the welfare of children and other vulnerable groups in our society. For that reason, the trusts and boards concerned have been working very hard to establish procedures that will ensure that those who are entrusted with the discharge of statutory responsibilities at local level will be clear about their role and fully accountable for all that they do.

Baroness Denton has, for her part, met representatives from the British Association of Social Workers to hear at first hand their concerns. She has visited units which are preparing for trust status and she has talked to people who are directly involved in providing services and who are preparing the ground. From the conversations that my noble Friend has had with managers and professionals alike, and on the evidence that she has seen, there can be no doubt that the schemes being developed between boards and trusts will address clearly and comprehensively the key issues that have been raised. Under the terms of the draft order, they will have to be approved by the Department of Health and Social Services.

I shall refer briefly to two other important issues which, although not technically part of the legislation, are intended to underpin it. Trusts which will be providing personal social services will need to have access to expert advice and guidance in providing those services and carrying out the functions that I have mentioned. To ensure that they have that, we are making it a legal requirement for any trust providing those services to appoint a qualified social worker as an executive director. At the same time, we will make it mandatory for each health and social services board to appoint a director of social services if they have not done so already. Guidance on the roles and responsibilities of both posts will be issued.

Those changes taken together represent a significant strengthening of the structures involved in the delivery of personal social services in Northern Ireland. Chief

executives of trusts have gone to great pains to build in safeguards for existing social work structures, both organisationally and professionally within trusts.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The Minister has just informed us about the appointment of a full-time, qualified social worker and a director of social services. How much will that add to the present bill?

Mr. Smith: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a figure, but I should have thought that he would welcome the fact that we are to appoint professionals as executive directors. That directly meets the concern that the management should incorporate at least one person with direct knowledge and a qualification as a social worker.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): What consultation has the Minister initiated, and what observations has he received, in respect of the trade unions which represent the employees in the area of social work about which we are concerned?

Mr. Smith: I mentioned that my noble Friend Baroness Denton had met representatives of the British Association of Social Workers——

Mr. Mackinlay: That is not a trade union.

Mr. Smith: Well, my noble Friend met association representatives. I will let the hon. Gentleman know later whether she met trade union representatives. However, since her appointment, my noble Friend has gone out of her way to meet those who are principally concerned about the implications and consequences of the order.

The order contains three other changes to Northern Ireland health and social services legislation. First, it amends existing law on the audit of health and social services bodies. The law in that area is no more than adequate at present and the order is designed to modernise and strengthen it. Secondly, the order amends the law on the registration of pharmaceutical chemists by requiring people seeking registration to satisfy prescribed conditions as to character, health and other matters. That will bring Northern Ireland legislation into line with that in other countries. Finally, the order repeals an existing provision in relation to the employment of nurses which is no longer needed because of changes in the way in which nurses are recruited and trained.

The proposals are about ensuring that our services in the area are structured and organised in a way that maximises their capacity to respond to the needs of people quickly and effectively while at the same time safeguarding the interests of the public and those vulnerable people in our society who need the protection of the state. I commend the order of the House.

6.29 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State referred to the Northern Ireland Committee's debate of 20 January. I should like to refer to some of the points that were made by the Minister of State on that occasion. We have been told that the people of Northern Ireland are proud of the existing system. If that is the case, why do the Government want to change it? If the people of Northern Ireland are satisfied with their system, what is the need for this order? I put it to the Under-Secretary and to the House that the intention of the legislation is not to improve health and social services but to fulfil the political dogma of the Conservative party, which is intent on dismantling the national health service.

The Under-Secretary of State referred to a debate that had been held in another place. Hon. Members will know that on that occasion an amendment calling on the Government to withdraw the legislation was defeated only very narrowly. It cannot be right to plough on relentlessly against such opposition from the upper House and against the opposition that will be expressed tonight by Labour and Northern Ireland Members. This order is premature. It should not be before the House, and we shall oppose its substance and the principles that underlie it. I hope that Ministers, rather than driving hon. Members into the Lobbies, will wake up to common sense and withdraw the order.

This legislation, which delegates statutory responsibilities to further private quangos, should not have been introduced in advance of legislation affecting the care of children. The first piece of legislation mentioned in schedule 2 is the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968. It is totally unfair and unreasonable that this order should be introduced before the House has had a chance to debate the forthcoming amendment to the legislation on children. We want to know how Parliament will be able to influence the scrutiny of child care in Nothern Ireland. That information will not be forthcoming in advance of the amending legislation to which I have just referred. The order that we are debating now ought to be withdrawn if the Government believe that people should have a say in matters of serious significance to Northern Ireland.

These trusts, to whose creation the Minister of State referred during the meeting of the Northern Ireland Committee on 20 January, will do nothing to improve health care in Northern Ireland. The Minister said:

> "The creation of social services trusts is of particular significance. The management freedoms which come with trust status are designed to devolve decision-making to those responsible for delivering services, offering them the opportunity to be imaginative and responsive to local needs.—[*Official Report, Northern Ireland Committee*, 20 January 1994; c. 4.]

On 19 April 1993—less than 12 months ago—I asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

> "what Department will make the necessary assessments under the community care reforms for people applying for residential and nursing home care in Northern Ireland?"

The reply was as follows:

> "Health and social services boards, through their units of management, are responsible for carrying out an assessment of need for any individual who lives within their area who requires community care services, including residential care and nursing home accommodation."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1993; Vol. 223, c. *18.*]

Are we to take it from what the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has said tonight that that answer will no longer apply and that assessments will now be made by those administering the trusts? In other words, will what we were told 10 months ago be changed by this order? Is this what the Government call forward planning and forward thinking?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a right that public representatives enjoy under the current law—the right to question a course of action—is to be removed? Does he agree that the distancing of public representatives from the boards that is taking place already will be increased, thus reducing opportunities to question and to call to account?

Mr. O'Brien: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly correct. The democracy that is necessary in the administration of Northern Ireland's health and personal social services is being further diminished. Local communities will have their input into the question of quality of service reduced further.

The foreword to a document published last year by the Eastern health and social services board says:

"The future role of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board is to purchase services to meet the health and social care needs of its resident population within the boundaries of Government policy. Chief among these must be the needs of the population illustrated, as far as possible, by objective information, the views of the people themselves, the views of general practitioners and others. Professional advice, particularly from those in the caring professions, must also continue to influence the decisions of the Board in the purchase of health and social services care."

In other words, we are witnessing a reduction in the management of the services. Through this order, the people of Northern Ireland are being offered less time spent on patient care and—much worse—pressure on a service that is already under pressure. The Eastern health and social services board has declared its future role as being the provision of services in line with Government policy. This order will reduce the role of the health and social services boards and will result in lessened health and community care services for the people of Northern Ireland.

There will be no difference in the lines of responsibility. The health and social services boards are currently responsible to the Minister and the Department. The new trusts, too, will be responsible to the Minister and the Department. Indeed, the Minister of State told the Northern Ireland Committee:

"The vast majority of functions to which the hon. Gentleman referred are already carried out by the board staff at local level. The only difference is that the staff carrying them out in future will, in many cases, work for trusts instead of boards, but they will essentially be the same people carrying out the same jobs." —[*Official Report, Northern Ireland Committee*, 20 January 1994; c. 32.]

If the same people will be performing the same jobs and be responsible to the same Minister and boards, why is the order needed? It will only add to the expense of managing Northern Ireland's health and personal social services.

The trusts will be fully accountable to the Department for the discharge of delegated functions, but what will happen with training? At present, the requirement for personal social services training through a working partnership with employers and education institutions provides positive training at all levels. Since 1990, qualifying and post-qualifying social work training throughout the United Kingdom has been delivered through partnerships between employers and teaching institutions. In Northern Ireland, such partnerships currently operate at area health and social services board level, not unit trust level. The Minister should address that point in considering the provision of qualified people. Will trusts be responsible in future?

The people of Northern Ireland do not want the changes that the order will bring. Will the Minister confirm that 95 per cent. of those asked for their opinion of the order opposed it? The order will extend the Tory obsession with privatising and commercialising health and social services care. The Government are using the language of the market place to sell ill health and rationalise the sick. That philosophy underpins the order.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): If 95 per cent. of people canvassed were against the order, it would be revealing to know who accounted for the 5 per cent. in favour.

Mr. O'Brien: I assume that they were Government supporters, as is usually the case. Ninety-five people out of every 100 canvassed totally opposed the order. I hope that the Minister will take note of the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland.

The Government seem intent on creating more managerial posts and bureaucracy, rather than more hospital beds. Nothing better illustrates that than the creation of 12 management units providing personal social services. The order will bring Northern Ireland in line with some of the sweeping changes already made in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tim Smith: I have been reading the Labour party document "Health 2000". Does not Labour now accept the purchaser-provider split?

Mr. O'Brien: The proposals contained in that document are significantly different from those in the order. We argue for more local input into the future provision of social services. The order will deny local input in health and personal social services care in Northern Ireland. If the Minister accepts our proposals, he should withdraw the order.

The Minister would be the first to agree that there is a vast difference between the regions. In other parts of Britain, social care for the elderly and mentally ill and children involves considerable local input through local authorities. If the Minister has read "Health 2000", he will know that we intend to continue with that approach. In England, locally elected representatives have a say in care provision which directly affects the quality of life of the elderly, children and the mentally ill.

Funding is equally important. It is abundantly clear that in the English regions local authorities are underfunded in the provision of community care. Although it may be the Minister's intention to allow individuals who want to do so to live independently or semi-independently, his promises will be empty if back-up resources are not available to provide the services that the elderly and mentally ill require. Caring for such people in the familiar surroundings of their own homes costs money. If the Government intend to offer wider choice and genuine opportunities to the weaker members of Northern Ireland society, they must be prepared to underpin their stated intentions with adequate resources.

In extending choice, will the new community care trusts in Northern Ireland be instructed, as English local authorities are at present, that a fixed proportion of their funding for the care of the elderly must be directed at providing private care? If so, will the Minister explain how the top-up payments required of close relatives will be obtained? Can the Minister give an assurance that families caring for an elderly parent or other relative who enters a private nursing home will not be turned out of their homes so that the houses can be sold to provide the top-up money required for private nursing care for those whose mental or physical disposition requires it? That is an important matter which the Minister should address. Many people are concerned about the demand for top-up payments for families who live in private sector homes.

In extending the new choice, to which the Minister referred, will he give some indication of how the elderly will be looked after with regard to the financial provisionsin private nursing homes? Will he also give some indication that those who work in the voluntary sector in Northern Ireland, many of whom have a sound record of developing new and important welfare initiatives, will be allowed to continue providing those initiatives? Will they be encouraged to develop those initiatives and innovations in community care into the next century? Will voluntary workers be given the same incentive to do their work under the trusts as they have under the health boards? I make that point specifically because the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 has no equivalent in Northern Ireland.

Therefore, I return to the issue of accountability. The Minister, Baroness Denton, recently stated in another place:

"Accountability is to boards, to the Department and then to me."

In other words, accountability is restricted by Government influences. Baroness Denton also said:

"There is a line to the social work person on the board of the trust; a dotted professional line,"

and added:

"If something should go wrong, the trust . . . will be fully accountable and responsible."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 31 January 1994; Vol. 551, c. 1152]:

Some red lights are flashing and the Minister should explain what Baroness Denton meant.

We should again consider what the Minister said in the Northern Ireland Committee. He said:

"The trusts will be fully accountable to the boards and, ultimately, to the Department for the discharge of delegated functions."—[*Official Report, Northern Ireland Committee,* 20 January 1994; c. 32.]

There is some conflict between the views expressed in Committee and in another place. Therefore, the Minister should clear up some of the misunderstandings that have developed because of the debates on this order. I am afraid that those vague attempts at reassurance do nothing to make the position concerning accountability and ultimate responsibility any clearer.

Will the Minister tell the House who will finally be responsible for the taking of children into care? Who carries the professional responsibilities? Will it lie with the health and social services board or the trust board? Will it ultimately lie with the director of the board or the executive director of the relevant trust? Is the Minister ultimately accountable for the taking of children into care? As I pointed out, we ought to have debated the children's order before the order before us was presented to the House. Since we are seeking to amend the children's order, the Minister should answer those significant questions.

I remind the Minister that the patients and citizens charters, which were launched in a blaze of publicity and have all but fizzled out, emphasised the rights of people to personal services and related needs. How will the citizens charters apply in Northern Ireland? Will the Government make it compulsory for the new trust boards to employ approved social workers to care for the mentally sick and for people with disabilities? Will it be mandatory for the trust boards to employ qualified people in accordance with current legislation or will it be another sacrifice of the standards of so-called safety and efficiency? Will deregulation involving the provision of health and community care apply in Northern Ireland, reducing the quality of service?

There is a genuine and, in our view, justified concern in Northern Ireland about the future provision of personal social services and health care. Since the Conservatives came to power in 1979, one in five hospitals have closed and since 1981, one in three beds in hospitals have been lost. Those figures speak for themselves, but even worse is the £500,000—I am being a little generous to the Minister compared with the figure given by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) earlier—which will be required in order to pay the additional appointed chairman and non-executive members of the trust. That clearly shows that it is not the provision of beds and hospitals or of social workers that is the priority of the Government, but ensuring that bureaucracy in Northern Ireland is built higher and higher.

Salaried Government placemen, instead of treatment for the sick of Northern Ireland seem to be the order of the Minister's presentation. The order does nothing to redress that situation and the national health service has never faced a greater threat than it does today. I urge the House to reject the order, but I also appeal to the Minister to withdraw it before we enter the Lobbies in the light of the points I have made in my short address.

6.56 pm

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): I listened to the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) with great care. He spoke with sympathy and great knowledge of the needs of the people of Northern Ireland. I shall not repeat what he said because I could not do so with the same eloquence.

I intend to vote against the order for a number of reasons, but, because of the lack of time, I cannot list them all. However, all the reasons are valid and they are all important to the people that I represent. The order will be opposed by every representative of Northern Ireland. In view of such unanimity across the political divide in the Province, and in view of the considerable time that the Government spend urging the Northern Ireland politicians to co-operate, they should reward such united opposition to the order by putting it to one side. I join the hon. Member for Normanton in appealing to the Minister to withdraw the order as a gesture of good will to the Ulster people and to the united front presented by Ulster politicians.

According to press reports, the Secretary of State is about to launch—or, perhaps, has launched—another political initiative that entails the creation of a Northern Ireland assembly with power. The ideal time and the proper place for the discussion of the order before us is in such an assembly. In fact, the assembly, when established, will have to examine the health and social services provision in Northern Ireland and may wish to alter radically the present system.

I shall also vote against the draft order because it epitomises the lack of full democracy in the Province. Unlike other parts of the United Kingdom, we are denied the fundamental right to table amendments and to have a proper debate on Second Reading, in Committee, at Report and on Third Reading. Our debate is limited to 90 minutes, which means that I shall have to cut my speech short to allow other hon. Members from Northern Ireland to take part.

In addition, I shall vote against the order not only because I want it to be rejected, but as a protest—the only

[Sir James Kilfedder]

form of protest that is available to me, as a believer in parliamentary democracy—against the undermining of health and social services provision in my constituency.

I have often made speeches in the House condemning Eastern health board's imposition of major cuts on Ulster hospital in Dundonald, Ards hospital and Bangor hospital. Bangor hospital serves at least 75,000 people, and the population is increasing each year as a result of new housing developments. Bangor should have a fully functioning hospital with acute facilities, a gynaecology ward and a casualty department. Having applied pressure, I was promised that services would be improved, but that promise has not yet been fulfilled. In the name of the people of Bangor and surrounding areas, I again demand the restoration of a fully equipped community hospital.

The order will lead to the creation of 12 trust boards for social services. There is no need for those boards, for reasons already catalogued by the hon. Member for Normanton. They will be costly manifestations of the bureaucracy that now dominates Northern Ireland. The Minister has admitted that the chairman and non-executive members will receive what I consider to be substantial salaries for the number of hours that will be put in—money that is desperately needed for the elderly, the young, the mentally handicapped and others who require community care.

Who allocates these lucrative posts to chairmen of trusts? Over the past year or two, we have seen examples in Northern Ireland——

Rev. Ian Paisley: Such as Albert Reynolds.

Sir James Kilfedder: A more immediate example is the appointment of the chairmen of the tourist board and the electricity company. Those and other appointments were made before privatisation by the Secretary of State or one of his Ministers.

Rev. Ian Paisley: It is patronage.

Sir James Kilfedder: It is patronage on a large scale.

Rev. Ian Paisley: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman is well aware, under the legislation that brought in the iniquitous Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Dublin Government have the right to put forward names for all those posts. It is clear to anyone who examines those names that the current political representation in the House of Commons is not replicated on quangos. The official Unionists are not represented; nor are the popular Unionists, members of my own party or, indeed, members of the SDLP. Those who stand for the Conservative party or the Alliance party and are defeated, however, get on to all the boards.

Sir James Kilfedder: My hon. Friend has stated the position very frankly.

Each chairman is to receive between £15,000 and £20,000 a year. The Public Accounts Committee has expressed anxiety about the manner in which they have been appointed, and about their management of the trusts' affairs.

The Minister said that the present health and social services system had the backing of the people of Northern Ireland, but adduced no evidence to support his claim. I challenge that claim: who supports the order? Which political party in Northern Ireland supports it; which organisation in Northern Ireland supports it; which indivdual supports it? Perhaps the Minister will also tell us whether the Conservative party in Northern Ireland supports it. There is widespread discontent about the present system. The new trusts, and the appointment of chairmen and non-executive members, have added to that grave concern. The system will largely remove the element of accountability to elected representatives of the people.

The people of Bangor have demonstrated conclusively that they want to retain both the Banks residental home for the elderly and Enler house, in Dundonald. Under the new system of trusts, however, the people of Bangor—people who believe in democracy—can be treated with contempt. Where is the democracy that this Parliament epitomises? I ask the Minister to take the order away from the House, and keep it away.

7.5 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Two or three speakers have already said pretty much the same; no doubt we shall hear much more of the same before the debate is over.

The order breaks new ground in that, for the first time, trusts are taking responsibility for social services work. We are deeply concerned about that, and feel that it deserves much closer examination than it will receive in an hour and a half. In the other place, Lady Denton said that this was a local solution to a local problem; today, the Minister used the same words. That attracted my attention to the report of the debate in the other place, and I noted that the Minister read out whole slabs of what had been said there. He might at least have made some effort to update his material, in the light of experience.

Neither Lady Denton nor our Minister told us how the "local problem" to which they referred had been created. That might have been enlightening. Both said that the present system had served Northern Ireland very well for 20 years. In that case, why is change now needed? Has the present system been found to be deficient in some respect? Neither Minister suggested that it had, so we must assume that changes in health and social services provision created the "local problem" and that the Government had to make changes as a result.

The people of Northern Ireland have not asked for those changes. They are well aware that democratic input into every aspect of administration in the province has been diminishing steadily for many years. The order will move democratic control from one arm's length to two or three arm's lengths—a serious development that does not sit well with the Government's declared commitment to democracy. This is part of a process that has been going on for far too long, and should have been reversed long ago.

The mere fact that the Government are putting more and more buffers between the people and the delivery of service in itself creates a climate of suspicion, and makes people chary of accepting the Government's view that this scheme will secure public confidence. That is pie in the sky: in reality, the Government are not very widely trusted in Northern Ireland, where people feel that they are being used as guinea pigs in preparation for what will happen elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The House will recall that when the Government introduced the community charge—to give it its proper title rather than its more popular description—the rest of the United Kingdom was used as a guinea pig. They did not

get around to introducing the community charge in Northern Ireland as it disappeared before it got that far —thank God that we had the wit to object to it on various grounds. We were right to object and we have been right about many things relating to Northern Ireland. We now say that this is not the right time for the order—in fact, it may never be the right time.

We want answers to a number of questions. What is to be the legal status of the trusts? It is not spelled out as clearly as it should be. If the Government are to embark on this confidence-building exercise, such issues should be spelt out. Are the trusts to be agents of the Government or of the boards? For whom are they acting? How is the perforance of their duties to be monitored?

In one respect, the Minister went some way to clearing up an issue that was troubling me. He said that social workers would be introduced at trust level. Surely they will be doing a job that is already being done by someone else, so who will lose their jobs? If no one is to lose his job, why do we need the new folk? The Government should have done a great deal of thinking before the order got this far, but it seems that that was not the case.

The order will affect very vulnerable groups. One has only to read schedule 2 to see who will be affected. Schedule 2 states that the order will repeal various provisions of, among others the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968, the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979, the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 and the Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1989. These Acts and orders deal with some of the most vulnerable groups in society.

I do not think that this is the way to proceed. Baroness Denton made it perfectly clear in another place that the functions that will be transferred to the trusts flowed from the legislation that I have cited. When people on the ground realise what is happening, their distrust of the Government's intentions will be greatly increased.

Article 92B deals with the improvement of the economy, services and so on. It states:

"The Department may appoint auditors to undertake comparative or other studies to promote economy, efficiency and effectiveness"

in the provision of services. The first issue to be studied is the question of how effective, efficient and economical the present services are so that we shall at least have something with which to compare the new body when it is, unfortunately, established.

It is clear that the Government are intent on introducing the order and will whip their cannon fodder through the Lobbies this evening. Their cannon fodder comprises hon. Members who have not heard the debate and who know nothing about it. If they did, successive Governments would probably have suffered more defeats. When dealing with vulnerable groups, economics is surely not our prime concern—or is it? If we think only of economics, those who have been disadvantaged for whatever reason will suffer grievously. Such folk should not be treated as mere chattels. We are not talking about the efficiency of the provision of goods or groceries; we are considering the services that are to be provided for vulnerable people.

Social services provision in Northern Ireland has been integrated and has worked well for 20 years but is now being deliberately fragmented. I see no good reason for that. If the order is passed, as I fear it will be, we need a truly independent and highly critical element—a bit of sand—to be introduced into the works. We need to ask the nasty questions which far too many people are willing to brush under the carpet.

The Government have set up shadow trusts and have proceeded as if the opinion of the House did not matter, because they know that they can win the necessary majority. They have also appointed the shadow staff. I wonder whether they are already being paid—I assume that they are. We are aware of the cost of the salaries alone, but that is not the only expenditure that will arise. A new bureaucracy is being created which must duplicate the existing system. If it does not, people in post will have to get the sack, no doubt with very large redundancy payments which are not mentioned in the order.

Article 6 deals with chemists. Why is the article included? Is this merely a convenient vehicle? What is the purpose of article 6? Why are these changes being made? The Minister should say a word about them.

My final comments relate to the need for proper ministerial accountability to the House or to the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland. The legislation highlights yet again the need for proper legislative processes in the House. Despite his chattering, the Minister knows perfectly well that if the order had to be dealt with in Committee, and if it were amendable, and if the Government had to answer probing questions and provide for Northern Ireland the information that they are required to give on legislation for other parts of the United Kingdom, the Government would have more explaining to do than could possibly be extracted from them in a one-and-a-half-hour debate.

Today's proceedings also highlight the need for a Select Committee on Northern Ireland——

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Ross: I am glad to see the hon. Gentleman nodding.

The Government will no doubt have the support of the Labour party. If members of the Social Democratic and Labour party catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will also complain that they are unable to ask probing questions to find out what is happening. I advise the Labour party and the SDLP not to throw away this opportunity but to join those of us who oppose the order. Of course, a Bill would have been most welcome, but that is an idea to be pursued at some other time.

7.17 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): There are some issues to which we are all anxious to hear the Minister's reply. Those of us who have read the record of the proceedings in another place discovered that pertinent questions were asked and reference was made to a debate in the Northern Ireland Committee. It was reported that there was a consensus among the political parties about the issues that were causing grave concern to the people of Northern Ireland.

Will the Minister tell the House who responded when the draft order was published and what was their response? If 95 per cent. of the responses were against the order, should not that have been a warning bell to cease pressing ahead with it, or is the consultation process a charade and a farce?

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

The Minister has recently been appointed and we wish him well in his task. He may not believe this now, but when he has been in his job for longer and when he has listened to the people of Northern Ireland, he will find that many of them, including members of his party, have grave concerns about meaningless consultation. People may marshal their facts and lobby a Minister, who will listen but not heed anything they say because the decision has already been made. When Government Departments continue to behave in that manner, it causes grave resentment and bitterness in the hearts of people.

Why have a consultation period and ask people to make representations if, when 95 per cent. of people say no to a proposal, the Government say yes? The Minister's party preaches to us that it would be wonderful if we could only get the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland to show unity. What is the Government response when Northern Ireland Members, whose opinions are diverse on many matters and between whom an unbridgeable and wide gulf exists on others, come together and agree on a proposal? They use their majority in the House to thumb their nose at the unanimous opinion of Ulster representatives and proceed with business. That is not the way to develop good relations in Northern Ireland and to give people confidence in the democratic process.

Accountability concerns all hon. Members and it has been mentioned in every speech tonight. The Minister's noble Friend spoke on the proposal in another place and I trust that he wii interpret what she meant, because I do not know what she meant. She said:

"Accountability is to boards, to the department and then to me. That position does not change. There is another line in the structure."

What did she mean by that? Does the line of accountability run from the boards to the Department and then to her? If so, why did she mention another line in the structure? Why did she not say that the line of accountability ran from the trusts, the boards, the Department and then to her? She left out trusts, but she described another line:

"There is a line to the social work person on the board of the trust; a dotted professional line, which is of benefit in this case." —[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 31 January 1994; Vol. 551, c. 1152.]

What has that to do with accountability? Will the trust be accountable in the same way as the boards, the Department and the Minister? We want that question answered tonight.

Hon. Members are aware that the taking of children into care is a serious matter. We have received phone calls from distracted parents saying that they have had domestic trouble and that their children have been "lifted", and that no one will now talk to them. Will we be able to discuss such matters with anyone? Has the line of accountability moved so far that there will be no way of bridging the gulf?

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it seems crazy and foolish for the House to be discussing this order today when on Thursday we shall discuss the proposal for a Children (Northern Ireland) Order? Many activities of the proposed trusts will be to do with the care of children. As we have not sorted out the proposals on the care of children, why should the order be passed tonight?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It would have been better to put the horse before the cart. The best way of achieving that would be to withdraw the order, allow us to debate the other order and then return to this matter. I do not know what the Government were up to when they decided to debate the order today. Perhaps they decided that, as the House would be dealing with orders all day, they could throw in another for discussion by Northern Ireland Members, who would be present to discuss the order on the airport.

They may have done it for convenience, but it is not convenient to those hon. Members who work in difficult circumstances that are unknown to Ministers and who are the only elected representatives in contact with the Government. We have councils in Northern Ireland, but they have relatively little power. We are the elected representatives and we have to carry out all the duties that councillors on this side of the water carry out. We have to do everything and the Minister should help the public's representatives to stand up for their constituents and to bring their constituents' complaints to them as part of the process of accountability.

The Minister's noble Friend said that a trust was a "statutory body". Would the Government define that? Do the inverted commas around those words mean they are not really statutory bodies or that they have a higher breeding? Perhaps the Minister will explain the standing of these organisations.

Seven of the units will work in areas that have no acute hospital services and only five will work in areas that have acute hospital services. We do not know for how long those five areas will have acute hospital services. We have heard a cry from Bangor loud and clear tonight. I could raise a cry from the North Antrim hills and from the Larne area, which has been brought to the House's attention by the area's representative and myself on numerous occasions. We can all cry about what has happened to our hospital services. Will the Minister tell us what accountability we can expect?

The Minister in the other place continued:

"The draft order seeks to preserve this integration and to enable services to continue more or less in their present form." —[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 31 January 1994; Vol. 551, c. 1125.]

I do not understand that, because this is indeed a real change that demands the appointment of a chairman, executive members, a director and a social service worker. As the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) said, there will inevitably be redundancies. Where will they begin and where will they end? We cannot establish the new structure without redundancies. The integrated system that we have at present is perfectly good and I do not see why we have to inject into it a new arrangement altogether.

Those are some of the questions to which the order gives rise. I have been able to refer to very few of the issues because our time is limited and I join my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) in saying that matters as serious as this, which have a bearing on the family and the civil liberty of the subject, should be discussed in a debate on a proper Bill, which can be amended. We cannot amend this order; we can only vote against it. That is not the way in which business should be conducted.

The Minister would do well to heed my advice tonight. He would then be lauded by the people who thought it worth while to make representations to him about their objections to the order, and by the people of Northern Ireland and their representatives in this House, all of whom are saying, "Take this order back. Let us have a debate on

the important order that is to be considered by the Northern Ireland Committee and come back to this order when we have dealt with that." That, more than anything else that the Government could do at the moment, would inspire hope and confidence in democratic principles. This is a personal matter—it has to do with persons, children, families and welfare. Let the Minister be a man tonight. Let him stand up and say, "Yes, I will consider the order further and withdraw it in the meantime."

7.31 pm

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): As someone who has spent the past 30 years in primary health care in the constituency of Belfast, West, let me first pay tribute to those involved in community care not only in that territory but throughout Northern Ireland. The past 20 years have been very difficult for all of them—especially for social workers who have to implement much of the legislation. I pay tribute to social workers, community and psychiatric nurses, medical practitioners and ordinary community workers on the ground who are not necessarily professionals.

The order has been introduced becasue the legislation introduced in 1991 was inadequate. We know about the trusts that we already have and about the trouble in relation to various hospitals, although that is not relevant tonight.

Like other hon. Members, I have studied the speech of the Minister responsible for health in the other place. On 31 January, Baroness Denton said:

"Since the proposal for legislation was published last June many people have voiced anxieties about its effect on services, particularly in relation to those for children."

Children are the most important subject that we are discussing tonight.

Baroness Denton continued:

"Some have expressed doubts about the accountability of trusts within the new arrangements. Questions about fragmentation and inequality of provision have been raised. My noble friend and predecessor and, more recently, I have considered very carefully the anxieties raised and have devoted much time and effort to listening and then explaining the issues."

I have devoted a fair amount of time to reading Baroness Denton's speech to establish exactly what she proposes.

The Minister's speech continued:

"I think it is fair to say that many of the anxieties expressed stemmed from a misunderstanding of the role of trusts, and perhaps I can clarify that point.

Health and social services trusts are state bodies, established firmly within the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland . . . They are not independent companies and are bound by the same guidance and directions that govern the operation of health and social services boards at present. Like my noble predecessor, I recognise that people have anxieties".

That is true: all the people of Northern Ireland and all the professionals have great anxieties about the proposals.

"I appreciate their concerns. They are genuinely held, but they have not been ignored. Regardless of which side of the debate we are on, we have one interest in common—the welfare of children and other vulnerable groups in our society. For that reason, the shadow trusts and boards concerned have been working very hard"—

here are the key words——

"to establish procedures which will ensure that those who are entrusted with the discharge of statutory responsibilities at local level will be clear about their role and fully accountable for all that they do."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 31 January 1994; Vol. 551, c. 1125-26.]

Baroness Denton used the words "establish procedures", but I am certainly not aware of any procedures that have been established. Earlier today I attended a meeting of the Eastern health and social services board to discuss the order. The hon. Members for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), for Belfast, South (Rev. Martyn Smyth) and the representative of the Alliance party were also there, as were representatives of the social work and legal professions and of Queen's university.

As the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) said earlier, the cart is being put before the horse. Some of the most important legislative proposals are contained in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order, which we are to discuss on Thursday. Not all the aspects of that proposal have been worked out. We shall have to address a great many questions to do with children in need and in care, sexual or physical abuse, and children who are in some way involved with paramilitary people. All those matters will have to be dealt with under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order, yet the trusts dealt with in the order before the House tonight will have to implement those provisions.

Baroness Denton and Baroness Faithfull both referred to accountability. Where is the accountability? We all know that, if a child tragically dies, everyone asks, "Where is the social worker? When did he or she last call?" Who should those on the ground speak to and seek guidance from? Is it the trusts? I am well aware that there will be a qualified social worker on the trusts. We must also consider the accountability of the trusts to the four boards and of the four boards to the management executive or the Department and eventually the Minister.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): We are told that procedures have been put in place. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is great concern that, although a social worker is to serve on the directorate, there is no clear line management right down to grass roots level?

Dr. Hendron: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that remark. There is no line management. I am not criticising the excellent professionals involved in shadow trusts because they themselves have not been given guidance. The boards do not seem to know where they are. As regards the Children (Northern Ireland) Order, anyone who has time to attend the Committee on Thursday—which I understand will sit for at least four hours—may glean some understanding of how complicated the problem is.

Another aspect relevant to the debate tonight and even more relevant to that on Thursday is the role of the police. Northern Ireland has many problems, similar to those in Britain but exacerbated by violence and by the fact that we have so many one-parent families. Children go before the courts, and the police are often involved. If we are to develop a comprehensive strategy for children and young poeple, we must involve the police. How on earth will we bring together the police force right across the north of Ireland, the 12 new trusts and four boards?

What we really need is a comprehensive system for dealing with child care. I sincerely believe—I have studied the order carefully—that it is a grave mistake on the part of Government to move it this evening. I do not want to repeat what other hon. Members have said, but I pay tribute to the British Association of Social Workers, Health Care in Northern Ireland, Barnardo's and various other bodies which have briefed us for some time. I ask the Minister to withdraw the order.

7.39 pm

Mr. Tim Smith: Much of the debate has focused on trusts. To some extent, we have had a rerun of the debate that took place in 1991 on the original order. There is a misunderstanding about the scope of the order. It is not unimportant, but it is relatively narrow. There was a misunderstanding by quite a number of those who responded during consultation who were inclined to criticise the concept of the trusts.

The concept of trusts in Northern Ireland was accepted when the House approved the 1991 order. That order provides for a clear distinction between the purchaser and provider and for the delegation of services from boards to trusts. What it does not do is provide for delegation of all functions of boards to trusts—only for some of them. I explained that mental health functions were transferred, but many other functions were not. I think that that was because at the time we were largely focusing on hospital trusts and not on the possibility of integrated trusts—combined health and personal social services trusts.

Frankly, it will simply not be possible for the trusts to operate most efficiently if those functions are not transferred to them. I am sorry that there has been a misunderstanding about that point. There has not been a deliberate attempt at obfuscation. The matter is relatively straightforward if the principle on which the 1991 order is based is accepted.

Dr. Hendron: The Minister could resolve many of our problems if he explained in simple language. If there is non-delivery of a service within the ambit of the order, who is responsible? Will it be the trust, the board, the Department or the Minister, all four, or any of them?

Mr. Smith: I can deal with that because a number of hon. Members raised the question of accountability. It is important. The position is no different in England and Wales, where we have trusts. The trusts are responsible for the delivery of the service and they are accountable, but there is a clear line of accountability from the trusts—[HON. MEMBERS: "To whom?"] The chief executive. I would normally expect, if I had a complaint about the operation of a health service trust in my constituency, to write initially to the chief executive. If I was not satisfied with the reply, I would take it to a higher level. The higher level goes from the trust to the board, to the Department and, finally, to the Minister in charge of the health service. That seems to be straightforward.

Rev. Martin Smyth: This is an important point. As I understand it, health trusts are to provide the service and the health authorities purchase the service. In Northern Ireland, the community trusts will be responsible not only for providing services but for purchasing the service. There is a dichotomy. It is bureaucratic logic going astray to extend it to community trusts.

Mr. Smith: The whole point of the order is to achieve a total split between purchaser and provider. That is why we are proposing in it to transfer certain functions from boards to trusts. We shall achieve a total transfer only if we accept the order, otherwise we shall be left with something of a halfway house which will not enable the trusts that are due to come into operation on 1 April to operate satisfactorily. I am sorry that it has been so difficult to explain all this, but I suspect that it is based on the fact that some people have a misconception about what trusts are really about. They are statutory public bodies. There is no question of them having any other constitutional status. They will be fully accountable for their actions and will be fully accountable to the boards, the Department and the Minister. It is vital that we should make the change in the order. I commend it to the House.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to order [11 February].*

The House divided: Ayes 296, Noes 266.

Division 122] **[7.44 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartliss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren

Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Sir Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thumham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 9th December, be approved.

Return of Cultural Objects

7.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): I beg to move,

That the draft Return of Cultural Objects Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 15th December, be approved.

The statutory instrument is important. The regulations, a statutory instrument under the European Communities Act 1972, will implement the provisions of Council directive 93/7/EEC of 15 March 1993 on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the terrority of a member state. This is an internal market measure providing an additional layer of protection for member states' national treasures.

Article 36 of the treaty of Rome allows member states to define and protect these national treasures, provided that the measures taken are not disproportionate to trade. It was feared by a number of states, particularly France and the southern states of the Community, that the removal of routine customs checks at the internal frontiers, following completion of the single market on 1 January 1993, would weaken national protection.

Important national treasures could be removed by their owners across internal borders without the permission of the member states from which they originated. One powerful motive for doing that would, it is maintained, be the drawing power of the international art market in London. It is fair to say that export controls on these countries are on the draconian side, with permission to export being the exception rather than the norm. As a result, the price that an owner can realise for his art object is largely a domestic market price as is it unlikely that a new owner would be able to export it lawfully.

It could well be argued—I have some sympathy with this view—that it should not be the business of the United Kingdom Government to police the export control systems of other member states. But we are a Community—a club where we should extend the hand of mutual co-operation and help. The United Kingdom argued that an informal agreement would achieve that, but the majority of states thought that the only effective way forward was a statutory system. They saw the problem as both an internal one, as I have described, and an external one at the external frontiers of the Community.

Member states decided that a consistent approach to both was essential. The result was a Council regulation, EEC 3911/92, which set up a system of Community export licensing based on categories and monetary thresholds set out in an annex. It is closely modelled on the United Kingdom's national system. Provision for national co-operation in identifying and returning national treasures was made in Council directive 93/7/EEC, again limiting the objects that could be subject to those provisions by the same annex.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Can the Minister clarify the question of monetary thresholds? Some of us think that the most urgent problem is the theft of religious and ecclesiastical art from Czechoslovakia and, even more, icons from Russia and elsewhere. The Minister knows that they can be sold for proverbial peanuts in eastern Europe. Where does the doctrine of monetary thresholds fit into this extremely difficult and thorny problem?

Mr. Sproat: As so often, the hon. Gentleman makes an extremely good point. However, it is not a point which arises on the regulations that we are debating. I agree that countries in eastern Europe, especially Russia with its valuable icons, should find a way to prevent sales if the objects are unlawfully exported. But the matter does not arise in this debate. If the hon. Gentleman would like to write or talk to me about it, I should be glad to discuss it with him.

Mr. Dalyell: Following the all-party heritage group's visit to Czechoslovakia, some of us wrote to the Minister's Department—before his time—at considerable length and raised the matter with the Prime Minister, as the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) knows.

Mr. Sproat: I will certainly make a point of getting out the correspondence and seeing what can be done in a context other than the regulations that we are debating.

The House will recall that when the directive was debated in Standing Committee B in November 1992, hon. Members were critical of some of its provisions. The package of regulation and directives was due to be debated at the Internal Market Council the following week, and the Committee asked the Secretary of State to ensure that no common position was arrived at without several changes.

The United Kingdom was President of the Council at the time and that is always a delicate position in which to use a blocking vote. But in this case, our position was also influential. The United Kingdom's negotiators achieved all the improvements we sought. We shifted the burden of proof so that the courts of each member state could apply their own system and, most important, we removed the requirement for licences for thousands of minor archaeological and numismatic objects.

In the Government's view, we had arrived at the best compromise possible. The directive stirred up the nationalistic instincts of member states. The southern states wanted it to cover a much larger area of cultural goods. Some wanted no time limit at all for the period during which a member state could request the return of a cultural object removed unlawfully from a museum or religious institution. Greece passionately sought this, since to have it otherwise was contrary to its constitution. In the end, Greece voted against the directive, and Germany abstained.

Given the text that we had before us, the United Kingdom considered that to continue to block it would reopen issues that were not tolerable to the United Kingdom. But I will freely admit that the directive is far from perfect.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Before my hon. Friend moves away from Greece, can he tell us whether there is anything in the regulations that would result in the Elgin marbles being returned to Greece? While he is talking about that part of the world, can he say whether anything can be done to prevent any further stripping of the valuable and historic items in the part of northern Cyprus that is now occupied by Turkey?

Mr. Sproat: I do not know about northern Cyprus. However, I can tell my hon. Friend, who asks an extremely important question, that nothing in the regulations would compel us to return the Elgin marbles. For the absolute avoidance of any doubt, we are not compelled by the directive to do so and we have no intention of doing so.

One important commitment won by the United Kingdom was to a review in 1995-96 of the operation of both the EC regulation and the directive. We are already assembling a number of issues and notifying the Commission and other member states of them. The art trade has been co-operative in applying for EC licences, and has drawn the disadvantages to our attention. The licensing unit in my Department has taken on two additional staff to deal efficiently with the extra licences. Applicants are kept waiting no longer than before for their applications to be deal with. But there is an extra cost, which must be balanced against our obligations to lend mutual assistance to other member states.

Whether the regulations will involve extra costs will rest entirely on the extent to which they are used. They will provide a mechanism for another member state to request the return from the United Kingdom of a cultural object that has been unlawfully removed from that state in breach of its rules for the protection of national treasures. They will also apply where a national treasure has not been returned following a period of unlawful temporary removal. But I must stress that this applies only to cultural objects unlawfully removed on or after 1 January last year. That point will give comfort to my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink), who asked an important question about the Elgin marbles.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): My hon. Friend will be aware that the regulations are retrospective; they go back to 1 January 1993. My feeling is that we should not pass retrospective legislation. It is much better for legislation to go from the time that it is passed by the House. Can my hon. Friend tell us whether any requests have been received for the return of any cultural objects that have been removed within the period covered by the regulations?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend asks a good question. I do not know the answer off the top of my head. Perhaps I can let him know later in the debate. As for retrospection generally, my hon. Friend is right—it is usually an objectionable principle. But in this case we had to deal with other member states of the EC which wished to go all the way back unprescriptively—that is, as far back as the object——

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South) *rose*——

Mr. Sproat: I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

We had some difficulty in stopping that. For instance, the constitution of Greece says that any object manufactured before 1832 belongs to the Greek Government. We had problems getting a date fixed, and we felt that 1 January 1993 was not a bad compromise to reach.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend confirm that this country is a potential beneficiary? We have suffered greatly in the past few years from thefts from churches. Is not it true that objects stolen from an English country church in, say, June of last year would come under the regulations if they turned up in one of the other countries in the Community?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes an important point. The great value of the London art market means that we tend to proceed in our arguments from the assumption that we are talking about cultural objects from other countries

[Mr. Sproat]

being sold here. As my hon. Friend rightly said, many valuable cultural objects from this country are found on the market in other parts of the EC. We could request that those countries co-operate with us to return British cultural objects. My hon. Friend makes an extremely valuable point.

Although the directive allows an optional provision for member states to apply the directive to objects that were unlawfully removed before January 1993, we do not intend to apply that provision. The answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point needs not to be qualified, but borne in mind. Although we will not apply that provision, other countries may do so, and we may continue to get pressure for the return of the Elgin marbles and other objects. We have not accepted that, and we do not intend to apply the directive in that manner. We believe that it would introduce unacceptable uncertainty for purchasers of cultural objects and for members of the art trade.

Hon. Members will have noticed that the regulations have adopted the same meaning for expressions as those used in the directive, and that there has been no attempt at interpretation. That was deliberate, because it is important to ensure that the directive is correctly implemented while avoiding the imposition of burdens other than those required. The best way to achieve that was to follow the wording of the directive.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke on Trent, Central): Will the Minister explain how the definition of illegality is to be applied? Is it simply necessary for the member state applying to this country or to another for the return of a cultural object to assert that, in its view and by its law, the object has been exported illegally? Is there some objective test of illegality?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman asks an important question. Each EC member state has its own definition of a national treasure. In Italy, that covers a wide range of objects, and Germany—I think I am right in saying—has specified 600 objects of national treasures. The hon. Gentleman would quickly see that if the manuscript of Beethoven's 10th symphony were discovered. It would not be included on the list, and therefore would not require an export licence.

The definition applies if an object that surfaces in London is defined as a national treasure by the home state, if I may put it that way, under article 36 of the treaty of Rome. For example, if an Italian national treasure surfaces in a catalogue at Sotheby's the Italian Government have to say within two months of the object appearing in the catalogue that they thought it had been unlawfully taken from Italy. The Italian Government must say that it is a national treasure which has been taken without an export licence. After that two months, they have no longer than 12 months to take the matter to court.

Mr. Fisher: Is the Minister saying that if objects categorised by a member state as a national treasure are exported, they have been per se illegally exported? Does that apply also to other artefacts or cultural objects which may be illegally exported—for example, objects which have been taken from an archaeological dig, illegally vandalised and taken into this country? A member state, say Greece, may say to our Government that those objects have been illegally exported. Do we accept Greece's word on that, or is there some objective test of what is an illegal export? Can any country—ourselves included—nominate an export as illegal?

Mr. Sproat: The export cannot be nominated as illegal after it has been taken, say from Greece to the United Kingdom. However, the object may be on the list of national treasures as defined by the Greek Government. The list is published and we all know what is on it.

If the object has been stolen, that is quite different. There are objects that can be transported from Greece to the United Kingdom legally if the Greek Government issues an export licence. The original regulation applied to objects that required an export licence. If an object is taken out of Greece and surfaces in the United Kingdom or in any part of the EC without an export licence having been issued, that is contrary to the directive and the regulations that we are debating. Theft is, of course, different and can be prosecuted through the courts in the normal way. Presumably, the object would not have been exported with an export licence because a thief would not wish to draw it to the attention of the authorities.

Hon. Members will see that regulation 3(1) provides for the Secretary of State to seek a cultural object where there has been a request from another member state. That goes into part of what the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central just asked. That means that we would expect to check an object with the full co-operation of the person on whose property the object is believed to be located.

Members of the art trade already co-operate in similar circumstances with the police, and I hope that that mutual co-operation will continue. In the few cases where it is considered necessary and appropriate for the Secretary of State to apply to the High Court in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, or to the Court of Session in Scotland, for an order authorising entry and search, the official responsible for undertaking the search would normally expect to enter the premises at a reasonable hour of the day, unless it is anticipated that to do so would defeat the object of the exercise.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not doubt the impeccable taste of either the Secretary of State or the Minister. The hon. Gentleman says that the Secretary of State will check who carries that out, but presumably it will be transferred to someone in the British museum or a Scottish gallery. Will it be the appointee or the Secretary of State who carries out the check?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman asks a complicated question to which I will attempt to give a lucid answer. "Seeking to check" is the wording which forms part of the European directive which I said we have used. It would apply if, for example, the Greek Government told us that a certain cultural object designated as a national treasure by them was thought to have been exported to London, and was likely to appear in the British markets.

The Secretary of State, through the officials of the cultural property unit in the Department, would place advertisements in the various appropriate antiques journals. Those would be circulated among the various houses in London where it was expected the object might be sold. The auction houses would be informed that they should look out for the object, which the Greek Government had reason to believe was to be unlawfully sold in London. "Seeking to check" would apply in cases

where an object had appeared and we had no advance notice from the member state's Government that it was likely to appear. If the object appeared in a Sotheby's catalogue, we would be in touch with an appropriate expert at the British museum and ask him to go and check.

In some, perhaps many, cases, court proceedings might not be needed if the bona fide owner can agree appropriate compensation with the requesting member state, but in other cases, court proceedings might be needed to establish the good faith of the owner. The requesting state will have to satisfy the court that the object that is the subject of the proceedings for return is, in fact, the one that is sought and that it was unlawfully removed from the territory of the requesting state during the relevant limitation period. The court must also be satisfied that the proceedings were brought less than 12 months after the requesting state became aware of the location of the object and the identity of its possessor or holder. That is the point that I made to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Is that the only way in which artefacts could be returned to their country of origin after the regulations are agreed? Could they be returned by normal negotiations and so on? For example, do the Elgin marbles have to fit into the categories that the hon. Gentleman stated?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman asks a good question. It is perfectly possible that an object will be returned by mutual agreement. Let us say that the hon. Gentleman bought an antique statue, believing, perfectly properly, that it had been exported from Greece with an export licence, and that he believed himself to be the bona fide owner. Let us say also that the Greek Government prove to the hon. Gentleman's satisfaction that, unknown to him, it had been unlawfully exported from Greece.

Of course, the hon. Gentleman, as the bona fide owner —there is not the slightest besmirching of his name— would say, "Of course it should not have been taken; I gladly give it back," in which case the requesting Government would pay him compensation. It might be what he paid for the object, or a similarly negotiated price. That is how it would work. I imagine that, very often, it will work that way, because people will be bona fide owners of objects that turn out to be unlawfully exported.

I want to emphasise the modest nature of the provisions. We should not view the powers of entry and search and of seizure as striking at the innocent owner's right to enjoy his property. Perhaps the powers, which will require an order from the High Court, will never be used. We have carefully not created a new criminal offence. Contempt of the High Court or of the Court of Session is a serious matter, with stiff penalties. The regulations should be sufficient should a member of the public obstruct the competent authority in the exercise of searching for a requested national treasure of another member state. But it is innovative legislation in the sense that, for the first time, we are prepared to act on a statutory basis to provide a mechanism for the return of the national treasures of other member states.

We shall watch carefully how use is made of the measure. It is a developing aspect of international property law, and the United Kingdom Government and the art trade wish to influence it positively. We have vital economic as well as cultural concerns in the United Kingdom. They come together in the strong, open and legitimate art market in London which, in its own code of practice, wants nothing to do with goods that have an unlawful provenance.

The problem of unlawful circulation of national treasures is worth tackling, just as we are tackling trafficking in stolen art and objects. I therefore commend the regulations to the House.

8.22 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The Opposition welcome the regulations. Any piece of legislation which polices and regulates the growing market in illegal works of art and antiquities is to be applauded and supported. That illegal market is said to be second only to the illegal trafficking of drugs. Quite how that figure is arrived at, I am not sure, but nobody has refuted it. Indeed, it has been quoted several times recently, not least by Lord Renfrew. If the scale of illegal trafficking is as large as that, it is a very large part of international crime and one which, at least in the European context, it is a good thing that we are tackling. The Opposition commend the Government on adopting the regulations.

In accepting, I hope, the support of the whole House for the regulations, the Government need to answer more questions than the Minister has addressed, especially as I detected, particularly in his opening remarks, some slight personal scepticism or reluctance when he referred to acting as policemen for the imperfections of other countries' policies. He referred to "a view with which I have some sympathy." If the Minister is a little sceptical about the regulations, we need to probe the Government's view of them and their commitment to implementing them.

How big is the problem for the United Kingdom and what research has the Department done to establish the scale of the problem for the United Kingdom? What percentage of the art market will be affected? The Minister said that the art market did not wish to traffic in goods which do not have good provenance, but he knows very well that many objects that are sold on the art market have doubtful provenance or no provenance at all and that, without those objects, the art market would be severely damaged. It would be very interesting to know what the scale of the problem is and what percentage of the market will be affected.

Also, in other matters, the Government rightly stress that they should set themselves targets so that their performance can be evaluated. What number of successful search and finds and, therefore, prosecutions will the Government consider adequate? Will the Minister give some targets about the performance of the regulations? The Minister needs to tell us more about the steps and the mechanisms that the Government will take. Will his Department need to take on new staff and train them? If so, how many, and what expertise will they have and what training will he provide for them?

Presumably, the Minister will need help from the Inland Revenue and the police in implementing the regulations. What training will there be for police forces? If, say, Italy asks us to search for a work of art that it suspects is in Glasgow or Liverpool, it will be no good if the number of police officers in this country is so limited that we cannot meet the request from the member state and therefore cannot implement the regulations.

I was slightly worried by the Minister's response to how a check will be made. He seemed to say, "We will leave it

[Mr. Mark Fisher]

to advertising in the art press that an illegal object is loose or is suspected of being loose in the London market." Is he saying that his Department would not be responsible if there is a request from, say, Greece because it believes that there is such an object here? Will it be sufficient for the Government to ensure that an advertisement is placed in *Apollo* or elsewhere? Is it not his Department's responsibility to ensure that either the Inland Revenue or the police search out that object? An advertisement would not fulfil the spirit of the regulations.

In particular, the Minister must say something more about the definitions. We understand that the regulations apply only to national treasures and the inventories of public collections or ecclesiastical institutions. The example that I gave when he kindly gave way to me was the pillaging of archaeological sites. It is unlikely that a new archaeological site or a site that has not been excavated before will be on an inventory of national treasures. It will certainly not be part of a national public collection.

If something is ripped from an archaeological site—this is exactly what Lord Renfrew is rightly concerned about, and the implications for international archaeology and our understanding of our cultural heritage in Europe—and it is not designated a national treasure, will it be covered by the regulations? That could leave a huge hole in the regulations.

What protection to the regulations give us? Many works of art are undoubtedly extremely important to the culture and cultural heritage of this country. We do not have a designated list of national treasures, but we have public collections and ecclesiastical institutions. We have many important works of art which are absolutely central to the way we see our heritage, tradition and view of our culture but which are not in public institutions, public collections or ecclesiastical institutions. Will they not be covered?

For instance, if they are stolen from a private collection or a national trust and they turn up—or we believe that they have turned up—in Rome, will we be unable to apply to the Italian Government for the return of those objects even though we know that they have been stolen from a private collection in Britain and are important works of art or artefacts? If so, there is another huge loophole, which the Government should seek to close. I am sorry, if that is the loophole, that they have not closed it in advance.

Can the Minister give some more assurances to the House about the way in which the regulations will be effective in helping us to gain possession of objects in the way that I have described, and will he especially give some consideration to the effect that that will have on the London art market? He referred to that subject briefly in his concluding remarks, but will he tell us what co-operation the Government had had from the art market and from museums and academics in their negotiations?

I understand that a committee has been set up to advise the Government, but in the debate recently in the other place the noble Lord Gowrie said that it had met only three times and he seemed at that stage to be extremely critical of the way in which we were proceeding to the regulations. Have those fears been assuaged? What has changed? Are the Government happy with the regulations that they are putting before the House?

Those questions need to be asked because the House needs to be reassured, not only that the regulations in their present form will be on the statute book, but that the Government have a real commitment to making them work. Though the Minister's remarks were very interesting and helpful to the House, I think that they were a trifle cautious or lukewarm in their enthusiasm. That causes—in my mind at least—some worry about the Government's commitment. The Government's record in that sector over recent years fuels that doubt and fear about commitment.

The problem has been around for many years, although it has grown enormously recently, and it has caused worry to everyone in academic circles, in museums and in the art world generally. A great deal of work has been done on regulations of that type in a European and an international context. Internationally, those date back to the 1950s, with The Hague protocol on the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict 1954 and the New Delhi recommendations on international principles applicable to archaeological excavations 1956—both of which were drawn up by UNESCO.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Is the Labour party still committed to the return of the Elgin marbles?

Mr. Fisher: The Labour party views that subject in the context that I am describing now—the Elgin marbles should be multinational agreement. That is is why the Labour party, unlike the Government, is committed to ratifying and being an active signatory to the UNESCO convention of 1970. If we were—Greece is a party to the UNESCO convention—we would be able to work out the orderly return, not only of the Elgin marbles, but of the Benin bronzes and many other cultural treasures. We should not handle it as a one-off bilateral agreement with Greece on an individual artefact or set of artefacts, but as part of an international agreement.

The problem is not only between ourselves and the Greek Government; it is a major international problem. The Government should say tonight why they will not ratify and be an active signatory to the UNESCO Convention 1970. They ought to do that. They should be serious about tackling the problem.

The Government ought also to be active in the European dimension because the regulation that we are debating is not sufficient. The Minister knows very well that work is going on at this minute on UNIDROIT, the convention on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects, which was basically concluded in 1992 and will be submitted to a diplomatic conference this year. Why do the Government not actively support UNIDROIT? The Attorney-General has said that he does not close the door on the Government signing UNIDROIT. What is the problem with UNIDROIT? It would greatly strengthen the regulations before us tonight. If the Government expect to be taken seriously in connection with the regulations, they should give a commitment to be active in their support for UNIDROIT at the conference next year.

The Government also need to explain why they are not supporting the Commonwealth convention which has recently been concluded. Every other Commonwealth country has been active in that. A decade of campaigning by New Zealand has brought the Commonwealth Mauritius protocol to completion. Eleven countries contributed to that working party; they have been drafting it for seven years and Australia has now offered to draft

legislation for other Commonwealth countries. Why are the Government dragging their feet on the Commonwealth initiative? Will they go further, as the Attorney-General said last year, and not just not close the door but open the door and be an active supporter?

The Minister must explain the Government's problems about the wider international context for the regulations that we are debating tonight—the UNESCO treaty, the Mauritius Commonwealth protocol and UNIDROIT. Taken together, those three agreements and the regulations would provide some context in which to tackle illegal trafficking in art artefacts, which no Member of the House can support.

The Government have taken the first step, and we welcome it, but there are three other steps waiting to be taken if the Government are serious about tackling that illegal traffic. The Minister must address himself to that.

What is the problem? Is it that the Minister fears that legislation will hurt London's art trade? If so, he should be open about that and discuss it. That was the burden of the debate on 3 November 1992 in the other place, when the noble Lords Gowrie and Carrington—the latter a former Member of this House, and both of them chairmen of major art auctioneers and art houses—mentioned severe fears and worries about the regulations and this action. Those Members of the House who, like me, are not experts on the subject, do not know whether the worries that those noble Lords expressed are well founded.

The Government have to answer that. Lord Gowrie said that it would threaten our position in the art trade; that it would be a smugglers' charter, and that we shall be acting as customs, civil servants, tax gatherers and policemen for other countries which will not police their own laws. He went on to say that the Government were under pressure to complete the legislation by January last year, that it was too quick, that there was too little consultation and that the consultative organisation met only three times. That was 15 months ago, so perhaps it met several times last year. We ought to hear about that. The noble Lord Carrington said that those things would be damaging and unworkable and would increase bureaucracy.

Those are charges by two people who have worked in that sector and who know about it. The Minister ought to respond. Are they right in having those fears? Have things been changed? Have the Government managed to secure negotiations and change the regulations in a way that would satisfy those fears? He said tonight that, basically, we were adopting the regulations as they were in the European directive. Is so, are the fears of the art trade still justified? Are the regulations likely to damage the art trade in this country? That is an important part of our cultural industries and a profitable area for this country.

We therefore have two different problems. It is good that the Government are doing something, even if it is rather cautious and tackles only part of the problem, but are they committed to it and have they got it right and achieved what, I accept, is a difficult balance between not damaging an important industry in the United Kingdom and doing right by the international market and protecting our national treasures? The Minister will say that, because he is being criticised from both sides, perhaps he has got it right, but when one is criticised from both sides one may equally have got it wrong from both points of view. There is no security in that argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) has suggested a way of squaring that circle. We should opt for a wider international agenda which does not simply protect European artefacts and the relationships between member states. Lords Gowrie and Carrington were concerned that as the regulations are purely European the art market would go elsewhere to areas not covered by UNESCO or other international agreements.

To calm those fears, we should not run away from or be soft on the issue. Instead, we should sign up to UNESCO and pressure the United States Government to ensure that there is effective international regulation. The Government have done that reluctantly in the past in respect of issues such as copyright, patents and designs with the Berne convention. If the Government are serious about tackling international crime, they have an opportunity to take the lead in respect of international regulations.

The Government are in a dilemma. They want to talk tough on crime, but I do not believe that they are certain that what they are doing will be effective. I am not sure whether they know the effect their actions will have on the art trade. The Government must decide whose side they are on and how best to protect our art treasures and our art trade and also how to tackle international crime.

The Opposition support the regulations. We are pleased to do that and we congratulate the Government on them. However, the crucial point is what the Government do next. Will they police the regulations with real rigour and determination? Will they go further in respect of an international perspective? If they will not do either of those things, when we next debate the issue at Question Time or in Adjournment debates in a year's time, if the regulations have not been effective it will be clear that the Government have been prepared to go through the motions but not to back the legislation with action or to seek an international solution.

If that happens, the aim behind the regulations to get to grips with a culturally dangerous and unpleasant form of illegal international trafficking will not have been observed. We will not have done right by that problem. The Government must convince the House that they are really committed on this and that they intend to do something about it.

8.42 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): My hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) put a question to my hon. Friend the Minister about the Elgin marbles. The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) put a similar question to his hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

With regard to the Elgin marbles, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say to his opposite number in Greece, Mrs. Melina Mercouri, "Never on Sunday, nor on any other day of the week." I am happy to remind the House that those words were first spoken by our former colleague Sir David Price, and never have truer words been spoken. He was absolutely right.

Nations, like individuals, cannot always have what they want. I hope that we will never accept that we should be told what to do by UNESCO, the European Union or any other international organisation. I remind the House that the Elgin marbles are not owned by the British Government; they are owned by the British museum which is an independent charitable foundation run by trustees. That should be understood in countries like Greece. Such countries should not be distracted by the word "British" in

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the title into imagining that the British museum is run by the Government. Returning the Elgin marbles would, in effect, involve confiscation of the trustees' private property.

My hon. Friend the Minister introduced the debate with admirable lucidity. However, I should like him to enlarge on what happens in respect of a country that has not yet joined the European Union but might join it in future. In that respect, I think of Norway.

Let us suppose that Munch's "The Scream", which was pinched from the Oslo museum over the weekend, were to turn up in four or five years' time in Bermondsey market or in the market in the Portobello road. Although I think that it is unlikely, suppose Norway joined the European Union in four or five years' time. What would be the legal position under the regulations with regard to returning the picture to Norway? Criminal law could be invoked and the picture could be returned as stolen property. However, I should like to know the position in respect of the draft regulations.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, the scope of the regulations is limited. I am not sure how much good they will do. Are they permanent? If they are approved, how effective will the review be? My hon. Friend said that we must carefully monitor the way in which the regulations work.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central said that he would welcome the control of illegal traffic. However, much of the trade in objects is perfectly legal at present. I am not sure whether we want to place a stop on that.

The spread of cultural treasures is good. If the regulations had been passed 50, 100 or 200 years ago, we would not be able to view any of the great foreign paintings that are on view today in the national gallery, the British museum or the Victoria and Albert museum. We would not see French impressionists or Dutch, Italian, German and Spanish paintings. Foreigners on the continent would not be able to see paintings by Turner, Reynolds or Gainsborough.

There seems to be a doctrine that any great work of art should remain permanently in the country in which it was created. That is nonsense. Are we really saying that the national gallery in Washington should return all its Rembrandts to Holland or that the French should whisk the Mona Lisa from the Louvre and send it back to Italy?

A great international collection in any country enables visitors to that collection, whether they are old or young, to compare and contrast paintings, furniture or other objects of different countries and different civilisations. The regulations could stop the international movement of fine works of art.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central wondered whether the regulations would affect the art trade. Obviously, they would if the movement of great works of art were stopped. London and New York are pre-eminent in the art trade and the art market. The world's greatest auctions for art objects are held mainly in London and New York.

My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has just succeeded in negotiating an agreement with the European Union which will help to preserve the art auction market in London. There has been a threat that the market will move from the European Union to New York, Geneva, Hong Kong and other places outside the European Union.

It would be a great pity to stop the movement of all important works of art within the European Union. That would damage the auction trade in London. We are prominent in that trade, which helps to pull into this country overseas visitors who visit the auctions or make use of them by telephone. When those people come to London, they spend money in hotels and restaurants, on shopping and on internal travel. All that helps to generate trade and employment in the United Kingdom and to improve the tax return to the Government. We should be crazy if we were to knock the international art market in London.

It seems to me that these regulations give any country within the European Union the power to state unilaterally that any object—any painting or piece of furniture, for example—is a national treasure. There appears to be no obligation to produce any evidence or to make any kind of case. It seems that the process is purely arbitrary.

We shall have to wait a few years to see how the regulations work. My reading of them is that a state can simply claim that something is a national treasure, thereby preventing its movement. Other states do not stick to the rules as the United Kingdom does. The British tend to follow to the letter the European Union's rules in respect of trading matters. We are all aware that many continental countries are not equally conscientious. That could place us at a disadvantage. I hope for an assurance that the operation of the regulations will be subject to a thorough review.

8.50 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), I support the regulations, so far as they go, as a step in the right direction. I shall cite in a little detail—although not at length, I promise—a particular case to illustrate what can happen. The hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) referred to the looting of churches, particularly in northern Cyprus.

A cause celebre is the Panayia Kanakaria mosaics from the church of Panayia, Kanakaria in Lythrangomi, which was overrun in the northern Cyprus invasion of 1974. These were still being used for religious observance until 1976, but then abandonment was necessary. It was reported in 1979 that the church was being used as stable and that some rather precious glass mosaics dating from the 5th century BC had been stolen. They depicted Jesus in the lap of Mary with the 12 apostles. They had been located in the apse, but they were lost.

Eventually—in 1988—they surfaced on the international market. They were on offer at $3 million, I understand, and were eventually acquired by an American art dealer. I understand that $1·2 million, cut various ways, changed hands. The American art dealer, as one would expect, attempted to market the mosaics. That was reported to the Getty museum and, to her credit, Dr. Marion True informed the Cyprus Department of Antiquities that they had surfaced on the black market in art works. Their return was requested, but the request was refused. The matter was taken to court and was eventually settled in the south district of Indiana in

October 1990. The mosaics are now being restored for display in a museum in Cyprus. That is just one example of desecration and systematic looting in northern Cyprus.

I stress that, in citing this case, I do not make any political point in connection with the invasion and occupation of northern Cyprus. I accept that the administration there does much to control the situation. Self-evidently, however, it is not doing enough, as that kind of thing is still going on.

I am not attacking the Turks as Muslims desecrating Christian churches and artefacts. Indeed, I have great respect for what the Turkish Government have done to preserve a cultural heritage that predates their arrival in that part of the near east. I think of the Ayix Sophia, and, in the case of modern times, the first world war cemeteries of Gallipoli. The authorities deserve much credit for that. Indeed, they themselves have much at stake, as they have their own rich heritage of unexcavated or undeveloped archaeological sites. In fact, some of the richest sites of classical archaeology are in mainland Turkey. The country has an embarrassment of riches and a vested interest in protecting them, and it takes rigorous steps to achieve that end.

We are dealing not just with northern Cyprus and Turkey. Hon. Members have mentioned churches in this country from which valuable artefacts have been taken. There are also the churches in rural Italy, and the hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) mentioned Czechoslovakia and icons that are systematically looted from churches in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. All of us have an interest in this matter.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that this debate is restricted inasmuch as it relates to the countries of the European Union.

Mr. O'Hara: Indeed, Madam Deputy Speaker. However, I am grateful to you for allowing me to depart from the debate to such an extent. I was about to return to it.

This is not a matter of narrow national interests. It transcends national interest. It is a matter also of international scholarship. I should like to highlight an aspect of the subject that has not been mentioned so far. There has been mention of looted objects without provenance that appear on the art market. "Without provenance" is not just a term used in a catalogue. Archaeologically, it is a very important term; it means without associations in space, time or cultural and artistic affinity. When a professional archaeologist discovers an object, he or she notes its location, its level, what other objects have been found with it and where similar objects have been found.

I use this opportunity to take up a general observation by several hon. Members about the respect that nations in general owe to each other with regard to their cultural heritage. I shall try to stay within the European Union. I hope that, in the course of time, former imperial powers, such as the United Kingdom, will be more willing to return to their rightful homes artefacts that may, in their present locations, be objects of curiosity, as well as of love and appreciation. I am thinking, for example, of items in the British museum, the Victoria and Albert, the Louvre, the Glyptothek, the New York Metropolitan and even the Getty, which would be of immeasurable cultural significance in their places of origin.

The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) suggested that there should be the mass emptying of museums and the return of every object to its place of origin. That is neither necessary nor desirable. If the hon. Gentleman will excuse me, let me say that there was an element of reductio ad absurdum in the case that he put.

Mr. Jessel: Does the hon. Gentleman think that every important art object ought to be returned to its country of origin? If not, how would he distinguish between important and not so important objects?

Mr. O'Hara: I was about to say that that would not be necessary or even desirable. Cross-cultural exchange is important, for it makes for cross-cultural understanding. However, some artifacts transcend such considerations. Mention was made of the Elgin marbles—or the Parthenon marbles, as I prefer to call them. They are symbolic of the triumph of Greece over Persian aggression, of the triumph of freedom of thought, artistic expression and political institutions and of that classical tradition which we may take for granted now but without which we would not be as we are. Inferior as we are, we would be measurably worse off without that tradition.

The Elgin marbles should be with the Parthenon and the other great monuments dating from the third quarter of the 5th century BC. It is grotesque that we should be able to see the originals in the British museum while visitors to the Acropolis museum must make do with plaster copies. The British Government would do a great service internationally if they made the gesture of offering to return the Elgin marbles to Athens.

I ask those who bang a jingoistic drum to consider hypothetically what would be their reaction if Nelson's column had been removed from London by an invader and was displayed elsewhere—and I wonder how the Americans would feel if the statue of liberty had been similarly removed.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Would the hon. Gentleman return only the Elgin marbles?

Mr. O'Hara: I used them as a specific example, in response to the remarks of the hon. Member for Twickenham. I referred to objects that transcend normal considerations, and the Elgin marbles fall into that category.

I welcome the regulations as far as they go. I mentioned the damage done to scholarship if objects are looted and sold on the black market without provenance. Collectors share in that damage to scholarship.

The House will be aware of the controversy surrounding the Ortiz collection on display in the royal academy. I know, from what has been broadcast and published, that that exhibition presents many beautiful objects—but many shown in the catalogue are without provenance. They may speak to us directly with their beauty, but there is so much that they do not tell because they are displayed in relative isolation from their historical and cultural context. The more they say directly to the practised artistic or archaeological eye, the greater the frustration at what they could say, if only their provenance were known.

We should welcome the regulations in that they go some way towards protecting the cultural heritage of

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member states and international scholarship. They rightly include compensation where it is due, and rightly also offer a salutary deterrent to wanton looting and collection—without which the looters' market fails. I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central the hope that the Government will go further down that road, but we can applaud the first faltering steps that the regulations take.

9.3 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) made a thoughtful speech, and I can associate myself with many of his remarks. We all agree that the proposals are modest, but they put down a marker in more ways than one.

There is universal condemnation of those who, without regard to context and true ownership, rob, pillage and sell cultural objects and view them merely as money. That is deeply to be deplored. Commercialism has done great damage in many walks of life and certainly has not over the years enhanced many people's artistic appreciation. There cannot be a single hon. Member who would not wish to deal vigorously with those who rob ancient sites, English churches or any other historic setting of its objects.

Rightly, Madam Deputy Speaker, you called the hon. Member for Knowsley, South to task when he strayed a little beyond the bounds of the European Union. Briefly, if I may, I shall make a couple of comments. I was indeed with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) in Czechoslovakia with the all-party heritage group a few years ago. We were deeply dismayed at the way in which churches especially, but many other historic buildings, had been robbed and desecrated by those who had regard only for the monetary value that the objects could obtain.

In a European Union context, we were told that most of those objects were finding their way on to the international market through Germany, Holland and the United Kingdom. Anything that can curtail that must be good. We all want to congratulate the Minister and Her Majesty's Government on recognising in legislative form that that must be tackled.

Of course, that is only a small beginning. Later in the parliamentary Session I shall present a Bill on market ouvert that has now completed all its stages in the House of Lords. There are a number of markets in the country, of which Bermondsey is one, where, when an object is bought, the title automatically passes to the purchaser.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It depends on the hour.

Mr. Cormack: Most people who go there to buy——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It depends on the hour.

Mr. Cormack: Would the hon. Lady contain herself? I know that it is difficult——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Not all day——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has been here long enough to know that I deplore seated interventions.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Cormack: Oh, all right.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was simply making the legal point that it is crucial that the transaction is done between the hours of daylight and sunset. Otherwise it does not transfer the title. I was not seeking to criticise the hon. Member, but simply trying to make the point absolutely clear.

Mr. Cormack: Of course, that is an extremely helpful intervention. For most of most days, when whatever object is sold at Bermondsey or at a number of other markets in the country which benefit from the same medieval exceptions, the title passes to the purchaser. However innocent the purchaser may be—like a lot of innocent purchasers, I bought a number of my Christmas presents there in the past year—and however honourable the people are who go to such markets, it is nevertheless clear that they are a channel for stolen goods from the United Kingdom and beyond.

If the Government are determined to build on the foundation stone of the motion, they must pass as quickly as possible the Bill introduced by the noble Lord Renton in another place. The Bill is necessary to deal not with the market, which is a most delightful institution where I am sure every hon. Member would like to go, but with the loophole to which I have referred.

I wish to be brief because other hon. Members want to speak, and will pass to the other subject which has cropped up in almost every speech—great national treasures. The hon. Member for Knowsley, South said that he would not wish to empty the great museums of the world, if I may paraphrase him. We would all agree, because art is universal and its message is universal. Anyone in France who does not have the opportunity to learn about the art of Flanders or Italy, or to see African sculpture at its best, or to be able to consider some of the extraordinary creations from Polynesia is impoverished. The same applies to people in this country who do not have similar opportunities.

I agree that some objects are so tremendously important, so integral to the context in which they were created, that they fall into a different category. I confess that in the past, whenever the Elgin, or Parthenon, marbles were mentioned, I fell back on the orthodox defence. Repatriating the Elgin marbles would open the floodgates: what would happen to all the treasures in Apsley house that were gathered by the Duke of Wellington, and all the pictures in the national gallery that were obtained by various means? I have rehearsed my arguments parrot fashion—and, indeed, believed them; but I have begun to have second thoughts.

Politicians must be prepared to examine long-held beliefs critically, and—sometimes—to admit that they may have been wrong. I am not attacking Lord Elgin: it is clear that he acquired the marbles legitimately, and paid for them. It is equally clear that they are beautifully displayed and magnificently cared for in the British museum, and that they are seen by millions of people. It would be cussed and contrary to send them back to Greece without a guarantee that they would be seen in equally advantageous conditions, conserved in the same manner and looked after properly.

Times change, however. It is beyond doubt that even to have contemplated the return of the Elgin marbles before or during the 1960s would have been entirely wrong, but

I now believe—I say this with some hesitation—that perhaps the matter should be reconsidered. I certainly think that the marbles fall into the supreme category referred to by the hon. Member for Knowsley, South. I also think that there is a strong case for saying that such magnificent—no, that word is not sufficient to describe them; these supreme —objects of European culture, which really set the tone for civilisation in our continent, should perhaps be where the ruined but noble Parthenon still stands.

I had the great good fortune to take a party of colleagues to Greece last year, in the company of the hon. Member for Linlithgow. We were not lobbied on the subject of the marbles—no one sought to make any case to us—but, looking at the Parthenon and being bowled over by it, I could not help wondering whether the time had come for us to consider returning them. I am not being dogmatic; I am not saying that we should not keep them in any cirumstances. Certainly no one in this country has any reason to be other than proud of the way in which they are conserved and displayed by the British museum.

Mr. Jessel: I am sure that I do not need to remind my hon. Friend that the Greeks would have no intention of putting the Elgin marbles back on top of the Parthenon where they originally belonged but would instead put them in a museum in another part of Athens.

Mr. Cormack: Not in another part of Athens but hard by the Parthenon. I do not dispute that, but if the west front of Wells cathedral were in a museum in Malibu, or if the west front of Lincoln cathedral were in a museum in Germany, we might suggest that it would be better if those great carvings were brought back and displayed close to their original setting. That is all that I am saying. If one has second thoughts, I believe that one should express them to the House.

I have been slightly led astray by interventions, but I conclude as I began, by saying that this is a modest proposal and one that I warmly welcome. I congratulate the Under-Secretary of State on the way in which he introduced it, and I am delighted to learn that the Opposition will not press the motion to a Division.

9.15 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I had not intended to speak, but the comments of the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) aroused my anger. He said that, if artefacts were returned to their country of origin, the number of visitors and the income that they bring to this country would disappear. Perhaps the countries from which the artefacts came should receive that income instead of us.

He also said that some countries are not as conscientious as we are in the preservation of some works of art. I do not know much about European artefacts, but I know that a number of African objects currently in the British museum and elsewhere were made to fade away. They are religious artefacts and were supposed to turn to dust. By preserving them we are acting against the religious convictions of the people who created them, a matter that should be taken into account.

The regulations are to be welcomed. I hope that they set a precedent in terms of international co-operation. Some artefacts have been stolen or acquired in very strange ways by British collectors, the British museum and other institutions. Some were stolen from Africa during the period of enslavement and colonisation. For example, the Ghanaians had to hide the sacred Ashanti stool from the invaders in case it was stolen and brought to this country; several obelisks are being kept here against the will of their owners in Africa; and the ivory mask of the Ino of Ife, which is a sacred object from Nigeria, is being held by the British museum which refuses to return it. I was once told that the nose of the Sphinx was in the British museum, so I contacted the curator who said that the museum did not have the nose but had part of the beard. I am sure that the Egyptians would like to display it and benefit from the revenue from students and those wishing to study it.

Dr. Spink: Surely the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that the British museum has been a party to any illegality.

Mr. Grant: Far be it from me to suggest such an appalling thing, but there are those who will say that the ways in which certain articles have been acquired leave a lot to be desired. The House would do a great service to people around the world if it were to investigate the ways in which some artefacts were gathered and came to be displayed in the British museum. I also mention in passing the Crown jewels—you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will be pleased to know that I do not intend to dwell on them today —and some of my favourite pieces, such as the Cullinan diamonds or the Stars of Africa, which should be returned to that country.

What is meant by "British territory" in the regulations? Would an artefact that had been taken away from a Caribbean dependent territory such an Anguilla qualify to be returned? This is an important subject and it creates a lot of anger and emotion, certainly among people of African origin. I hope that the House will have an opportunity to have a wider debate on the issue which is not restricted only to Europe.

I thoroughly support the right of the Secretary of State to intervene and to be able to enter people's houses to chase up stolen objects. I hope that that right will apply to international objects. I hope that the regulations are merely the beginning.

9.20 pm

Mr. Fisher: With the leave of the House, I wish to make one or two remarks.

This interesting debate has tested the scope, the implementation and the likely effectiveness of the regulations. The Government have received congratulations from hon. Members on both sides of the House on introducing the regulations, but the debate has been rather like going to the dentist because it has tested the regulations, which have winced at certain points.

Will the Minister comment on how the scope of the regulations will affect British cultural treasures? The regulations may not cover much of our heritage that is in private collections or in archaeological sites because the Government do not have a designated list of national treasures. If we are to benefit from the regulations, will the Minister confirm that his Department will now set about the task of drawing up a list of national treasures? Without it, we shall not benefit and much of our heritage will not be protected by the regulations.

Will the Minister comment on how his Department will implement the regulations? He will know that only nine of

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the 52 police forces have antique liaison units. Without trained staff and officers, how will be fulfil the obligations that the regulations place on the Government?

Will the Minister comment on the effectiveness of art smuggling? He will know of press reports that works of art have been stolen from this country and have gone, via Switzerland, to France and are now on France's list of designated national treasures. That smuggling must be tackled, but it will not be unless there is much more commitment from the Government.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have paid tribute to the Government for introducing the regulations and have agreed, in the words of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, East (Mr. Cormack), that they are only a marker. Criticisms have been voiced about the Government's commitment to make them effective.

As I said earlier, the Government must implement the UNESCO treaty, UNIDROIT and the Mauritius Commonwealth convention. If they do so, they will give teeth to the regulations, which have the support of hon. Members. Severe doubts have been raised, however, about the Government's commitment to them.

9.23 pm

Mr. Sproat: Many interesting points have been made in the debate. The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) was pulled up for straying a bit wide of the subject, but I hope that we shall be able to return to the important points that he and the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) made, which do not fall within my competence in this debate. So many important points were raised that I doubt whether I shall be able to do justice to all of them in the few moments remaining. I shall go through them in chronological order and if hon. Members wish to raise matters for me to deal with in correspondence I shall gladly do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) asked me how many requests had been made for the return of objects that had been here since 1993. I can tell him that no such requests have been made so far.

I do not think that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) launched an attack on the Government's case—rather, he said that, if there was a weakness in it, it was that we did not have any commitment to the measure. I can certainly assure him that we have a very real commitment to it. The hon. Gentleman mentioned various other bodies, which I cannot really go into in great detail here. They included UNESCO, UNIDROIT and others. At some stage, we may have a debate on the whole question of cultural objects from around the world and what we should do about an object that unlawfully finds its way on to the New York market, but such matters are unfortunately not within the competence of this debate.

We do not agree with a number of central aspects of what UNESCO has suggested and do not therefore seek to incorporate them into the regime that we propose to establish. For example, UNESCO would like a specific certificate for every single cultural object. We believe that that would create an appalling bureaucractic nightmare and thus render the whole exercise totally impracticable.

Of course we are dedicated to ensuring that only lawfully exported goods find their way out of the country where they lawfully are into another, but there are ways and ways of doing that, and we believe that the regulations represent the best practical way and certainly the best compromise that we could find. It is entirely wrong to think that we are sceptical about the regulations. That is truly not so. We are extremely keen to make them succeed. We shall review their success in 1995-96. We will return to all these matters and see whether the regulations have done what we want them to do and, if not, how they can be improved.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central asked me a straightforward and fair question about whether we would take on any new staff. The answer is that we do not think that we shall have to. We have taken on two new staff already so that applications for export licences can be dealt with as quickly in the future as they have in the past. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question really depends on the amount of work arising from the regulations. Clearly, if we receive an absolute flood of requests from other EC member states saying, "Please follow up what we believe is an unlawfully exported object," more staff may be required, but our present view is that extra staff will not be needed.

Let me make it clear that we are not talking about objects that have been stolen, which rightly have to be dealt with and already can be dealt with through the courts. We are talking about objects that are unlawfully exported because they do not carry an export licence. An hon. Member might own an object perfectly legally and want to sell it in Rome. If he did not get an export licence——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to order [11 February].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Return of Cultural Objects Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 15th December, be approved.

Housing Support Grant (Scotland)

9.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move,

That the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 25th January, be approved.

I propose to keep my opening remarks brief. This is the seventh successive annual housing support grant order that I have laid before the House. Hon. Members will by now be familiar with the housing support grant system, but it may be helpful if I remind the House that housing support grant is a deficit subsidy paid to local authorities that, on the basis of reasonable assumptions about income and expenditure, would otherwise be unable to meet the costs of council housing from their rental income.

Full details of the grant settlement for the next financial year are set out in the order and the accompanying report. As always, I wish to express my thanks to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, with whom the grant settlement was discussed. Although the convention has reservations about certain aspects of the settlement, I am grateful for the constructive and helpful approach that it takes in our annual discussions on these matters.

The draft order provides that the total grant payable next year will be £25·7 million. Broadly speaking, that sum represents the difference between the eligible expenditure and the relevant income of the authorities that, in the absence of grant, would have a deficit on their housing revenue accounts. Eligible expenditure consists mainly of loan charges and of management and maintenance spending. The loan charges that we estimate local housing authorities will have to meet next year are, as usual, based on a projection of each authority's capital debt to the mid point of the financial year, taking account of new borrowing and debt redemption.

To calculate interest charges, we applied to those projections of capital debt the pool interest rate expected for the local authority debt next year. Our present estimate of that rate is 9·2 per cent. Interest rates may fluctuate, however, and I can assure the House that, if there is a significant change in the estimate of the pool rate, the Government will, in line with usual practice, introduce an appropriate variation order to adjust the amounts of grant payable. For the moment, our estimate of total loan charges to be met from local authority housing revenue accounts amounts to £494 million.

The other main item of eligible expenditure is that on the management and maintenance of housing stock. Our estimate of eligible management and maintenance spending in 1994-95 is based on an assumed average spending level of £696 per house. That represents a 15 per cent. increase over the equivalent average for the current year. Although that is a generous increase, I consider it justified by the additional demands being placed on local authorities' housing management services, particularly as a result of the tenants charter. I would add that it is further evidence of the commitment of the Scottish Office to the maintenance of the physical condition of Scotland's housing stock.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In relation to the housing support grant that is given for the repair and building of hostels, what guidelines has the Minister issued to local authorities in terms of the need to participate, to consult and have discussions with those who run and manage hostels? Will he ensure that those who run hostels have the right to determine or be involved in the way in which the money is spent?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is taking me slightly out of sequence. I am coming to that point. I am glad to say that some 20 district councils receive housing support grant for the hostels portion. The sum this year has gone up considerably as a result to £2,066,339, which is a substantial increase. I genuinely believe that local authorities are fully aware of the possibilities in that connection and it represents an indication of the co-operation between authorities and the Scottish Office.

On the other side of the equation—the estimated relevant income—the assumed average standard rent for next year has been set at £34·86 per house per week. I stress that that figure is not a forecast, guideline or recommendation. It is the average rent which, for the purposes of the grant calculations, we consider that the authorities should reasonably be expected to achieve. The actual rents charged by authorities may be higher or lower, according to their own decisions about income and expenditure.

I shall discuss the implications of the subsidy settlement for actual rents in a moment. Before doing so, I should mention the hostels portion of the housing support grant, on which we touched a moment ago. Since we decided three years ago to extend the hostels grant to all authorities with hostels, rather than limiting it to authorities that qualified on the basis of their housing revenue accounts as a whole, there has, as I mentioned, been a welcome increase in the number of hostel places made available by authorities from 1,796 in 1990 to 2,126 in 1993.

As I mentioned, the amount of grant has increased from £1·3 million to more than £2 million next year. I recognise, of course, that hostels are far from being the complete answer to homelessness, but I believe that they make a significant contribution to dealing with the single homeless. I am pleased that the partnership between the Scottish Office and local authorities in this area is definitely producing worthwhile results.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Is the Minister suggesting that any Scottish housing authority that applies for a hostels grant is likely to get it? The need for hostels for the homeless is widespread throughout Scotland and is not confined to local authorities that happen to have been given a grant this year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Authorities have received a hostels grant in response to representations. There is one case within my knowledge in which the costs were far greater than was the case for the rest of Scotland. As the costs were considered excessive, the grant was not allowed. In general, authorities that are eligible and apply get the grant.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the Minister aware of Landsborough house in Ayr, which is provided by Kyle and Carrick district council? It was named in honour of a former councillor, the late James Landsborough, and is an excellent provision for the single homeless in Ayr. Is the Minister also aware that, due to the lack of foresight and to the inept planning of

[Mr. George Foulkes]

Tory-controlled Kyle and Carrick district council, that newly equipped hostel will have to be knocked down? Is not that completely ridiculous and a waste of public expenditure? Will the Minister tell us exactly how he will deal with that in relation to the expenditure that will be required to replace Landsborough house and to provide sufficient alternative accommodation?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Kyle and Carrick district council is receiving the hostels portion housing support grant of £50,032, if I have read the order correctly. The priorities chosen by the council are a matter for it. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the details, because I have not been directly involved and it would not be appropriate for the Scottish Office to be involved in choosing local priorities, which should more properly be a matter for local democracy. If the hon. Gentleman wishes, I am prepared to look into that point. Perhaps he will give me a note of the circumstances. I shall, of course, reply to him fully.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Minister said that there would be about 2,000 places for the homeless in hostels. What is the current level of homelessness in Scotland in terms of individuals registered as homeless with local authorities?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of homeless people have increased. Two thirds of the applicants have given as the immediate cause of homelessness the fact that their family or friends are no longer willing or able to accommodate them. Shelter's figures show a 15 per cent. increase in homelessness. The Government have seen the figures. As Shelter has said, most of the increase related to Glasgow and at least part of the increase seems to be due to under-counting in previous years rather than to a real increase in 1992-93. Scottish Office statisticians have discussed the figures for Glasgow with a view to publishing more accurate estimates shortly. In my winding-up speech, I shall give the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) our best estimate of the numbers.

General fund contributions represent a subsidy from council tax payers to council tenants. This sort of subsidy is indiscriminate because it benefits all tenants regardless of their circumstances, and it is unnecessary because tenants who are unable to meet the costs of their housing receive assistance in the form of housing benefit. Therefore, I make no apoligy for the proposals in the Housing Revenue Account General Fund Contribution Limits (Scotland) Order 1994 to bar authorities from budgeting to make general fund contributions next year.

Authorities were consulted individually about these proposals and only nine of them saw fit to make representations on the matter. I have examined those representations carefully and concluded that none of them presents a case that is strong enough to justify allowing them to make a general fund contribution.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): When the Government previously allocated funds to the homeless in Renfrew district, the council was allowed to buy four houses in the private sector. When the local folk complained about that, the information that they received from the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), the Under-Secretary, was that the district council could have used the money to improve flats. When Renfrew district council received the money, what information did it receive about how to spend the money —whether it could be used to refurbish council flats for the homeless or whether the council was forced to buy private houses?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We issued a special allocation of more than £20 million for special projects. The hon. Gentleman may have a point in saying that it could have been done better. An enormous amount has been achieved throughout Scotland as a result of those special projects, and that is the view of Shelter as well. We are learning all the time. If the hon. Gentleman has recommendations to make, they will be taken into account in the future.

Mr. Graham *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am tempted to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I want to develop this point.

The effect of the subsidy proposals on authority rent levels will vary. Decisions on such rent levels are a matter for authorities, but I accept that some of them will be influenced by the levels of subsidies. We should not, however, exaggerate the extent of that influence.

A large majority of authorities in Scotland do not receive housing support grant in respect of their mainstream council housing or make general fund contributions. Clearly, the subsidy proposals will have no impact on the rent decisions of those authorities. For the 17 authorities that currently receive grant in respect of their council housing, the effect of the change in the level of grant from this year to next will vary. In most cases, the grant is a relatively minor component of housing revenue grant income and the impact of the change in grant levels is likely to be outweighed by the decisions of authorities on such matters as management and maintenance spending.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The Minister will know that many tenants who are on co-operative or district council waiting lists are offered community-based housing association properties. Is he concerned that many of the community-based housing associations where tenants find housing are facing rent increases of 30, 40 or 50 per cent? Surely he should be concerned about what is happening in that area, because hardship is being created.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Many of those matters must be discussed at the local level. Certainly, the levels of housing association grant in Scotland are on average higher than those south of the border. The purpose of that is to ensure that housing associations continue to cater for their traditional clients.

The amount of housing benefit that will be paid this year is likely to be more than £750 million. Of that amount, it is estimated that more than £500 million is likely to be paid to local authority tenants—and paid by the Department of Social Security to local authorities. That is a significant factor in relation to rents. As I have made clear, decisions on council rents are matters for local authorities, and the Government's influence on those decisions is limited. Nevertheless, it has become a tradition——

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West) *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will develop the point, and then give way to the hon. Gentleman. It has become a tradition at my meetings with the convention for me to forecast the overall average rent increase for the coming year, despite the Government's subsidies forming such a small proportion of the housing revenue account income. That makes it extremely difficult to forecast average rent increases with any accuracy.

Despite that, I advised the convention this year that I expected rent increases for 1994-95 to average between 4 and 5 per cent. That remains my best estimate, although I note that a number of authorities, including Glasgow, have already announced average rent increases for next year that are well below my estimate of 5 per cent.

I know that Opposition Members will consider that, when compared with current rates of inflation, a rent increase of 5 per cent. is too high. I must remind them that year by year, local authorities are making real improvements in the management and maintenance services that they provide to their tenants. It is right that those extra costs should be met by those tenants who can afford to do so. Tenants who cannot afford to meet their housing costs receive housing benefit and are fully protected against rent increases.

Mr. Canavan: The Minister will recall that he and I were elected to Parliament on the same day. At that time, the Labour Government had introduced the whole system of housing support grants and virtually every housing authority in Scotland qualified for assistance under that system. We now have a situation where virtually none of them do. My local authority gets no support at all, except under the hostel agreement.

The flagship of the Government's housing policy seems to be Scottish Homes, the national housing authority. The authority announced a 6 per cent. increase in rents early this week, which is more than twice the rate of inflation. How can the Minister justify that increase, at a time when he is imposing a limit of a 1·5 per cent. increase on public sector workers' wages? That is a disgrace, and it is a cut in the living standards of working-class people and their families. Is it not about time that the Government, and the Minister in particular, recognised that and took action to give housing authorities, including Scottish Homes, sufficient resources to improve the housing stock, as well as recognise that a reasonable level——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making an intervention, not a speech.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The decision on rents was a matter for the Scottish Homes board and, as a result, more will be spent on Scottish Homes' stock and on the public sector tenants who are living within that stock.

There has also been a movement away from generalised subsidies towards personalised subsidies, through housing benefit. I mentioned the sum of £750 million which is to be spent on housing benefit in Scotland. I defy any hon. Member to say that that is a small sum. It is an enormous sum, and justly so. In that context, the proposals before the House make up a fair and reasonable subsidy package. They balance the interests of tenants, the council taxpayer and the national taxpayer. I commend the order to the House.

9.48 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Here we are once again, having our annual February debate on the housing support grant order. The needs are greater once again, and the amount of cash keeps getting smaller. I notice, incidentally, that there are no nationalists in the Chamber; nor were there any in the Committee room upstairs where we were discussing sheriff court fees. We must conclude that the homeless and the state of Scotland's housing are matters far too unexciting for the three stooges to bother with.

I took a bet with myself on how long it would take for a Conservative Member to mention the irrelevance of housing benefit. I did not think that the Minister himself would introduce it so early in his speech. As Opposition Members have pointed out, housing benefit is obviously aimed at householders; it has nothing to do with building and repairing housing stock.

Today, we learn of the housing support grant—the only direct Government support for council housing—for 1994-95. Once again we see a drastic fall, from £36 million to £25·7 million, to be shared among just some of our housing authorities while others will receive not a penny. That is a cut of 28·4 per cent. As was pointed out, in 1980 the figure was £228 million, which was shared among all housing authorities. In that year, general fund contributions provided a further £100 million or thereabouts for housing.

This year, Glasgow's housing grant will be cut from £11 million to roughly £1·5 million. Edinburgh, the capital, will receive £0·5 million for hostels and nothing at all for its mainstream housing. It is hard to credit that our capital city is receiving not one penny for its mainstream housing.

Incidently, I wonder why the Minister does not have printed on the order, which is available from the Vote Office, a table showing each authority's housing support grant for mainstream housing and for hostels, showing who receives what, what they received last year, and who receives nothing at all. Would that not be a useful piece of information under the tenants charter?

How does the Minister come up with such an absurdly irrelevant, useless, out-of-touch, global figure of £25·7 million and such unfair and inadequate grants for some authorities and nothing at all for others? Believe it or not, one thing he does is to create a grant formula based not on actual levels of local authority income and expenditure but on notional levels of money spent and money coming in.

When I describe how the general portion of housing support grant alone is made up, hon. Members will see for themselves the scope for cheating homeless people and council tenants out of their rights. The Scottish Office's own document states:

"the amounts by which the sum of estimated loan charges, estimated management and maintenance expenditure, estimated rents lost, estimated capital expenditure funded from current revenue and estimated other expenditure exceeds the sum of estimated rental income, estimated general fund contributions, estimated balances brought forward and estimated other income."

There are eight items to estimate, but hardly a hint of reality to be seen in any of them.

Let us consider rents lost. If a council decides to redevelop some of its houses, as happened in Glasgow and in other parts of Scotland, which it does with the full knowledge and co-operation of the Government, is it not farcical and unfair if it loses housing support grant because houses are standing empty and earning no rental income?

[Mrs. Maria Fyfe]

Instead of assuming 3 per cent. or any other percentage of income lost, why does the Minister not act on the reality of the actual rents lost?

When discussing this matter with local authorities, the Minister had the cheek to put the tenants charter on the agenda. He mentioned the right to repair. Remembering the year-on-year reductions in housing support grant and the number of eligible local authorities, we might ask "What with?"

The Minister builds in groundless assumptions all over the place. In his calculations he began by grossly overestimating income from rents. He anticipated an average increase in rents from £26·51 to about £34·86 a week. In support of that, so he said, he called in aid the rents for Scottish Homes. Considering that his decisions affect the rents of Scottish Homes, is that not like a burglar telling people they have no right to complain as he took even more from the house across the road?

Even if actual rents rise by 5 per cent. next year, the Minister's estimate of rental income will still be £236 million higher than the reality, and that fairy tale helps him to reduce housing support grant. The Government's assumed figure for management and maintenance for 1994-95 is less than the amount that authorities have told the Minister that they need to plan to spend. The Minister has increased the assumed figure per house by 15 per cent. Nevertheless, he comes nowhere near closing the gap between his notional figures and the reality—assuming that the local authority receives any housing support grant.

At present, only 29 housing authorities receive a grant of some type. Of those, 12 only do so as a result of receiving hostels grants. Just 17 out of a total of 56 receive housing support grant for their mainstream houses, and next year even fewer will do so—13 only will receive even that grossly inadequate support.

The settlement per house gets less and less every year. It is important to realise that fact when considering housing support grant figures each year. Not only are fewer authorities made eligible every year, but the amount per house, when one considers the remaining housing stock in the local authority sector, gets less year on year. In 1992, 697,000 houses received housing support grant of £47·5 million, or £68·10 per house. In 1993, the housing stock was down to 668,000, and £53·69 was received per house. In 1994, 646,000 houses are to receive £39·74 per house. That illustrates the way in which the Government, far from responding to the housing need in Scotland, on that per house basis are demonstrably worsening the condition of Scotland's public sector housing stock.

Last year, in the debate on the Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1993, my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) asked the Minister what news he had for those people managing women's refuges to meet the growing demand for such hostel accommodation. The Minister replied that they are financed, not from housing support grant, but from the aggregate external finance. He did not commit himself to meeting the needs, but simply contented himself with a bureaucratic and technical answer—and still the refuges turn away many women whom they cannot help.

I ask the Minister, why do only a minority of housing authorities in Scotland qualify for hostel accommodation grant? Does the Minister think that homeless people, people needing hostels under care in the community, and battered wives needing shelter, live only in certain parts of Scotland but do not exist in others? Should he not organise a grant system which meets the needs of the most desperate of our people?

Last year we pointed out that children in bed-and-breakfast accommodation are more likely than others to suffer ill health. We emphasised the need for housing adapted to suit people with disabilities. We told the Minister of overcrowding in our constituencies. Since then, in addition, we have had the damning evidence of the Scottish Homes survey—the Minister may not remember its existence—commissioned by the Scottish Office about the condition of Scottish housing. Last year, in the debate on the Housing Suppoort Grant (Scotland) Order 1993, the Minister said that the survey

"will be enormously helpful in pointing the way to effective targeting of resources in the future"—[*Official Report*, 17 February 1993; Vol. 219, c. 445.]

Where are those extra resources? Why is the money being cut instead of increased?

At the current level of funding, by 2000 some people will still live in the damp houses that they now occupy. Where is the serious money to treat damp houses and prevent so many of our nation's children from growing up with asthma and bronchitis due to the damp and difficult-to-heat housing in which their parents are forced to live.

Hon. Members have pointed out that rents are increasing inexorably. In 1979, the average council house rent was £4·92 a week. Under the present Government, tenants will pay about £28 next year. Those rents have increased well in excess of inflation. Tenants are paying more and getting less for their money.

Thirteen years ago, Scottish housing authorities built 7,000 houses for rent in one year. In 1992, they could build only 1,650. They have even had to pull down housing of sound construction which has deteriorated as a result of lack of investment. The Government have created a shocking waste of public money.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) pointed out at Labour's local government and European conference a week ago, we have called time and again on this dogma-bound Government to allow local authorities to embark on a new programme of house building for the thousands of homeless families in our communities and the thousands more young couples who desperately need homes of their own. We should provide jobs for building workers and suppliers across Britain who are crying out for new orders.

Once again, the housing support grant is an abysmal failure. It is a smack in the face and a sneer of cold disdain to every one of our people who is inadequately housed from a Government who long ago lost any sense of being a Government for all our people.

I call on my hon. Friends to vote against the order. We should tell the Government to tear it up and come back with an order that addresses the problem. In future, the Government should not come to the House with such grossly inadequate funding for local authorities when they know so well the size of the crying need.

10 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Glasgow, where I was this afternoon, is experiencing one of its worst days of winter and we are experiencing similar

conditions down here in London. I am grateful to organisations such as the Simon Community, the Salvation Army, the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church for doing something to help our homeless people. The Government stand condemned for failing to do what those charitable organisations are trying to do. How can the Government claim that, with housing support grant, they are helping to build more hostels when they are aware of the terrible pressures that local authorities face?

My native city of Glasgow has an excellent record in respect of helping the single adult homeless. The Government have done nothing but try to hinder the city. Without finance, local authorities cannot help the single homeless.

There have been two by-elections in my constituency. Like many other members of the Labour party, I had an opportunity to canvass and meet people on housing estates. It is a sad indictment on us that some of those housing estates are worse than they were 30 or 40 years ago.

Tenants remember when some of those housing estates were excellent places in which to live. As a result of the Government, who claim to be the Government of law and order, turning a blind eye to the antisocial behaviour of some tenants, other tenants are living in fear. They are not secure in their own homes.

Head teachers have reported that children are taking it in turns to stay away from school because at least one child in a family has to remain at home to stop the home from being burgled. The Government are simply taking finance away from local authorities. If the Government are serious about law and order, they should ensure that every tenement flat has a security entry system. The Minister should provide money for such systems.

If tenement flats had security entry systems, elderly and young people would know that no one was prowling around the back door, on the landing or up the close trying to see whether anyone was at home. Those systems would help to reduce crime. They would also help tenants who take pride in their properties, who wash the stairs and keep the gardens clean. They would know that no passer-by could get in to destroy what they had worked hard to achieve.

Years ago, if tenants—possibly elderly people—were standing around, strangers were not able to enter. Nowadays, elderly people are frightened to tackle strangers, so they need a secure system. The Minister ought to give serious consideration to that matter in the case of every council property and, indeed, every private property. Grants are available.

I am thinking especially of multi-storey flats. I have heard Conservative Members criticise local authorities for building such flats. Actually, some of them are beautiful and a joy to live in. I wish there were one in London that I could use four days a week. There are several such buildings in my constituency. The Government of the day forced the local authorities to construct multi-storey flats, threatening to withdraw grant from those refusing to build non-traditional housing. That is the type of thing with which the House concerns itself at present.

If the Minister seriously wants to secure an improved quality of life for the tenants of multi-storey flats, he should make provision for a concierge service and for camera surveillance at points of entry. In my constituency we have what are the equivalent of three streets rising into the sky. In some cases, anyone can gain entry—drug addicts and burglars, for example. There is evidence that a block of flats with a concierge service is a much better place in which to live.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman will have his own opportunity to speak.

The Minister mentioned Scottish Homes. I realise that this debate is about local authorities, but there is a comparison to be made here. I suspect that the Minister is more interested in looking after Scottish Homes than in looking after local authorities. After all, that is where his placemen are. The Minister can pick the Sir James Mellons of this world, but he cannot pick the democratically elected local authorities and the housing convenors. It must be said that most of the Scottish Homes property in my constituency is excellent. It is well looked after and is a credit to tenants and management.

The Minister is aware, however, of my deep concern about some of the community-based housing associations, some of which are getting too big for their boots. An association in the constituency of Hillhead increased rents by 50 per cent. What would happen if a local authority did that? When an increase of £1 a month was proposed for dwellings in Glasgow, there were almost riots in George square. Trade bodies, the tenants' association and everyone else turned out.

In my constituency, some rents have increased by 30 per cent. What makes the situation worse is the fact that 75 per cent. of the rent income of some community-based housing associations is spent on administration—paying for officials. Thus owner-occupiers in the catchment area are not contributing as much as those who pay rent, resulting in an unfair burden on the latter. The agency responsible is none other than Scottish Homes.

Many tenants who have been with a community-based housing association for 15 or 16 years find, when they apply for a house or a flat in another part of the association's area—perhaps because of arthritis or some other disability—that they are granted a change of dwelling only if they opt for an assured tenancy instead of a secure tenancy. The Conservative party talks about citizens charters and people's rights, but every day of the week in my constituency tenants are losing their right to appeal to a tribunal. I hope that the Minister will examine that aspect.

One terrible case with which I am dealing concerns a woman whose husband left the matrimonial home. She has been told by the housing association—which is an agent for Scottish Homes—that she can remain in the property, but on an assured tenancy. That is the worst kind of discrimination. Right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House fought for women's rights and now those rights are being lost.

There is no sheltered housing in the Haghill and Germiston communities in my constituency, yet the houses there were built before the war—under the John Wheatley legislation. Some tenants have lived there since they were two or three years old, after leaving the slums and other parts of the city. Now that they are of advanced years, there is no sheltered housing for them. To obtain that, they must leave the friends and relatives with whom they have lived all their lives. Why should not those who have put something into society get something back at the end of their days?

[Mr. Martin]

There have been many debates about council house sales. I am on record as saying in Glasgow district council in 1974 that we should experiment before the Government moved in and forced a local authority to sell its housing stock. Some of my hon. Friends were also councillors at that time. Perhaps that is how I got a reputation for being a so-called right winger. The sale of council houses may be successful in desirable areas, but young couples are not getting the chance that their mothers and fathers, and even their grandparents, had of obtaining a better house.

How can the Minister say to young couples who have been paid off by the railway workshop or the cigarette factory in my constituency, "You can buy your council house"? They do not have two ha'pennies to rub together. They cannot even afford to send their children to the Christmas treat at school. How can the Minister say, "If you want a nicer house, buy one"? Local authorities must have the flexibility to give a chance to young couples who have served their apprenticeship in bad housing.

The Minister sold off decent housing. It was a popular move. In my constituency, some local authority houses that were bought at a discount for £10,000 have changed hands several times and are now on the market for £40,000. Some people have done very well, but unless the Minister gives local authorities the money to buy two, three, four and five apartment houses, there will be losers. Those people who will lose deserve something better than they have now.

10.13 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I may say to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin), as one right winger to another, that I agree with him on the voluntary bodies issue. We are fortunate that there are such bodies, which show that they care and take action.

I welcome the comments of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary about what I would call realistic rents. I have always believed that local authorities should charge realistic rents, which would ensure that properties were maintained in a viable condition. If we had done so many years ago, we would have had funds available through the rents system to deal with the massive problems of dampness and so on. Housing benefit takes care of those who cannot pay, and it should be the vehicle through which funds are used to ensure that local authorities maintain their stock in a viable condition.

While I am sure that the hon. Member for Springburn is right in saying that some multi-storey buildings are nice places in which to live, he must agree that most people, given the option, would prefer to live in a different kind of property. That is my experience of people wishing to obtain housing.

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) referred to the security of some of those properties and to the security systems on the doors. Does my hon. Friend agree that such matters are for the local authority rather than for the Government? Is he aware that in the city of Aberdeen many local authority properties are having such systems fixed?

Mr. Walker: I agree with my hon. Friend. If local authorities had had realistic rents from the outset, all those things would have been funded adequately and properly. The hon. Gentleman's reference is another example of insufficient cash to deal with problems.

The hon. Member for Springburn mentioned housing associations. I am sure that he is right in believing that some housing associations may have caused problems. In my constituency, the vast majority of the housing associations do a good job and I commend them.

However, the hon. Gentleman highlighted something that should be examined—the incidents in which individuals, for a variety of reasons, are forced into a transfer of tenancy. They should not be forced from a secured tenancy, with all that that means, into taking an assured tenancy with the resulting changes in the parameters. That question needs to be examined and perhaps the Government will take it on board.

In conclusion, as I know that many hon. Members want to speak, may I say that I am delighted that at long last we are beginning to talk in a sane way about how we fund local authority housing.

10.17 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I, too, recall speaking in the same debate on 17 February last year. It seems that, one year on, matters have not greatly improved. As we heard, rents have continued to rise and, according to Shelter, homelessness in Scotland has risen by 15 per cent. in the past year. Of Scotland's housing stock, 4·7 per cent. is still below a tolerable standard.

As the Minister knows, I have a special interest in housing in rural areas, where the problem is especially acute. Again, homelessness has increased and the proportion of housing of a low standard is larger than in other areas. In 1991, according to Scottish Homes figures, 6·6 per cent. of rural housing was below tolerable standard as against 4·3 per cent. in urban areas. Low wages, which tend to prevail in rural areas, especially in the highlands and islands, mean that, usually, local people cannot afford to pay market prices for housing. In 1990, Market Research Scotland found that 83 per cent. of people living in rural areas could not afford to pay more than £30 a week. Those people are not only facing that problem of hardship, but face higher living expenses than those in the rest of the country.

In many areas, the situation is exacerbated by the demand for holiday homes. I spoke about that last year and the Minister wrote to explain the Government's thinking behind the 50 per cent. council tax discount for holiday homes in Scotland and in England, especially in places such as the Lake District, but, of course, not in Wales. I am still worried about the lack of any attempt to secure a population balance in small communities which can so easily end up lifeless. I have seen it all too often: every second house has become a holiday home, people have left and the place is dead.

As was mentioned by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), Scottish Homes has just announced an average rent increase of £2·07p a week—6 per cent. —from 1 April. The Minister said that that was not a matter for him: I think that we shall hear the phrase "not a matter for me" more and more in this place. But whatever gloss the Minister puts on the housing position and whatever figures are bandied about, I still receive far too many letters about housing problems in rural parts of my constituency. Let me give two examples.

An ambulance man employed in accident and emergency services, and restricted to a certain rural area —albeit quite a large one—by operational requirements, has been on the housing waiting list since 1991. Although that man plays an important part in the community, he has to live in a caravan: to me, that means that he is homeless. It is dreadful that someone who gives service to the community cannot obtain a home. I wonder what he thinks as he passes all the empty holiday homes; I am sure that he is not too happy.

I received a letter about a man with two children, whose wife is pregnant again. He lost his job when the company for which he worked went bankrupt, through no fault of his. He was unable to keep up the mortgage payments; all four lived in one room—lent by a friend—for six months or so and then in a box room in a relative's house. Eventually, the man managed to get another job, which took him away for two out of every three weeks. That relieved the situation somewhat, but the stress and anxiety took their toll on his wife's health. I am glad to say that, after a year, Argyll and Bute district council housed the family, but it was a long and difficult year for them.

According to the district council's housing plan for 1993-98, the housing condition survey found that much of the stock in my constituency—in both the public and the private sector—was in urgent need of repair. The cost was estimated to be some £163 million and that was based on 1989 prices. Where on earth will the council find that kind of money?

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I am sure that in the hon. Lady's constituency—as in parts of mine, such as the islands of Arran and Cumbrae—there is support across the political spectrum for allowing the council to stop selling houses in areas where there is high demand and little supply. The Scottish Office, however, will not even make the concession of allowing the council to stop selling at any point in the decline of the stock. Surely, in rural communities experiencing the circumstances described by the hon. Lady, the least that the Government could do would be to allow authorities that discretion, given that it is not even a matter of local political contention.

Mrs. Michie: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He is absolutely right. Over the years I have advocated that local authorities should be allowed to stop selling because they know what the problems are. How can it be regarded as dreadful that some thought should be given to a change of use being granted before family houses are turned into holiday homes and thus adding to the numbers that are left empty.

I am sure that the Minister will be delighted to hear that I intend to finish on a positive note——

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the hon. Lady agree that the capital debt overhang afflicts housing in many Scottish councils, including the central belt and the rural communities? The position is especially bad in the rural areas because more housing stock there has been sold. Is she aware that the entire rental income of at least one council in Scotland is not enough to cover the interest payments on the accumulated capital debt? In such circumstances, how on earth is it possible for a council to invest in its housing stock?

Mrs. Michie: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because he has reinforced my argument. I remarked that Argyll and Bute district council was asking where it would get the money to tackle its housing problem.

As I was saying, the Minister will be delighted to know that I shall finish on a positive note. Some harsh words have been said about Scottish Homes and in the past I have accused it of not honouring its promises. However, I welcome the joint announcement that was made last week by Scottish Homes and Highland and Islands Enterprise that they are carrying out a major study of the link between rural housing availability and economic development.

The population of the highlands and islands has been rising steadily over the past 20 years and is currently about 370,000. Although people are arriving, many indigenous people are having to move away and the lack of housing in rural areas is seen as a major constraint on the economic and social development which is so necessary if local people are to have the opportunity to stay if they so wish. I know that there are particular problems in the western isles and north-west Sutherland where the reduction in population is a cause of great concern.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise said:

"Economic development creates demand for housing, while a lack of suitable housing is a block to the creation of employment which underpins communities. This is particularly true of remote rural areas, where the gain or loss of a few households or jobs can make the difference between a community progressing or declining."

I wholly agree with that statement. I am glad that the study will include the remoter parts of the highland region, the Western Isles, Shetland and my own constituency of Argyll and Bute. I want to put it on record that the joint study is being undertaken. I hope that it will be carried out in good time and that any recommendations will be acted on speedily. I shall certainly be watching very carefully to see that they are carried out.

10.28 pm

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): When some of my colleagues became aware that I might try to catch your eye to be allowed to speak on housing, Madam Speaker, they queried whether I should be allowed to do so, bearing in mind that I represent Strathkelvin and Bearsden, a constituency usually associated with leafy suburbs in which the majority of the population own their own homes. However, as the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) knows, that is not quite a true picture. It has been suggested that the Government recession has brought us to such a state that even the good burghers of Bearsden are in difficulty over council housing.

There is little council housing in the Bearsden part of my constituency—a small sheltered housing development —but that is not the case in Strathkelvin. In Strathkelvin, of which I represent a part, there are 8,055 council houses, of which 4,834 are in my constituency. The majority of those, just over 3,000, are in Kirkintilloch, there are some in Bishopbriggs and the rest are in Lennoxtown and Torrance. Those are looked after by an excellent district council with a tip-top housing department.

The housing stock is kept in good repair. The council has just completely replaced all window frames and installed insulation. It has a devolved, democratic system of fulfilling the wishes of the people of Kirkintilloch, Bishopbriggs, Lennoxtown and all other areas. It is responsive to people's wishes and needs in this important

[Mr. Sam Galbraith]

area. Lest anyone persists in the notion that my constituency consists of leafy suburbs, let me say that that is not the case.

Once again, the Government have given nothing by way of housing support grant to Strathkelvin. Does that mean that there are no problems in my area? Certainly not. My surgery is regularly filled with people looking for houses. They have been looking for many years, but are making no progress. Many of them want exchanges. Homelessness is a problem in my constituency. The homeless write to me and come to my surgery, but they have been given nothing by the Government.

The Minister will tell us that the housing support grant is basically deficit-based. He will say that it is based on estimated relevent income, eligible maintenance, relevant accounts, estimated this and estimated that. That means that it is plucked out of the air. Is all that estimation relevant or in any way related to the needs of people in the area? It should be related to those needs, but in my area it clearly is not. How can it be, when the Minister gives no housing support grant to combat major homelessness and help people who have been waiting six or seven years for council houses?

It is clear that the method of calculating the formula is wrong and it is time to return to the drawing board and reassess the calculation so that it relates purely to need. I hope that the next housing support grant proposals will relate to that and will give my district authority, which spends money wisely and well and looks after its housing stock, a greater amount.

My housing authority is so highly regarded in the district that residents of Scottish Homes who are being offered new landlords wish the district authority to take over. There are 488 houses——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Galbraith: I shall certainly give way to my hon. and learned Friend.

Sir Nicolas Fairbairn: Local authorities hold 100,000 unoccupied houses. If they were occupied would not that do something for the homeless?

Mr Galbraith: If they were occupied there would be people in them! That would certainly do somethng for those people. As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, there are often good reasons for such houses being unoccupied. I shall not abuse my hon. and learned Friend any more. He is a splendid friend of mine and we have spent much time together.

The issue has been raised many times. My constituents who currently reside in Scottish Homes wish the district authority to be their new landlord. Yet that choice has not been open to them, because of the connivance and instruction of the Government, who spend all their time talking about choice, freedom of the individual and devolving power, which we all realise is a complete fallacy because they give choice only when it suits them.

This is an issue of which the Government should be ashamed. I trust, therefore, that the Minister will use his good powers with Scottish Homes to allow it to conduct a ballot and thereby give my constituents who live in its housing the opportunity to propose Strathkelvin district as its landlord, because it has shown itself to have a highly efficient, effective, devolved and accountable housing management system which is a credit to the area. I trust, therefore, that, when the Minister proposes the housing support grant next year it will adequately recognise the needs of my community.

10.35 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): From those who have participated in the debate, it is clear that the housing problems of the city of Glasgow are desperate.

I held a surgery last weekend. Thirteen constituents attended, 10 of whom raised issues related to the standard of their housing in one form or another—repairs, overcrowding, dampness and similar problems. Hon. Friends who represent constituencies not only in Glasgow but in conurbations throughout Scotland receive such complaints regularly.

The housing support grant figures that the Minister gave this evening betrayed once again the lack of grasp that he and his fellow Ministers have of the housing needs of Scottish people. The figures were not based on local authorities' estimates of their needs. The Scottish Office, contrary to those estimates, ignores the actual income and expenditure of local authorities. It regularly meets the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the larger local housing authorities, but continually ignores the advice and information that it is given.

Housing support grant has dropped from £47·5 million in 1992-93 to £35·9 million last year and to under £26 million this year. Grant for Glasgow, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) said, has the most severe housing problems in Scotland, has decreased from £11 million to just over £1·5 million. That is woefully inadequate. The Minister has been told time and again by Glasgow district council and by housing authorities that considerable additional resources are necessary and that the problems will be addressed only by debt write-off. He continues to ignore that, and the problems continue to mount.

At present, 60 per cent. of the housing revenue account, of which housing support grant once provided a major part but now provides only a minor part, is spend on repaying local authorities' loans. Tenants are more likely to be paying off interest on those loans than getting any improvement in the housing stock in return for their rent.

Housing support grant is now under £26 million for the whole of Scotland, but only 13 years ago it was £228 million. If the Government convince my hon. Friends and me that the situation is improving, they will have done a remarkable job because we all know from our surgeries that the problems are getting worse rather than better.

COSLA calculates that, on a cumulative basis, about £1·8 billion has been taken out of housing resources in Scotland in the past decade. That direct Government support would have been available if funding had continued at anything like its level when housing support grant was introduced. That is a massive amount and I invite the Minister to comment on what it could have done in terms not only of building new houses, treating dampness and repairing leaking roofs and ill-fitting windows, all of which can contribute to the incidence of chronic illness throughout the central belt of Scotland, but of providing shelter for homeless people.

When I spoke in the debate a year ago I highlighted the plight of homeless people in Glasgow and mentioned some of the organisations seeking to help them. Their situation is worse now than it was a year ago. The resources of the Glasgow Council for Single Homeless have been slashed, and the Stopover project, a vital refuge for young single homeless people, has been closed for the past three months, with no sign of when it will reopen although it was supposed to do so at the beginning of the year.

The situation continues to get worse. In the meantime, the Government's answer, which is highlighted in the figures put before the House today, is grossly to overestimate the rent increases that can be charged and grossly to underestimate the management and maintenance costs that local authorities will face. It would be interesting if we could reverse that equation even once, to try to pull back some of the ground that has been lost over the past 10 years.

There are many appalling homes, particularly throughout the central belt of Scotland, and thousands of people without any home at all. According to the figure that the Minister cited, the total number of places being made available in hostels throughout Scotland is just over 2,000. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that hostels are not the answer to the problem of homelessness, but when set against the total number of homeless in Scotland that figure comes nowhere near to addressing the problem.

Over the past few days, there have been comments about the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth), the most interesting of which was that the hon. Gentleman has three homes. I do not know what anyone does with three homes. I continually meet people who would do anything to get one home. *[Interruption.]* I will gladly give way to the Minister of State, Department of Employment, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), if he wants to intervene. Apparently he does not.

The problem of home ownership needs to be looked at. The Government say that they are trying to deal with the problem, yet their supporters include the hon. Member for Finchley, who quite happily owns three homes. The hon. Member for Stirling sees nothing wrong in that. Other hon. Members such as the hon. Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) and for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) think nothing of trading with council houses as though it were an excellent way of making extra money.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Watson: Yes. The hon. and learned Gentleman is always amusing.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I presume that the hon. Gentleman has a home in Scotland; and, as he lives down here, he will also have one in London. That is two.

Mr. Watson: I am glad that the hon. and learned Gentleman has managed to put one and one together and make two; for this evening, that is a quite remarkable achievement. Of course I have a home in London and a home in Glasgow. But the hon. Member for Finchley has his constituency in London, so he should require no more than one home.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. We are talking about housing in Scotland, not Finchley.

Mr. Watson: I agree that this is a debate on housing support, Mr. Morris, and I do not suppose Finchley gets much housing support. I drew attention to it merely to contrast the situation with the problems that I meet daily in Scotland.

Many Scottish local authorities have a number of houses lying empty and unable to be let to tenants. There are reasons for that. There is certainly no lack of demand for them and no lack of will on the part of local authorities to repair them and make them habitable. The local authorities lack the resources to enable them to make those houses habitable and secure and to re-let them. The Minister has had this point put to him on countless occasions, especially in relation to Glasgow, but has refused to take the arguments on board.

The level of housing support grant has continued to diminish as a result of the Secretary of State once again making those totally unrealistic assumptions, overestimating the amount that will be raised from rents and underestimating the appropriate level of repairs and maintenance. When will the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that the Scottish Office figures that he uses to calculate both those figures are well wide of the mark?

The question of rents was referred to earlier. In respect of income from rents, the Minister has told us that he is assuming that rents will be £34 and above per week next year. That is about 31 per cent. higher than the present average rent. The figure of 5 per cent. was used earlier, and it was pointed out that even that is well above the current rate of increase in the cost of living. The Minister anticipates a figure of approximately six times that. Even if rents rose by 5 per cent., rental income in Scotland would still be about £235 million short. The Minister must be more realistic in his assumptions.

It bears repeating that housing support grant is now the only direct Government support for council housing in Scotland. For next year, projected income has been overstated by about £235 million, with maintenance expenditure overestimated by £18 million. *[Interruption.]* The Minister may think that that is a matter for some amusement. Those I meet weekly in my constituency do not. They are desperately concerned and the housing department in Glasgow is equally desperately concerned.

At the Minister's December meeting with COSLA, he stated that any authority which faced an above average rent increase for the next year, based on his assumptions, would be treated sympathetically when it applied to receive recognition of the requirement to make a general fund contribution. He said in his opening remarks that, of the nine authorities that had applied, apparently with his encouragement, not one had been permitted to do so. The Minister rejected all the submissions and he did not say why. I hope that he will take the opportunity to give his reasons when he winds up. What is the point in encouraging local authorities to make use of the general fund contribution when none of them has been allowed to do so?

We must look at the picture across Scotland as a whole. It has already been said that only 13 of the local authorities are getting the mainstream grant from the housing support grant, only 21 are getting the hostels grant and, astonishingly, only 6 per cent. are getting both. Those figures include major conurbations. The city of Dundee gets nothing. Edinburgh gets nothing for its mainstream

[Mr. Watson]

grant. Other major conurbations, such as Motherwell, Renfrew, Inverclyde and Aberdeen, get nothing in either category. I invite the Minister to justify that.

We have seen the housing conditions survey and the figures that it produced on the standards of housing throughout Scotland. The Minister is living in a different world, and so are those of his hon. Friends who think that there is nothing wrong in owning a number of houses. I want to deal with the problems of people who either have no home at all or who live in totally inadequate housing. That is what this debate should be about, but it is not, because the funding has been consistently cut. That can only mean poorer housing for many of those whom Scottish Labour Members represent.

10.46 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): If we look at the details of the financial provision about which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) was speaking, we see that, 13 years ago, the housing support grant stood at £228 million and the general fund contribution at £100 million. Next year, the combined total of both will be a mere £26 million. On a cumulative basis, that represents the £1·8 billion loss of revenue for housing over the past decade that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central specified.

No other aspect of social provision can have such a direct impact on people's lives as the lack of housing finance. The problems of dampness, inadequate housing and homelessness are rife throughout Scotland. I know that the Minister is a compassionate man. I hope that he will deal with those aspects in the debate and show that he recognises that the lack of housing finance over the past decade is causing real problems for people throughout Scotland.

The basic limitation on housing finance in Scotland is the capital debt overhang. In fact, 60p to 65p of every pound of rent paid in Scotland goes to refinance the interest payment on the housing accumulated capital debt. In many councils, the figure is almost 100 per cent. For Gordon council, in north-east Scotland, the figure is more than 100 per cent. In those circumstances, it is simply impossible for councils to reinvest adequate sums in the maintenance of houses, never mind in any building programme. I would like the Minister to tell us directly how on earth finance can be injected into housing when individual district councils face such a financial problem.

I suspect that the Government's attempt to diminish public housing in Scotland was sourced in two hopes. First, there was an ideological drive against public housing—and perhaps the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) was the main protagonist. The argument was that if public housing was reduced in Scotland, people would be more amenable to the idea of voting for the Conservatives. Over the past decade, public housing in Scotland has been reduced, but there is no sign that the social engineering favoured by the hon. Member for Stirling has had any impact on the Conservative party's fortunes.

Secondly, it was argued that public housing was an economic problem for Scotland and that it was an inhibition on economic development. It is clear from studying the situation throughout the United Kingdom over the past few years that, in many ways, the housing market in the south of England has been much more of an economic problem for that area than the housing market in Scotland has been for Scotland. The preponderance of private housing in the south, with all the emphasis that that gives to a boom-bust cycle in the economy and over-investment in property, has been much more of a problem in terms of economic management than the degree of public housing has been in Scotland.

I ask the Minister to move away from the campaign against public housing in Scotland. He must realise that hundreds of thousands of Scots are entitled to live in good quality, rented accommodation in the public sector. If we are to get back to basics, let us get back to the basic provision of high-quality council and other public housing in Scotland. Any ideological Government drive against the public sector in Scotland should now be abandoned as not having fulfilled the political aspirations of the hon. Member for Stirling but having condemned hundreds of thousands of people in Scotland to the abject misery of substandard housing over the past 10 years.

10.50 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): This document is largely technical. Anyone in Scotland who happened to read it would not find out much about housing in Scotland because it is deliberately designed to be difficult to understand and interpret. The Government hope that they will be able to slip this document through the House without too much press coverage or awareness in Scotland of the way in which they are treating council housing.

This represents one of the few occasions when the House can debate council housing in Scotland; therefore, we should take advantage of this occasion and try to interpret the document. We should never forget that although few hon. Members live in council housing, hundreds of thousands of our constituents do so. The council housing sector remains important to constituents, although it may not be so important to hon. Members who represent them.

The experience of my hon. Friends who have spoken in this debate, and who continue to speak about their surgeries in their constituencies, is one that almost all Labour Members can repeat. Every surgery that I have held in Dundee since 1987 has been dominated by the issue of council housing and the lack of decent, affordable council housing for those who need it. The Government have ignored that forum in Scotland for a considerable period.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): My hon. Friend makes an interesting point about Dundee. Does he conclude that the housing needs of the people of Dundee were a major factor in the recent by-election which we won so spectacularly?

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. The Labour party in Dundee won a council seat back from the Scottish National party, which had held it for a considerable time. We won it back with a convincing majority. Indeed, the turning point in that by-election was when the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) graced Dundee with his presence. Thereafter, the votes haemorrhaged towards the Labour party and away from the SNP. I invite the hon. Gentleman to return to east Dundee any time he wants to come—he reinforces Labour's position in that city every time he visits.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) made an interestng point about the impact of council by-elections and the experience of hon. Members taking part in them. I remind him of the importance of debates on council housing, especially on the periphery of Scottish cities where council housing is predominant and of such a poor standard, where unemployment is high, where the crime rate is high and where the problem of drug abuse is common. My hon. Friend said that one of the most important things that can be done in terms of Government support for council housing in Scotland was to make funds available for various security measures to make council housing more secure for people who live in it.

In Hilltown, and especially the Maxwelltown area where there are such problems, Dundee district council must now spend part of its housing revenue account on putting in security cameras, security entrances, concierge systems and so on. That is the sort of thing with which the

[Mr. McAllion]

council should be given direct assistance by the Government, but it gets absolutely nothing in housing support grant. It receives no help whatever to deal with all the problems that it faces. That is an absolute disgrace.

Given the condition of the housing stock in Dundee, it is a disgrace that we must divert part of the money which should be spent on the housing stock into security measures so that people can feel a bit safer in their homes. An even bigger disgrace is the fact that the local council gets no help from the Minister, or from the Government who are responsible ultimately for housing in Scotland.

Schedule 3 to the order refers to what we call the hostel portion, and those councils that will qualify for it in 1994-95. Twenty-one local authorities in Scotland qualify, but Dundee is not one of them. I remind the Minister that I intervened during his speech to ask what the level of homelessness in Scotland was. He replied that he would give the answer in a minute, but two, three, four and then five minutes passed, and the Minister sat down without giving the answer.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Some 42,500 households applied to local authorities in Scotland to be considered as homeless. Some 92 per cent. of those households found permanent or temporary accommodation. Local authorities have statutory responsibility, especially for priority cases. Some of the other cases lost contact.

Mr. McAllion: I thank the Minister for those figures. Is he not ashamed of his boast that he is making about 2,000 places in hostels available to the homeless in Scotland? That is in no way adequate to meet the problems facing councils across the country. He says that Dundee council has a statutory responsibility to deal with the priority homeless cases. Why is he not giving Dundee any of the hostel portion? Why is Dundee not getting assistance from the Government to help with the homeless problem?

The Minister should go to some of the agencies that work with the homeless in London, particularly young homeless Scots. He would discover that the young homeless Scots who head towards London because they cannot find housing back in Scotland mainly come from Glasgow; in second place after Glasgow comes Dundee. What assistance is Dundee getting from the Minister next year in terms of support for the homeless? Absolutely nothing.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I set up a firm in Dundee recently, and all the 800 staff had no difficulty in finding housing. How extraordinary.

Mr. McAllion: What is extraordinary is that anyone in the House could begin to understand what the hon. and learned Gentleman has just said. I did not understand a word of what he mumbled across the Chamber to me.

The idea that apportioning £2 million to 21 difficult local authorities in Scotland is in any way commensurate with dealing with the problem of homelessness is put in context by remembering the amount that local government reform will deny the new Dundee council. It will lose £2·25 million in terms of grant aid and expenditure. The Minister for Local Government and Planning tells me that that is not a significant sum. If £2·25 million is not a significant sum, neither is the £2 million that the Minister has allocated to 21 different authorities across Scotland to help them tackle the homeless problem. The Minister should begin to take that on board.

The order deals also with the different authorities in Scotland that get housing support grants from the Government. The Minister knows that there are 56 different housing authorities in Scotland. Only 29 of them—just over half—will receive any housing support grant from the Government. That means that 27 different housing authorities in Scotland will get absolutely nothing, among them Dundee. Dundee has had nothing from the Government during the past 10 years in terms of housing support grant.

Owner-occupation in Scotland is heavily subsidised through mortgage tax relief, and other forms of tenure are heavily subsidised through right-to-buy schemes, rent-to-mortgage schemes and stock transfers. Even the private sector is heavily subsidised through gro-grants. With that mind, does not the Minister think that it is an absolute disgrace that 27 different councils in Scotland do not receive a penny in subsidy from the Government for the council housing for which they are responsible?

The Minister was in Dundee recently when Wimpey opened the new private housing development in Mid Craigie. He and other Ministers authorised a grant of more than £2 million to Wimpey Homes to allow them to build private houses for sale on the market and to make a big profit for Wimpey Homes in the process. Is it not a disgrace that the Minister can subsidise the profits of private house builders at a time when he gives nothing to 27 councils across the country? If he does not think that that is a disgrace, it is time he recognised that it is and it is his responsibility to do something about it.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the taxpayer directly provides housing support to pay for people's rent, that money is paid indirectly to the individual and that it goes into the coffers of the housing department? Does he agree that that amounts to many millions of pounds?

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman is referring to housing benefit, not housing support. I shall tell him of my experience with housing benefit. One of the cases at my recent surgery was about housing benefit. It involved a constituent, who was a single parent with three children, who had a private flat in Dundee because access to council housing had not been available to her. She had been living at the address for three and a half to four years. The Government changed the regulations and qualifications for housing benefit. She received notification that she no longer qualified for housing benefit in private accommodation because the rent was too high and that she should move out of the private accommodation and into council accommodation.

My constituent appealed against the decision. Because her landlord got wind of the fact that the council was challenging her right to housing benefit, he has given her notice to quit. She will have to get out of the home that she and her family have known for the past four years and move into the council sector—and not into good housing in the council sector, because the good council housing has been lost through the right to buy and other measures that the Government have introduced.

She will be asked to move into areas of Dundee that are euphemistically called areas of low demand—areas where

nobody wants to live, where crime, vandalism, unemployment and drug abuse are prevalent. She and her family have been put at risk because the Government are denying them housing benefit. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) should not tell me that everybody's needs are looked after. Those who depend on the council sector do not have their needs looked after by the Government.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I am not aware of the situation in Dundee, but I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman with much interest. What about the father of those children? Is he responsible for their upkeep?

Mr. McAllion: You would rule me out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I started on the Child Support Agency. The fathers who are being chased are those whose wives depend on income support. Anyone who does not depend on income support is not chased by the Child Support Agency. If the hon. Gentleman does not know that that is the case, he does not have any working-class constituents.

[Interruption.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us get back to the debate.

Mr. McAllion: I shall follow your instructions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and get back to the debate and not pursue that matter any further.

Before the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) sneers, let me say that the father could have been dead; I have no idea about him. The hon. Gentleman should not

As the Minister will be aware, *Inside Housing*, which is read by all housing professionals in Scotland and is regarded as one of the most prestigious magazines dealing with housing in Scotland, dealt with the order in its issue of 28 January. It stated:

"Scottish local authority tenants face steep rent rises next year following the government's anouncement of a £10 million cut in housing support grant last week."

Hon. Members should not be under any illusion as to what the order represents. It represents a £10 million cut in housing support grant to be made available to local authorities. This year, there was £35·9 million in housing support grant; next year, there will be only £27·5 million. As *Inside Housing* says, that means an average increase of 5 per cent. in council sector rents next year, and the Minister has admitted as much.

It is a case of double standards, not "back to basics". The Government parade around the country, boasting about low inflation, but they then increase inflation by putting up rents at twice the level of inflation. Why is it that only council sector tenants have to pay higher rents when everybody else's rents have been kept in line with inflation? It is because of a vile, anti-council tenant policy which has been pursued by successive Ministers.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I seek some information, because a question was asked some time ago and it was not answered. Perhaps, in relation to Dundee, the hon. Gentleman will say how many void houses there are, how long they have been in existence——

Mr. Canavan: Empty houses.

Mr. Porter: They are called void in England.

Will the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) also say what monetary effect that has on the Dundee local authority? Before I cast my vote, I should very much like to know what the local authority is doing.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman would do better not to intervene in Scottish debates because he shows his ignorance of the reality of housing conditions in Scotland. It is that some district councils have houses which they cannot let—houses which are available to be let but in which people are frightened to live as a result of the general conditions in the district in which they are located.

If Conservative Members do not understand that there are vast tracts of cities in this country in which people are frightened to live because of the state to which the Government have reduced those districts, it is time that they began to do so, instead of trying to score cheap debating points. We are speaking about real conditions in which people have to live, not making pure debating points, as Conservative Members try to do with their debating skills.

Earlier, the Minister spoke about the Government's commitment to maintaining the physical condition of Scotland's housing. Has he not read the national housing conditions survey which was carried out by Scottish Homes on his behalf, which showed that 423,000 dwellings in Scotland suffered from damp, serious condensation or mould and that 3·5 per cent. of that number—nearly 15,000 houses—suffered from all three conditions at the same time? Yet he speaks about the Government's commitment to maintaining the physical stock of housing in Scotland. Let him try to tell the people who live in that housing that the Government are committed to maintaining the stock of the house in which they live. The Government are not committed and I will never be convinced that they are.

I have spoken for long enough and I do not want to give the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) a heart attack. I would not want to be responsible for any further by-elections. I must, however, tell the Minister that the difference between the people who live in the council housing sector in Scotland and everyone else is simply that they do not vote Tory, and for that reason they are not a priority for the Government. Unlike the tenants of Westminister city council, there will be no designated housing policy for them because there is no reward to be had from that for the Conservative party in Scotland.

The Government are simply writing off council housing in Scotland because they believe that council house tenants vote Labour. The Government want to change people's voting patterns so they are trying to destroy council housing. Their priority is tenure change instead of the priority that will be the priority of the next Labour Government when a Scottish parliament is set up, and that is to ensure that everyone in our country gets a decent house which they can afford, and which is a decent place in which to live.

11.6 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words, especially after the robust and sincere speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion). I think that the only mistake that he made was in giving way to some of the Conservative Members who have not been sitting through what has been an interesting debate, to

[Mr. George Foulkes]

which, to be fair, the Minister and some other Conservative Members from Scottish constituencies made useful contributions. It is a pity that it has been spoiled by some sedentary interventions and one or two standing interventions.

As in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) and for Dundee, East, concern about housing features as a major issue at the surgeries that I hold every week in my constituency. The second most urgent subject mentioned by constituents is problems arising from the Child Support Agency, which is astonishing. Until a few years ago, it used to be the poll tax but, thankfully, we do not have that any more and now the agency has taken the place of the poll tax in the extent of the problems that it causes. It is taking the place of the poll tax in the way in which it is making Conservative Members, and especially members of the Government, unpopular, not only in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom.

I find that, apart from maintenance problems, many difficulties are experienced by people who seek transfers to smaller houses or to larger houses—in most cases, families to smaller houses. Throughout Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley the sale of council houses has distorted the available stock. As no replacement stock has been provided, it is difficult for even the most sensitive and understanding local authority—I have that in Cumnock and Doon Valley, although not in Kyle and Carrick—to find appropriate houses for people seeking transfers. That causes great hardship.

The problem could be solved overnight if the Government would release the money that is available from council house sales for the building of new council houses. That would be the sensible thing to do. It would also provide jobs for people in regions of high unemployment. Housing and unemployment problems could be dealt with substantially overnight.

My next point relates to an issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). Many of my constituents, like those of my hon. Friend, live in houses owned by Scottish Homes. Whenever people are asked their preference, they say that they want Scottish Homes to continue as their landlord or, if that is not possible—as unfortunately appears to be the case—they prefer the local authority to take over

Those people particularly do not want to be part of housing associations. They do not want to be part of a housing authority black hole or to be under a private landlord, especially when it is unclear where accountability lies. To whom are housing association members accountable? Technically, in some ways they are accountable to Scottish Homes, to the funding body or to the Government. However, in reality, they have no direct accountability in the way that local authorities have accountability.

Unfortunately, as my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden rightly said, the tenants are not given the opportunity of exercising those options. Scottish Homes says that it wants to get out of house ownership so that that option is unfortunately not available. I pressed Sir James Mellon on that and he said that his board would not accept that option. He said that Scottish Homes was going to get out of house ownership and house rental.

The option of local authority ownership is also not available. Council tenants are left with Hobson's choice.

I want to amplify the point I made earlier about the homeless hostel in Ayr. It is astonishing that a great deal of money—thousands of pounds—has been spent on Landsborough house; and the Secretary of State should be aware of what is happening as he lives near by. The house was named in memory of the late James Landsborough, who was an excellent councillor on Kyle and Carrick district council. However, Tory-controlled Kyle and Carrick district council is showing its lack of foresight by saying that all that money will be wasted because Landsborough house is to be demolished for new commercial development which the council has proposed for the site.

What is to happen to that expenditure? Surely there should be reference to the district auditor. Surely the Secretary of State should examine the matter. We hear criticism of other councils, but we seldom hear Kyle and Carrick taken to task, and I suspect that I know why.

Mr. Robathan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) wishes to raise a point of order because she is wearing a hat. Is that the case?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any hon. Member who wants to raise a point of order can do that. It is entirely up to the hon. Member.

Mr. Norman Hogg: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The remarks of the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) are impertinent, improper and insulting to a colleague in the House. The hon. Gentleman should be a gentleman and withdraw his remarks.

Mr. Robathan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a new Member of the House, I thought that one wore a hat in the House only if one wished to raise a point of order. I did not think that my remarks were at all disrespectful.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: May I inform the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) that the hat is used if a Member wishes to raise a point of order during a Division. To the best of my knowledge, we are not in the middle of a Division at the moment.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) shows how green he is——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us return to the debate.

Mr. Foulkes: Indeed. The hon. Member for Blaby is not just disrespectful to my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey); he is disrespectful to all the people in Scotland who are concerned about housing because he has intervened in such an infactile way on several occasions during the debate.

It is ridiculous and it will create a great deal of hardship——

Dr. Godman: I have never seen the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) before.

Mr. Foulkes: Well, unfortunately, my hon. Friend will see a lot more of him. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will not dignify the hon. Member for Blaby by continuing to refer to his infantile interventions.

What is far more important is the question of rents in Scotland. At present the average is £26·51 per week, yet the Government assume that the figure will be £35·86 in the next financial year, despite the fact that, in the calculation of the housing support grant, they are assuming an increase of 5 per cent. Anyone who can do the simplest arithmetic will realise that the difference between the two figures that I have just quoted is much more than 5 per cent. The local authorities will have to find a great deal of money to make up the difference. They will be underfunded by many millions of pounds.

I should like to conclude with a brief reference to the Cumnock and Doon Valley district council. The council, whose area has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the whole of Great Britain, will receive no housing support grant and no hostel support grant for this year or next year. That is an absolute disgrace. In addition to its high unemployment rate, the area is the home of people on very small incomes. Its residents work in the textile and other industries in which wages are very low indeed.

The whole tenor of this debate has been meanness on the part of the Government—the worst meanness in housing that I have known for a very long time. The provision of affordable decent housing is a basic right, and it is about time the Government understood that.

11.15 pm

Mrs. Fyfe: I should like, by leave of the House, to wind up on behalf of the Opposition. Seven Opposition Members have spoken in the debate, but we have had a contribution from only one Conservative—the uncharacteristically brief speech of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker).

I have to say that it was utterly trivial and childish of the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) to make the point that he made when my colleagues were dealing most sincerely and passionately with the needs of their constituents, who worry deeply about the state of housing in Scotland. People outside must despair of Parliament and must wonder how aware are some of its Members of the needs of their people.

As I want to leave the Minister time to answer some of the important questions that have been put to him, I shall be brief. Will he please answer the question about assured tenancies and secure tenancies and the rights of women who are separated from their husbands? That question was put by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin).

The Minister should stop making ludicrous over-estimates of rental income and ludicrous under-estimates of management and maintenance costs. That is his way of distorting the housing support grant calculations. Will he, in future, print a detailed and informative housing support grant order and, while he is about it, stop talking about capital allocations—a term meant only to confuse?

Does the Minister intend to fund a programme to ensure that homeless youngsters and battered women have somewhere to go—that there is adequate hostel accommodation?

As time is short, I shall not quote the Scottish Homes survey, as I intended to do. The Minister commissioned Scottish Homes to undertake the survey. He has only to go back and read it again. Last year, he warned us not to vote against the corresponding order, saying that if we did, the housing authorities would get nothing.

I have heard nothing to make me change my mind about urging my hon. Friends not to vote for this order. Let them vote against it and tell the Minister to meet COSLA again and to re-read his own housing survey so that some realism may be built into his estimates. Only then shall we see some sense and humanity in the funding of our housing.

11.18 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am very glad of the opportunity to respond to this debate.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) asked why Dundee did not receive the hostels portion of the housing support grant. The answer is quite simple: Dundee does not have any housing department hostels. If it were to provide such hostels, it would certainly qualify for that portion. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that 5·5 per cent. of the council housing stock in Dundee is empty. I hope that the hon. Member will use his good offices to encourage the council to bring more of its stock back into use.

Mr. McAllion: I will use my good offices to make that 5·5 per cent. of housing stock available for rent, if the Minister will give the council the money to put it in a fit condition to rent.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We will certainly bear in mind Dundee's bids before the final allocations are made in a few weeks' time.

As the comments of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie), much is happening in respect of rural Scotland. Scottish Homes has produced 1,700 additional homes in rural areas, and £3·3 million was provided for that purpose during 1992-93. An evaluation of the rural demonstration areas has been undertaken and the results will be published later this year. Per capita, rural areas receive more in local authority allocations that the average for the rest of Scotland.

Scottish Homes is looking carefully at how it may bring vacant stock back into use. It held discussions with the Forestry Commission and the Scottish Landowners Federation. I repeat that an additional £3 million was made available to Scottish Homes to enable further progress to be made.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride) *indicated dissent.*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman must be realistic. Many vacant houses in Scotland are in the private sector.

Mr. Ingram: Rubbish.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman says, "Rubbish." I know that a great many public sector houses should be brought back into use.

Mr. Ingram: Is the Minister aware that not one tenant has been placed in any of the 80 brand new houses in my constituency built by East Kilbride development corporation and available for occupancy since last November? Why? Because the Government are trying to force housing associations into the town. Those houses should be allocated now. They have been empty since November.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is the Minister responsible for new town housing, is in his place and will

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

have heard the hon. Gentleman's comments. I have little doubt that there will be rapid progress in the coming months, in relation to those houses.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asked for the release of council house receipts. They are already released to public authorities in Scotland. We estimated that £230 million would be raised from council house receipts this year. In fact, the figure is £268 million—and those entire receipts go the public sector, which will be greatly to its benefit. That sum increases the overall sum to be spent on public sector stock to £440 million.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) put the case for Glasgow. Last year, Glasgow's housing revenue account produced a surplus of more than £60 million. In those circumstances, there is no need for additional Exchequer support. Housing support grant is a deficit subsidy. Glasgow is projected to have a relatively small deficit next year.

Mrs. Fyfe: The Minister visited Glasgow and saw its housing need. Does he really believe that level of housing support grant comes anywhere near meeting the needs of the people of Glasgow for decent housing?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes. The housing support grant is perfectly fair, when one bears in mind that Glasgow set an average rent increase for next year of only 2·8 per cent.—which we estimate is well below the national average.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) spoke about security. In urban regeneration schemes, we give priority to installing strong security systems—and Glasgow district council has been doing so in the multi-storey flats at Castlemilk. I support that policy, and the hon. Gentleman's comments will not be lost on that district council.

The hon. Member for Springburn said that a housing association had increased rents by 50 per cent. I am aware that in certain circumstances—for example, on a change of tenancy—rents may be substantially increased, but secured or assured tenants would not pay such increases. That would be contrary to the terms and conditions of their tenancies.

I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Springburn would give me the details in writing and I shall consider them thoroughly.

We have been consulting on the question of changing from a secured tenancy to an assured tenancy, because there has been an inconsistency in the way in which housing associations have interpreted the law. We have received responses to that consultation, but there is a case pending. Milnbank housing association is challenging the rent officers and we are awaiting the outcome of that case. We shall bear in mind the points that the hon. Gentleman has made and if he will give me the details, I shall look into it.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Milnbank housing association is in my constituency. Scottish Homes is leaving Milnbank to take the legal action through the courts and Scottish Homes is willing to pay part only of the legal costs. I hope that if that is a test case in which the Government are interested, they will take all the costs on boards and not burden the rent payers of the Milnbank housing association, which operates in only a small part of my constituency.

I shall be able to furnish the Minister with cases in my constituency where rents have been increased substantially and I hope that he will look into them.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will write to me about the case that he mentioned of the increase of more than 50 per cent. As I said, the Government will not make a decision until after the outcome of that case. On the issue of homelessness——

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have taken a large number of measures to deal with homelessness. We have provided some £27 million for extra capital allocations, we have provided more than £10 million for homelessness under the urban programme and, of course, we have provided the hostels portion of the housing support grant, which has been debated tonight. We have also provided cash incentive schemes and we are providing substantial support to the voluntary organisations.

In the past week, Scottish Homes has announced that it was promoting lead tenancy arrangements, whereby empty private property is leased to housing associations for letting to homeless families, and that it was using new, furnished accommodation grants for housing associations to encourage provision of accommodation for the homeless.

I shall give way to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. A. Godman), whose constituency I shall be visiting before long.

Dr. Godman: May I say how pleased I am that the Minister has accepted my invitation to visit certain housing schemes in my constituency.

If a housing association threatened a tenant with an assured tenancy, what powers would the housing association ombudsman have to overturn such a decision?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The housing association ombudsman is in post and his recommendations in cases of maladministration will be carefully considered by the Scottish Office as soon as it receives them. Of course, the hon. Gentleman is free to refer cases to the ombudsman.

As the House will know, the housing scene has changed dramatically over the past few years.

Mr. Canavan *rose*——

Mr. Watson *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I still have a lot to say——*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There is too much noise.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If I give an obvious example, Scotland has overtaken England in the percentage of public sector houses sold to sitting tenants. There is 0·5 per cent. more in Scotland.

We all know that the scene is changing greatly. More and more local authorities are accepting that their role need not be confined to the direct provision and management of their own housing stock. Increasingly, they are realising

that housing needs may be met most effectively by acting in an enabling role and by co-operating with Scottish Homes, housing associations and the private sector to jointly plan investment and provide homes for their areas. There are now some 42 strategic agreements with local authorities and those are bearing fruit. Only this morning, I was in Falkirk, from where the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) comes, and saw a successful development which involved the district council.

Mr. Canavan *rose——*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. When I stand, the hon. Gentleman must sit.

Mr. Canavan *rose——*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that the debate should end in such confusion. If the hon. Member who has the Floor does not give way, others must resume their seats. Does the Minister wish to give way or not?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Falkirk, West, his constituent, the district council, Scottish Homes and the developer had an extremely successful housing development in the small urban renewal initiative. Conservative Members warmly welcome partnerships such as that: it is working, and it will continue to work. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put: ——

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 250.

Division No. 123] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Moate, Sir Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*

Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thumham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 25 January, be approved.

ENERGY CONSERVATION BILL [MONEY]

Queen's recommendation having been signified——

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Energy Conservation Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses of any Minister under the Act, and

(b) any increases attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.

—[Mr. Chapman.]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Robert Jackson be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. Richard Tracey be added to the Committee.*—[Mr. Chapman.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Meigle Cottage Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.*—[Mr. Chapman.]*

11.43 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome this opportunity to speak about Meigle cottage hospital, which is a popular cottage hospital in my constituency. Consequently, it would be against Government policy for it to be closed—unless, of course, the Government can demonstrate that there are conclusive and undoubted logical reasons for the closure. I hope clearly to demonstrate that according to, first, the regional council, secondly the district council and thirdly Scottish Enterprise, Tayside, that the population projection figures used by the health board are neither conclusive nor undoubted.

I shall show that, contrary to the health board's claims, Meigle as it stands is a perfectly satisfactory clinical hospital.

The hospital was a gift from Mrs. Cox of Cardean and was built in memory of her late husband. Sadly, the hospital suffered a fire soon after it was built and had to be built a second time. Mrs. Cox had the hospital rebuilt. No one can dispute that it was a memorial gift to the community.

Mrs. Cox gave an endowment that guaranteed the financial viability of the hospital. There was no public subscription and no public sector funds were involved. Indeed, until the national health service was created there was no need for public money to be involved in the hospital. I shall read from a letter that appeared in the *Dundee Courier* on 4 February 1994, which I believe sums the hospital up. It is headed

"Meigle Hospital—desecration?

Sir, —As the oldest surviving grandchild of Mrs. Cox of Cardean who gave the Meigle Cottage Hospital to the community, I note that very little has been said about the fact that it was built in memory of her late husband.

Surely the Government action in closing it is akin to the desecration of a gravestone?"

That is signed by Betty Ogilivy-Wedderburn.

The ground conditions, the gift conditions and the absence of public financial input make Meigle a unique and special case. The building and ground may not be used for any other purpose. I have a copy of the ground title, the disposition by Sir George Kinloch Bt. of 4 May 1915, from which I shall read an extract.

It says that the ground may not be used as a

"tavern or public house or for the manufacture or sale of any ale beer porter wine whisky or other spirituouse or malt liquors or for the carrying on of any trade manufacture or business or for any purpose that might affect or deteriorate the vale or amenity of the adjoining lands".

The heirs are determined to enforce those provisions.

This popular cottage hospital is supported by all the GPs in Meigle, Alyth, Coupar Angus, Neutyle, Muirhead, Birkhill and Blairgowrie. It is supported by the churches, the health council for the whole of Tayside, the regional council, the district council and the community councils, all of which believe that Blairgowrie cannot cope. There will be too few beds to handle the demand from the Blairgowrie and Meigle catchment areas. The new extension at Blairgowrie, which is being constructed, provides eight extra beds.

Meigle has 12 beds, so there will be four fewer beds after the extension, in a catchment area where the

[Mr. Bill Walker]

combined population is growing and continues to grow. The Meigle occupancy rate is very high—more than 80 per cent. I welcome the presence of the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) because of his interest in these matters. I remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that in summer and winter we have a huge transient population in the catchment area.

I will read from one letter of the many hundreds that I have received, but it explains clearly the situation:

"My father, a widower living alone in Darkfaulds, Blairgowrie . . . was rushed to Ninewells hospital in December 1993 for major bowel surgery . . . which left my 73-year-old father extremely weak and traumatised.

Several days after the operation I received a telephone call from his Ninewells ward at 9.45 pm to advise me that his bed was required to enable them to carry out more operations before Christmas. They had inquired at Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital but they had no beds so they would like him to go home where the District Nurse could carry out bed baths, a home help could pop in and could we arrange for someone to keep an eye on him! I was stunned. Here was my father unable to get out of his chair himself, having to be supported when he walked to the toilet, having an infection in his arm where the drip had been and suffering from shock, being asked to go home to live alone.

Unbelievable!"

The daughter who was writing to me does not live near him at all, as is true in so many rural constituencies.

The letter continued:

"The next day I telephoned his family doctor (Dr. Sandy Young) who arranged for him to get a bed in Meigle Cottage Hospital. In Ninewells that day, the staff explained to me that they were only there to carry out operations, not for the recuperation of patients!!

My father cannot remember the journey from Dundee to Meigle due to his state of shock. The staff at Meigle were excellent, and after two and a half weeks there, he was able to go home and cope for himself. While he was in Meigle, the staff assured me that he would not be discharged until he was fit enough to go home. What a relief that was for us.

I should add that my father is a diabetic and had been seriously ill on three occasions during 1993 so it would have been very worrying to us if Meigle Cottage Hospital had not been able to admit him."

That letter is typical of many that I could produce.

Is it any wonder that the people and general practitioners in the Blairgowrie and Meigle catchment areas are questioning the clinical judgment and population projections used by the health board, which until now have been accepted by the Government? The population projections of the general registrar's office are suspect. They do not take adequate account of the large number of planning approvals given or of the number of houses that are currently under construction. For example, Perth and Kinross district planning department advises me that, between 1981 and 1991, there was a 7·2 per cent. increase in population—from 15,499 to 16,613—in the Blairgowrie, Coupar Angus, Alyth and Eastern Landward area, all of which Blairgowrie copes with.

It is true that, in the small village of Meigle itself, there was a small decline in population, from 908 to 874, but Meigle's catchment area of Airlie, Eassie, Newtyle and Ruthven, experienced an increase of 4·8 per cent., from 1,401 to 1,469. The combined population figures for the catchment areas, excluding Muirhead and Birkhill, show an increase of 6·44 per cent.—or 1,148 people—in the period during which the health board has been determined to close the hospital. There has been a massive increase in population. The Muirhead and Birkhill practice, which also uses the hospital, has increased its patients by 320 in the past three years and as of today has three patients in Meigle Cottage Hospital.

It is amazing how bits of paper arrive on one's desk. I have been advised today that 66 new accommodations are to be built by the East Perthshire housing association in Blairgowrie. Every week I am being advised of additional houses being built. In Dundee, figures cited by Scottish Enterprise Tayside—another independent body—show clearly that, although there has been a decrease in population in Tayside, with a minus figure of 8,074, in the Perth and Kinross area there has been an increase of 4,275, well over 1,000 of which—1,700—were in the Meigle-Blairgowrie catchment area. The age distribution figures show clearly that that area has a lot of young families who use hospital facilities and a lot of elderly people.

More than 500 houses with planning approval are to be built in Blairgowrie alone. If Alyth, Newtyle and the others are added, we can expect an increase of another 1,500 within the next couple of years or so. Over the past five years, during what can only be described as difficult building industry conditions, the following houses have been completed: in Blairgowrie, 50 per annum; in Coupar Angus, two per annum; in Alyth, four per annum; in Eastern Landward, 20 per annum; and in Newtyle, six per annum. I suggest that, as the market improves—and it is improving—those figures will substantially increase and we will get nearer the figures that we had in the mid-1980s.

In that case, Blairgowrie and district, which has become a commuter area, will again demonstrate clearly that young families want to come to live there. The number of expensive houses that are planned or are being built will mean that a larger number of elderly people will retire to the area. The young and the elderly require hospital facilities.

The number of beds in the Blairgowrie and Meigle areas and the cost per patient per day are important factors. I shall not disturb the House tonight with all the figures other than to say that Meigle, if we had two extra beds there, could have a cost of about £90 per patient. We need those beds, which would give us the lowest figure for bed occupation costs in the whole of Tayside region. What is the real cost of retaining Meigle? It is less than 0·2 per cent. of the Tayside health board's revenue budget. I firmly believe that we need all the beds at Blairgowrie plus those at Meigle, and probably more.

My case is not built on the popularity of the hospital alone; it is built on the reality of the population growth since 1981, when I first had to do battle with the health board. My case is built on the reality of house building and planning consents over the next five to 10 years. It is built on the fact that neither I, nor the doctors, my constituents and the local authority officials accept the logic of the health board's case. I shall not be deterred from pursuing the matter further.

The Minister responsible, my noble Friend Lord Fraser, tells me that he did not receive my letter requesting a meeting. I cannot forget that there have been other problems within his Department; Glasgow is just one example. It is with deep sadness and without any malice that I have to tell my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that this matter is so important to me and my constituents that I will use every parliamentary device available to expose the flaws within the Department and

the ghastly way in which the health board has ridden roughshod over the clinical judgment of the GPs and the wishes of the people.

If the hospital closure goes ahead, the way in which I shall deal with the matter could lead to demands for resignations, especially in view of the letter I received from my noble Friend Lord Fraser on 13 January. He tells me that almost £500,000 will be needed to bring Meigle up to standard. So what? What about all the money spent when the hospital was first built? At today's values, that is an enormous amount.

My noble Friend goes on:

"Enhanced accommodation and a wider range of services are available in Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital situated only 8 miles away."

If the matter was not so tragic, that could be funny. That must be the distance as the crow flies. I invite the Minister to walk that eight miles; he will not get anywhere near the hospital. The Minister's letter refers to the

"split between the 2 closely situated hospitals".

They are not closely situated. By public transport, the distance between the hospitals at Meigle and at Blairgowrie is nearer 15 miles.

The letter says that one site offers

"better accommodation and a wider range of service provision."

I believe that Meigle is perfectly adequate. The letter continues:

"The Health Board has in particular undertaken to ensure that people will have a choice of recuperating in Blairgowrie rather then remaining in Perth or Dundee if they wish to be closer to home."

What about all the letters I have received which ask where, if Meigle closes, people are to go? I have not referred this evening to just one isolated letter.

The matter is out of all proportion to the size of the hospital. My constituents, without exception, feel that the proposed closure is wrong and mistaken, that it borders on being malicious and that it desecrates a memorial that was funded adequately at the beginning and which would have been functioning adequately today if it had not been acquired by the national health service. All that must be answered for. That is why, in the final analysis, my right hon. Friend is given the opportunity in law to make the judgment. Only he can take into account all aspects of the background to the case. I am confident that he will.

11.58 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his success in securing a debate on the closure of Meigle cottage hospital. I understand the importance that he attaches to the matter, and the strong attachment to the hospital that has developed locally.

The services provided by Meigle hospital have, over the years, been much valued by local people who have appreciated the ready access to acute care or the choice of convalescing close to home after treatment in Dundee or Perth. This debate gives us an opportunity to consider the planned transfer of those services to Blairgowrie and to address the concerns that have been raised by local residents recently since my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State announced the planned closure of Meigle cottage hospital.

What I hope to do tonight is explain the background to the planned transfer of services, the implications for patients and visitors and the adequacy of planned bed numbers in Blairgowrie in the light of projections of the growth of the population in the area to which my hon. Friend referred, and especially growth in the population of the elderly.

Two main factors lie behind the decision to approve the health board's plans to transfer services from Meigle to Blairgowrie. First, with continuing medical advances and new techniques and technologies, Tayside health board has found, in common with all other health boards, that fewer acute beds are needed to deliver the same or an increasing level of care.

Secondly, Meigle cottage hospital is not suitable to deliver modern acute care. The health board faced a choice of investing £500,000 of capital to bring Meigle up to standard, and even then being left with a hospital with a poor lay-out and high running costs, or investing a similar sum at Blairgowrie cottage hospital to extend it to take on the work from Meigle and releasing about £280,000 of overhead costs which are currently tied into running services from two sites in close proximity for other health purposes.

In the light of those considerations, the health board, after much careful thought, decided to seek approval to close Meigle and transfer services to Blairgowrie. Blairgowerie has a wider range of services than Meigle and can offer better integrated care for patients. The health board canvassed widely for views on the proposed closure of Meigle and got the clear message form local residents that extended stays in Perth and Dundee were not an acceptable alternative to local care.

The health board has therefore made provision at Blairgowrie to ensure that anyone who would have expected to receive treatment or convalesce at Meigle will be offered the choice of care at Blairgowrie as an alternative to Perth or Dundee, and that the 56 general practitioner acute and long-stay beds at Blairgowerie will be used flexibly to meet local needs. There should therefore be no need for people to travel to, or remain in, Dundee and Perth longer than necessary.

That was taken into account when my noble and learned Friend and I considered the health board's proposals alongside the views expressed by the local people. We decided that, on balance, the benefits to patients of the more extensive range of care available at Blairgowrie outweighed the inconvenience to visitors of travelling to Blairgowrie. We therefore approved the health board's plans to close Meigle and transfer services to upgraded facilities at Blairgowrie.

As for the implications of the planned transfer of services for patients and their visitors, current trends show that in general four fifths of Meigle patients are directly under the care of local GPs. Those people will, under the planning new arrangements, be transferred to Blairgowrie.

Mr. Bill Walker: I understand clearly what my right hon. Friend is saying: there will be four beds fewer. If they cannot cope now, how will they cope with four beds fewer?

Mr. Lang: I have already covered my hon. Friend's point. I made it clear that the health board estimates that there will be a reduction in the need for beds as a result of changes in the length of stay of average patients. I can assure my hon. Friend that the health board has gone into this very carefully—as, indeed, has my noble and learned Friend.

[Mr. Lang]

I was referring to the implications of the transfer of services to patients of visits. The one fifth who presently use Meigle to convalesce prior to discharge will be given the choice of remaining in Perth of Dundee or convalescing at Blairgowrie. My hon. Friend referred to mileage, and those matters can be easily checked. My officials have been told by the health board that the distance between Meigle and Blairgowrie is seven miles along a bus route. They were informed that it takes around 25 to 30 minutes by bus and under 20 minutes by car to travel between Meigle and Blairgowrie.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lang: I must reply to the other points raised by my hon. Friend. I must press on, if he will forgive me.

Mr. Walker *rose*——

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend has made his point. I am telling him what the health board told my officials. The matters can be checked and if, of course, it turns out that the information which I have been given is incorrect, I will correct it with my hon. Friend.

I understand that buses run hourly from Monday to Saturday, and two-hourly after 7 o'clock in the evening. Buses also run every two and a half hours on Sundays.

The average length of stay of a patient at Meigle is about 19 days. On average, about 190 people a year receive in-patient care and around 150 receive outpatient treatment in Meigle. I accept that, for those people and their visitors, there will indeed be the added inconvenience of travelling to Blairgowrie. In most cases, however, we are talking about a period of only two or three weeks offset against the ready access to X-ray, out-patient, geriatric and occupational therapy services, in addition to the full range of services provided from Meigle. In terms of the level care that can be provided, this is worth the extra inconvenience for a couple of weeks.

Moreover, by withdrawing current services from Meigle, there is the opportunity to use the building as a community resource, and as a focus for day care and health and social care in Meigle. In September 1993, health board officers met the chairman of the local community council and the local regional councillor to discuss alternative uses for Meigle hospital, in the event that the board's proposals were accepted. Those discussions raised the possibility of various community care uses which might involve local community voluntary effort should they wish to be involved.

An approach to the social work department following those discussions progressed the possibility of using Meigle as a day care facility. I understand that subsequently both region and health board are now planning for this development. My hon. Friend mentioned costs. I should point out that Meigle now costs around £100 per in-patient day. Even with two extra beds at £90 a day, Meigle is still more expensive than Blairgowrie, whose costs are £76 per day.

The third main issue on which there has been much debate in recent weeks—my hon. Friend also raised it tonight—is whether the planned bed numbers at Blairgowrie cottage hospital are adequate to cope with the influx of activity from Meigle. Last week, my hon. Friend drew to my attention the detailed population statistics of Perth and Kinross district council. My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State undertook to re-examine the population figures in conjunction with the projections used by Tayside health board. He also undertook to take into account the planning approvals granted in the area.

The main population trends in recent years have been a decline in the population of Meigle of between 3 and 4 per cent., and an increase in the population of Blairgowrie of around 8 per cent. In 1991, the district council issued building warrants for 200 homes in Blairgowrie on a phased programme of development which is on-going. That is likely to attract families to Blairgowrie, and to continue the trend of population growth in that area.

No similar developments are planned for Meigle and, if current trends continue, the population of Meigle is likely to continue to fall. In assessing the number of beds needed at Blairgowrie to provide for the transfer of services from Meigle, the health board took into account recent trends and the registrar-general's projections for the population of Perth and Kinross.

The health board's estimates indicated that the population of Blairgowrie and surrounding areas would rise from 14,500 to 18,500 by the year 2001. Those projections, on which health board plans were based, overestimate the population number significantly. The district council's statistics provided by my hon. Friend indicate that the current population is only 13,300, rather than 14,500 used in health board calculations. The health board paid particular attention to the projected growth in the number of people over 75, because older people tended to be heavy users of health services. Over the next 10 years, projections indicate that there are likely to be around 400 more people in the Blairgowrie/Meigle area.

Of those, between 50 and 60 will be over 75. The health board assesses that the health needs of those people, along with those of the existing residents of the area, can be met comfortably within the 56 beds to be provided at Blairgowrie.

Recent trends in both the acute and long-stay sectors of the health service show declining bed occupancy rates and shorter lengths of stay, with more people receiving care in their own homes or in a primary care setting. That is as much a trend in Perth and Kinross as elsewhere in Scotland, and it means that fewer beds are needed to provide the same level of care. Neither Meigle nor Blairgowrie hospitals are fully used at present. On average, there are two empty GP beds at Meigle and four at Blairgowrie. The health board assesses that the increased demand from the increasing population in the area will be more than offset by the continuing trends in bed usage.

The health board, however, has assured me that if its projections of bed use prove to be wrong and further beds are required, appropriate arrangements will be made at Blairgowrie to provide additional beds.

My hon. Friend also referred to the origins of Meigle cottage hospital and, in particular, the generous donation by the Cox family. As I mentioned, the health board and the regional council are planning for Meigle to be used to develop community day-care facilities and also respite care which will help people to remain at home in the local area. My present understanding is that that would meet the broad objectives of the original endowment. It would be the board's intention to seek to recommemorate the Meigle site when it transfers to a new community care use, thus allowing continuation of the association between the building and the local community.

In summing up, I compliment my hon. Friend on the close interest that he has taken in an important constituency interest. I can understand the concern that might be felt in some quarters at the recent announcement. I hope that what I have said will to some extent reassure my hon. Friend and his constituents, but I emphasise that my noble and learned Friend and I are presuaded that the health board has fully taken into account the likely changes in the population of Meigle and Blairgowrie in its planning and that it has planned adequate provision at Blairgowrie to provide for the transfer of services from Meigle.

We believe that local concerns to retain a valued local service have been met by Tayside health board in arranging for the transfer of services to Blairgowrie and that significant benefits to patients will result from the transfer of services which outweigh the inconvenience to visitors of additional travel. Moreover, the planned changes pave the way for new community care developments and the provision of day-care facilities in Meigle, which will be of particular benefit to older people in the area.

I will, of course study further the *Official Report* of what my hon. Friend has said. I know that my noble and learned Friend intends to follow up his recent meeting with my hon. Friend and will write to him about the various points that were raised. I hope that, thereby, what I have said this evening and what is being followed up by my noble and learned Friend will help to put matters into a fuller perspective for my hon. Friend, and I again compliment him on securing the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 15 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Training

1. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of spending by industry on training in each of the last five years.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Hunt): We estimate that British employers spend about £20,000 million a year on training. The last recorded figure in 1987 was £18,000 million.

Mrs. Gillan: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that one of the major contributing factors to our rapid recovery from recession in advance of all the other European Community countries is that British industry has continued to maintain its investment in training?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. One of the many satisfactory features of the CBI survey last week was that 84 per cent. of firms in the United Kingdom intend to increase or maintain their spending on training. My hon. Friend is absolutely right—those firms will benefit most from that investment in training as we continue through recovery into growth in the longer term.

Mr. Barry Jones: The right hon. Gentleman will know that there are no large apprenticeship schools in aerospace, steel and textiles, although, in his ministerial capacity, he may remember the existence of such schools. What action is he taking specifically to ensure the provision of apprenticeship schools? We have too many press releases from the right hon. Gentleman and not enough action.

Mr. Hunt: All that I will say is that the hon. Gentleman will have noted that the Chancellor of the Exchequer used his Budget statement on 30 November 1992 to announce that we shall be introducing a modern apprenticeship scheme, which will be available for school leavers next year. In the Department of Employment budget, the Chancellor has allocated more than £1 billion for training credits and the new modern apprenticeship scheme. I hope that industry will respond by coming forward, especially this year, with trail-blazing apprenticeship schemes that will ensure that we have the most relevant structures in place for those modern apprenticeships next year.

Mr. Heald: Will my right hon. Friend pay tribute to the work of the training and enterprise councils in helping women who want to get back to work by providing child care facilities? Can he comment on the Threshold scheme in Northampton, which he visited last week, which is an example of partnership between the public sector, the private sector and training and enterprise councils to promote this sort of work?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Indeed, I pay tribute to more than 1,200 top business and community leaders who serve on 82 training and enterprise councils and who do a tremendous amount of work on equal opportunities. My hon. Friend is right to earmark them. The child care initiative, launched by my predecessor and involving expenditure of more than £40 million over the period, gives training and enterprise councils the opportunity to come forward with some imaginative and innovative schemes. The scheme that I saw in Northampton is extremely impressive and is founded, as my hon. Friend said, on positive partnership.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: What will shift the Secretary of State from his mood of complacency? Between 1990 and 1992, more than 1 million skilled workers were put out of work, nearly 500,000 semi-skilled workers lost their jobs, the number of people trained in industry dropped by 300,000 and the Secretary of State tells us that that is a success. This is not the Opposition talking the country down—it is the Government doing the country down.

Mr. Hunt: I am sorry that the Opposition are continuing to talk the country down. We have an impressive record on competitiveness. In manufacturing, where there has been a decline in employment since the 1960s, 4 million workers now produce more than 7 million produced 15 years ago. That is a tribute to the British work force. The hon. Gentleman must not forget that we have 1.4 million more people in work in the United Kingdom than we had 10 years ago. Let him start talking up our achievements, rather than pointing to an agenda to which the Labour party has already signed up. That agenda would destroy millions of jobs through statutory works councils, a statutory minimum wage and a statutory compulsory working week. That is a recipe for disaster.

Labour Statistics

2. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the levels of employment in (a) the United Kingdom, (b) Germany and (c) France.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The UK has 69 per cent. of the working age population in work and rising; Germany has 65 per cent. and falling; and France 60 per cent. and now also falling.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful reply and for the encouraging figures that he has given to the House. They clearly underline the fact that the UK economy is in much better shape when compared with the economies of our principal European competitors.

Does my hon. Friend agree that one reason why we have come out of recession so well is the fact that we do not have a social contract? Does he agree that the absence of a social contract certainly has not damaged rates of take-home pay?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The absence of the social chapter in Britain accounts, in part,

for the higher levels of employment and they have also been helped by the reforms that we carried out in the 1980s. The figures speak for themselves, as do the people who speak for industry. For example, Black and Decker announced its intention to bring its operations fully into Britain out of Germany. A company spokesman said:

"Anyone familiar with the situation in Germany will grasp that, because of the costs, it has become very difficult to do business there."

If Opposition Members had their way, it would be very difficult to do business here.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister answer a question about something that concerns business men in the county of Cumbria? The tax increases in this year's Budget will be introduced on 1 April. Does the Minister believe that the increases have implications for the United Kingdom economy? Will the increases lead to further unemployment and will they increase unemployment in my part of the UK?

Mr. Forsyth: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor's proposals to reduce the burden of national insurance contributions will have a beneficial effect on employment and on businesses. The hon. Gentleman clearly says what he thinks, but if Opposition Members are arguing that higher public expenditure and higher taxation will have an impact on employment, they are right. That is why the Government resist the proposals that come from Opposition Members to add to public expenditure every day of the week.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that jobs are built in an economy through having successful businesses, such as Chartham Papermill, where one of our hon. Friends will be opening a new plant shortly? That firm has won national and regional awards for quality, training and exports during the past three years. Is not that the way to build jobs, and not through bureaucratic regulations?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. Regulation and bureaucracy are the enemies of employment and that is why the Prime Minister has ensured that every Government Department is looking to reduce the burden of regulations and bureaucracy. At the forthcoming European elections, the Government will be arguing for less bureaucracy and regulation and not more, which destroys jobs.

US-UK Summit

4. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what matters he intends to raise at the summit with the United States Government which might assist employment prospects in Britain.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a job summit and I intend to talk about jobs.

Mr. Connarty: I am grateful to the Minister for being brief, although he passed on no information of any worth. There are 543,000 fewer people in employment in Britain than there were a year ago and 451,000 fewer people in employment than in 1979. Surely it is time to talk to the United States about how it succeeds by having a minimum wage in most states and giving people trade union rights which we deny to employees of the same firms in this country.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman said that I gave no information, but I said that I intended to talk about jobs at the forthcoming summit. In Britain we believe that three things are important: first, a stable economic framework; secondly, a flexible labour market; and, thirdly, the removal of barriers to enterprise. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we have a great deal to learn from the United States, but not in the way that he suggests. It is a fact that over the economic cycle of OECD between 1979 and 1989, the United States saw growth of 26 per cent., which created 18.5 million jobs in that free enterprise economy. The European Community saw growth of output of 23.7 per cent., but that gave rise not to 18 million but only to 6 million additional jobs. The lesson for Europe is to go further down the route that I have suggested of deregulation, reducing bureaucracy and creating a stable economic framework, rather than going down the route that the hon. Gentleman advocated in his question. The way ahead lies with more free enterprise.

Sir Peter Hordern: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in the United States, which has the most rapid growth of technology and productivity, there are no government training schemes of any kind? Does not that make nonsense of the Opposition's repeated claims that Government training schemes are the way forward?

Mr. Hunt: What I will say to my right hon. Friend is that when I recently visited the United States I found that the private industry councils, on which our training and enterprise councils were based, had provided the valuable lesson, to which he referred, that we must ensure that the private sector is fully involved in decisions on training. The figure that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan), combined with the more than £2 billion that my Department spends on training, forms an effective public-private sector partnership.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Secretary of State make it clear to the summit that in 14 years of this Government we have seen unemployment treble to 3 million, that 3 million full-time employees have been replaced by 3 million part-time and self-employed workers, and that we have the worst trained and educated labour force of any country that will attend the summit? Will he also ask the Americans how they have created 18 million jobs—as he claimed—with a minimum wage provision? Will he make clear how much Britain is paying in family credit support to maintain low pay—wages subsidised by the taxpayer?

Mr. Hunt: Still the hon. Gentleman talks down Britain. He must think seriously before he starts to decry the achievements of this nation. I have given one. We have almost 1.4 million more people in work now than we had 10 years ago. That is a signal achievement. The lesson that we learn from the United States is not to go down the route that the hon. Gentleman and his party advocate in signing up to a socialist manifesto for the European elections. He proposes statutory works councils, a statutory minimum wage and a compulsory working week. Those are the last things that one would find in the United States. It is about time that the hon. Gentleman dropped those proposals, which would cost millions of jobs.

Mr. Alan Howarth: At the summit, will my right hon. Friend inquire about the progress in the employment of disabled people and the advantages to the American

economy in consequence of the Americans with Disabilities Act? Does he accept that in the United States of America—the land of free enterprise—it was concluded that voluntary arrangements would never sufficiently overcome discrimination against disabled people in respect of employment? Will he respond positively to the view of the Employers Forum on Disability and the Law Society, as well as the 311 hon. Members who have signed early-day motion 2, that the time has come for legislation to ban discrimination against disabled people in respect of employment in Britain?

Mr. Hunt: I know that my hon. Friend feels strongly about this subject. I hope that Britain can achieve more through greater opportunities for disabled people to gain access into work. As my hon. Friend knows, we have suggested proposals. We are presently considering the position following the representations that were made to us after the new access to work scheme was announced. I hope to make an announcement on that shortly. I do not think that compulsion is the route which we should follow. I believe that we must give increasing opportunities to disabled people to get into work.

Unemployment

5. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken to co-ordinate the variety of initiatives to combat unemployment in areas of industrial decline.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Examples include the introduction of new integrated regional offices and the creation of a single regeneration budget from 1 April this year.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply. Does he agree that where local authorities, local chambers of commerce, trades councils and his own Department are already working well with good small initiatives, imposing on them English Estates, TECs and British Coal Enterprise Ltd. will do precisely what he does not advocate—make bureaucracy mushroom? Will he undertake to evaluate those initiatives to see whether they really work, or whether they are just providing jobs for the boys?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is extremely important that the various agencies work together to ensure effective action with minimum bureaucracy. I know that the hon. Gentleman has been anxious to ensure that that happens in his constituency, where he is dealing with the problems of high unemployment and the fallout from the closure of pits. If he has any specific measures that he would like us to look at, I should be happy to consider them.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is my hon. Friend aware that although employment prospects in Amber Valley were devastated by pit closures, mainly in the 1970s, the area now has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe —certainly lower than Germany? The reason for that is mainly due to the success of new manufacturing businesses. Does not that illustrate that the best way to create sustainable jobs in the long term is not by subsidising unsustainable old industries, but by allowing better conditions for enterprise and better labour relations, which in themselves attract new jobs to the area?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree entirely. The way to secure future prosperity is by embracing change, not resisting it, and doing that, as my hon. Friend says, by using our skills to best effect and competitively in a global marketplace. Were we to embrace the policies of the Opposition in the European Community, we would shut the door to the jobs that will come from that inward investment. Because we have opted out of the social chapter, we have the opportunity that comes from being, if I may quote President Delors,

"a paradise for inward investment".

Mr. Barron: Can I bring the Minister back to the real world in relation to regeneration? The Government are about to announce a £3.75 million English Estates project for Templeborough in Rotherham, which I support. It is estimated that the project will create 175 jobs. Last year, 2,939 coal, engineering and steel jobs were lost in Rotherham and, in November, 260 jobs were lost at Templeborough steel plant. Only last week, 75 jobs were lost at Brinsworth strip mill. The loss of 400 jobs is being negotiated in United Engineering Steels in Sheffield and Rotherham. The regeneration project is a flea on a dog's back compared with the number of jobs that are being lost in that area. When will the Government meet those job needs, instead of proposing these developments, where less than 20 per cent. of jobs are replaced through regeneration?

Mr. Forsyth: We shall start making progress when Opposition Members realise that jobs come from companies being competitive and from private enterprise being able to sell goods and services competitively. Opposition Members believe that the state can provide employment. Conservative Members believe that Government agencies can assist the market to operate effectively. Real jobs will come from free enterprise, which Opposition Members stand against.

Mr. Steen: Is the Minister aware that in the economically declining fishing port of Brixham, in south Devon—the second-largest fishing port in the west country —the Employment Service agency wants to construct a new building on a prime site in the centre of the town to house both the paying out and job creation offices? It is prepared to pay over the odds, with Government money, and to push out private enterprise which wants to build on that site. Is not job creation and training a better use of public money than buying a prime site?

Mr. Forsyth: I am very much aware of the case that my hon. Friend mentioned because he has written to me about it and I have looked into the circumstances. I understand that the Employment Service has made no final decision on the site. I shall be happy to respond to my hon. Friend, once I have had a chance to discuss the matter further with the chief executive of the Employment Service, who is responsible for the decision.

The principle of integrating the work of the jobcentre and the payment of benefits on one site is a good one, which is for the convenience of people who use job centres and which—as the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is indicating from a sedentary position —was supported by the Public Accounts Committee. It makes sense to proceed on a value-for-money basis with that policy, but I shall consider with interest the example in my hon. Friend's constituency.

South East London TEC

7. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to increase the level of support to the South East London training and enterprise council.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): There is no such training and enterprise council as the South East London TEC. If the hon. Member is referring to her TEC—South Thames—the Department's regional director is negotiating the level of resources for 1994-95 with that and other London TECs.

Ms Hoey: I thank the Minister for her reply. Some of us in south London will still call it the South East London TEC, no matter what the Minister wants to call it.

The Minister will be aware that South Thames TEC is the first to become involved in kids club networks and that the setting up of the first after-school club for kids in Vauxhall is one of the useful things that have happened in my constituency. Will she welcome that initiative and ensure that South Thames TEC can put money into that scheme to enable the club to continue and will she allow the increase in after-school child care to continue, so that the many unemployed women in my constituency and in south London have an opportunity to get back to training and to work?

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, of course, I welcome the initiative and I have visited that club, as I think the hon. Lady will know. I am pleased to congratulate all those concerned in setting it up. We have made it clear that those TECs that were piloting the out-of-school child care initiative will continue to be funded, as will all other TECs, from 1994-95. Although I cannot pre-empt the TECs' judgment and take a view on that scheme, I can say that funding to TECs for that purpose will continue.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my hon. Friend recognise that Surrey TEC is just up the river from South Thames TEC and that it is doing an excellent job with local industry in reskilling people, especially younger people? That partnership with industry depends not merely on what the Government do, but on what industry does to help people to get back to work, given the new challenges presented by the need for people of a higher calibre—especially school leavers. Does she welcome Surrey TEC's initiative?

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, I have pleasure in welcoming Surrey TEC's initiative and similar initiatives at other TECs. I am delighted to welcome the various initiatives that result from partnerships between industry and Government and, in particular, "Investors in People", which encourages training and skilling on a lifelong basis.

I have pleasure in confirming that that is not confined to the private sector and that the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service today became the first nationwide civil service body to receive the full award of Investors in People.

GCHQ

8. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he intends to meet representatives of trade unions to discuss the position of the ban on union membership at GCHQ.

Mr. David Hunt: The Prime Minister and I had such a meeting on 20 December.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Secretary of State aware that the campaign against the ban on union membership at GCHQ is as strong as ever and that it will continue until victory is secured? There was no justification for it in the first place. Is the Secretary of State not bothered by the fact that the International Labour Organisation has expressed much concern about the continuing ban and that, as the Government are unwilling to compromise in any way, the ILO may well decide to issue a formal rebuke or reprimand? If that happens, it will be the first ever case of a western Government being so reprimanded.

Mr. Hunt: There are a number of points in the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question. Let me say, first, that we did exactly what the ILO requested us to do: we had discussions with the civil service unions to see whether a solution could be found. No one ever imagined for a moment that it would be easy to secure a solution capable of satisfying both sides. So far as the Government are concerned, the dialogue remains open. I am confident that we have nothing to fear from an examination by the ILO of our industrial relations policies. We believe that we can demonstrate that those policies comply with all the ILO conventions that we have ratified.

Mr. Allason: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the former director of GCHQ, Sir Brian Tovey, has stated that during the imposition of martial law in Warsaw and during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan about 10,000 working days cover was lost at GCHQ? Will he confirm that that is a perfectly good reason for the ban on external interference by trade unions in the activities of GCHQ? Can he assure the House that the existing staff association works perfectly well and that there is no reason whatever for interference by an external trade union?

Mr. Hunt: I can confirm what my hon. Friend has said —that, between 1979 and 1981, 10,000 working days were lost at GCHQ. We just cannot run the risk that anything like that will ever happen again. My hon. Friend is right. Indeed, we suggested that the staff federation should be affiliated to the Council of Civil Service Unions to enable people who belong to the federation to have access to the facilities that are available to unions affiliated to CCSU. Sadly, the civil service unions did not feel able to accept that proposal.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is it not true that, according to reports in the *Financial Times*, the Government are currently planning to withdraw the United Kingdom from the ILO, precisely because the ILO has censured this country—a sanction which is normally applied to countries like Haiti and North Korea? Are not the British Government becoming isolated, not only in Europe but throughout the world, for their anti-worker and anti-union policies?

Mr. Hunt: There is no truth in the assertion that Ministers intend to withdraw from the ILO or to seek an opportunity to do so. Despite criticism from the Trades Union Congress, we believe that our policies comply with all the ILO conventions that we have ratified. As my hon. Friends have pointed out, our overriding objective is to ensure the maintenance of continuous operations at GCHQ, which is vital to the protection of national security. However, the Prime Minister has made it clear that the

Government are ready to discuss any further proposals that the unions may wish to put forward, provided that they are consistent with our overriding objective of safeguarding national security.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, because of their irresponsible behaviour in disrupting the vital work of GCHQ in the 1980s, the trade unions have only themselves to blame for the ban?

Mr. Hunt: I could not agree more. It is important to ensure that GCHQ staff are not subject to potential conflicts of interest. As I said earlier, the Prime Minister and I listened for some considerable time to the points put forward by the trade unions to see whether or not that overriding national objective could be maintained, but we were not convinced that the trade unions could overcome those potential conflicts of interest. It ill behoves the Opposition to try and put a different gloss on the fact that, thanks to our legislation, we have put harmony in place of strife. We are not prepared to allow the Opposition to put that major achievement at risk.

Banking and Financial Services

9. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of jobs which have been lost in banking and financial services in London over the past four years.

Miss Widdecombe: Figures from the labour force survey show that in the banking, finance and insurance business services in greater London the number in employment has risen by 7,000 since 1989.

Mr. Raynsford: What message has the Minister for the 505 employees of Barclays bank in London whose new year began with a redundancy notice at the very moment when the bank's new chief executive was having his pay doubled to £737,000 a year? What comment has the Minister about that example of corporate ethics or does she believe, like the Prime Minister, that it is no matter for her?

Miss Widdecombe: What is a matter for the hon. Gentleman is giving his constituents hope, which he appears completely unable to do. The House will note that the phraseology of the hon. Gentleman's original question was how many jobs have been lost. Jobs have risen and he did not even have the grace to welcome that. Perhaps he would like to tell his constituents that, with London's share of world trade in financial services increasing to 27 per cent. the financial services sector earned the United Kingdom £4.3 billion and that the employees to whom he refers work in an industry which, even if it is redistributing employment, is nevertheless growing. Why does he not give encouragement to Britain's performance in the financial services sector? Why do not the whole lot of them start encouraging things?

Dr. Spink: Is my hon. Friend aware that employment in London and the south-east has risen by more than 200 in the 10 years since March 1983? Will she confirm that some of the 150,000 places in the new apprenticeship scheme will be available in London?

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, I have pleasure in confirming that. I also have pleasure in confirming that another good sign for young people, apart from the creation of modern apprenticeships, is that the number waiting more than eight weeks for a youth training place has declined from more than 3,000 to just over 300. There are now a large number of TECs with no young people waiting. Modern apprenticeships will help that process even further. Why are modern apprenticeships not being welcomed? *[Interruption.]* I take it that hon. Members are cheering the Government. Thank you very much.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware that Barclays bank has declared 7,000 redundancies and National Westminster bank has announced 4,000, yet we still have to wait ages at the queue at the bank? Why is that?

Miss Widdecombe: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should do a competitiveness survey and go somewhere else for his queue. Although there have been job losses in the banking industry in the past year, there have been strongly offsetting rises in insurance and business services. It is generally good news in the financial sector. The hon. Gentleman might pass on that message to those in the queue and to the cashiers.

Labour Costs

10. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence he has on non-wage labour costs in (a) the United Kingdom, (b) France, (c) Germany and (d) Italy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Non-wage costs never get into the employees' wage packets, but do make it more expensive for employers to provide a job. On average, for every £100 of wages an employer in Britain must pay £20 extra, in Germany £30 and in France and Italy £40.

Mr. Congdon: Does my hon. Friend agree that those lower non-wage labour costs are part of the reason for our success in attracting inward investment? Does he also agree that the imposition of the social chapter—which both Opposition parties would like to force on this country—would not only destroy our competitive advantage, but, more important, destroy jobs?

Mr. Forsyth: I entirely agree. Lower non-wage costs are not only a reason for the attraction of inward investment to Britain but—along with our general economic policy—the reason for the fact that in real terms workers in Britain enjoy some of the best take-home pay packets in Europe.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Given the favourable non-wage labour costs to which the Minister has just referred, how does he justify the enormous discrepancy between the average wage in England and Wales and wages in areas such as south Wales and Northumberland, where average weekly earnings are up to £65 less than the overall average? Why are the Government not tackling such huge wage differentials?

Mr. Forsyth: I am amazed that the hon. and learned Gentleman should ask that question. If he had his way and we signed up to the social chapter, the extra costs would have to be met out of those pay packets, and there would be even less for people to take in wages. The hon. and learned Gentleman should not complain about low pay when, like the rest of his party, he wants to add to the costs of employment.

Mr. Bates: Does my hon. Friend agree with Klaus Kratzenberg, a supervisor with Black and Decker in Limburg, Germany? When asked why he thought that Black and Decker was closing its German plant and moving it to Spennymoor in County Durham, he replied:

"It is simple. Industry must be flexible—the social chapter isn't."

Mr. Forsyth: I entirely agree with the sentiments expressed by Black and Decker. I must tell Opposition Members that when companies such as Mercedes are starting to source outside Germany, and when Volkswagen, Peugeot and others are beginning to look outside Europe, alarm bells should be ringing in the minds of hon. Members who are genuinely concerned about jobs. There is no doubt that the social chapter is driving people out of work; the longer that Opposition Members adhere to it, the greater will be the possibility that people in Europe will embrace policies that will make their countries less competitive and less able to provide employment.

Mr. Prescott: In view of his many visits to America, will the Minister tell us whether he agrees with the Secretary of State's earlier statement that America had no minimum wage legislation?

Mr. Forsyth: I think that if the hon. Gentleman checks the record he will find that my right hon. Friend said that America did not have a national statutory minimum wage. However, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding us of the international comparisons to be made. He will know that the European country that has embraced his policy of a statutory minimum wage is Spain—where the unemployment level is twice the European average, and twice the level in this country.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: In recognising the crucial importance of Britain's lower non-wage costs compared with the rest of Europe, is my hon. Friend aware that Lemmerz, a German wheel maker, has transferred all its heavy wheel-making operations to my constituency for precisely that reason? Is he also aware that carpet companies in my constituency are now going to Germany to buy up its now-redundant carpet-making machinery precisely because German companies cannot compete under the regime that has been imposed on them?

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving yet another example of the way in which the social chapter has exported jobs out of the Eleven into Britain. That is good news for Britain, so long as we ensure that we never ever sign up to the social chapter and its job-destroying characteristics.

Apprenticeships

11. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many modern apprenticeships will be available in 1994-95; and in which industries they will be concentrated.

Mr. David Hunt: A full range of modern apprenticeships will be offered to 16 and 17-year-olds in September 1995. Some prototypes will start later in the year.

Mr. Clapham: I note that the Minister does not give the number of apprenticeships and there is a possible reason for that. He will be aware that in the final year of the Labour Government there were 150,000 apprenticeships in manufacturing alone, while in manufacturing in 1991 there were only 51,000. Clearly, the Minister's response is inefficient and inadequate and a more positive stance is required. Will the Minister give mature entrants—the people who have been thrown on the scrap heap over the past 15 years—the opportunity to join the apprenticeship scheme? Has he had discussions with British Coal Enterprise Ltd. to allow miners who have been made redundant to join the new apprenticeship scheme so that they can learn new skills to help them get new jobs?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman knows that the new, modern apprenticeship scheme that the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 30 November is designed to encourage more young people to train up to national vocational qualification level 3 and to encourage even more young people to train to even higher levels. Of course, during the year we shall be considering prototypes which will enable those young people to reach that high level of qualification.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that some of the national training and education targets directly relate to the points that he has raised. The important priority for the Government is to ensure not only that we have young people training to an even higher level, but that through programmes such as Investors in People we shall encourage every member of the work force, and primarily those who are currently unemployed, to train to even higher levels of qualification.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 February.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in Moscow for a series of meetings, including meetings with President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Has the Lord President of the Council noticed the response of Mr. Reynolds in Dail Eireann when Miss Mary Harney asked what representations had been made to the United States over the Gerry Adams visit? His response is that we do not get involved in trying to tell foreign Administrations what decisions to make. Will the Lord President press the Prime Minister to exercise the same restraint with the United Kingdom, especially Northern Ireland?

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the issue of the visa was a decision for the United States authorities, although our own advice, as the House knows, was clear. The hon. Gentleman will know that we believe it to be right and in the interests of all people in Northern Ireland that the British and Irish Governments should work closely together. As he knows, the talks process brings together the two Governments and the main constitutional parties who will work together to find an accommodation. I believe that that is right.

Mr. Day: Would my right hon. Friend agree that the appearance of Gerry Adams on "Walden" proved beyond

any doubt that whatever Sinn Fein says, it has rejected the Downing street declaration? Would he join me in urging Sinn Fein to reconsider its position and would he also agree and confirm to the House that the Government will never do what Mr. Adams requests—become a persuader of the people of Northern Ireland to join an united Ireland? Does he recognise that many Conservative Members remain committed to the Union of Northern Ireland and Great Britain?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will know that my right hon. Friend has on many occasions made clear the position of the British Government on the question of persuasion. Of course, I suspect—in fact, I know—that everybody in the House would urge Sinn Fein to consider seriously a positive response to the joint declaration.

Mrs. Beckett: As Ministers are still proclaiming that "back to basics" is the lodestar guiding Government policy while the Prime Minister is dodging all questions about it, does that not show yet again that "back to basics" is making the Government a laughing stock?

Mr. Newton: I do not know whether I am sorry to have to say that the right hon. Lady is a bit out of date. My right hon. Friend has today given a clear explanation of the "back to basics" theme and has once again made it clear that it is especially important in such spheres as standards in education, law and order and the provision of public services, and it applies also to the range of our increasingly successful economic and business policies.

Mrs. Beckett: I notice once again that the Lord President's list, and presumably the Prime Minister's, does not include standards in telling the truth about tax. Why are the Government refusing to come clean about the size of the further tax increases that British families will face in 1995?

Mr. Newton: What I and my right hon. Friend will continue to emphasise is the contribution that our tax policies are making to the economic strength and improved standards of living in this country.

Mrs. Beckett: As the Lord President must be aware, my hon. Friend the shadow Chief Secretary has tabled questions about the extra taxes that people will pay in 1995, but no answers are being provided. The Government must have the figures—we know that the Government have the figures—and the people of Britain will have to pay the extra tax, so why do the Government not have the guts to tell people how much they will have to pay?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and hon. Friends have answered many questions and will continue to answer the questions that the right hon. Lady's colleagues ask—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer this one."]—but what we want to know from the right hon. Lady is when the Labour party will come clean about its public spending policies which will put up taxes.

Mr. Shersby: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue yesterday told the Public Accounts Committee that some £550 million of unclaimed tax remains to be picked up by taxpayers who have been affected by changes in the tax regime in the past couple of years whereby, for example, women are now assessed independently? Is he further aware that that amounts to about £880,000 per parliamentary constituency? Will the Government do everything possible to ensure that the Inland Revenue makes that fact known to every taxpayer?

Mr. Newton: The Government and, I am sure, the Inland Revenue are always anxious to ensure that taxpayers are properly informed of their rights and receive their correct entitlement. I am sure that every effort will be made to achieve what my hon. Friend seeks.

Q2. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 February.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: As the real value of pensions has been falling for many years, following the breaking of the link with earnings, the value of pensions in the United Kingdom is out of line with virtually every other comparable European country, the compensation package for value added tax will not compensate pensioners in full as was promised, and we have had extremely cold weather for the past week, will the Government now introduce a special heating allowance for pensioners?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman must have a rather curious source for his statistics, because the truth is that not only have the Government protected the real value of the state retirement pension but the combination of our policies on social security and pensions and in the economic world have led to a position in which pensioners' average real incomes have risen by more than 40 per cent. since the Government took office.

Q3. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 February.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning the nonsensical advice given by Liberty to truanting schoolchildren that they should defy police and is it not typical that the Labour party tends to support them?

Mr. Newton: I would certainly join my hon. Friend in condemning the advice which has been reported in the papers today. The Government's efforts to improve the campaign against truancy and to succeed in getting errant pupils back to school—which is where they should be—is, and should be, widely supported. For Liberty to oppose it in the way it does shows that it does not remotely understand the best interests of our children or our schools.

Mr. Jamieson: Will the Leader of the House therefore express his concern that at the end of the March, when the Tory party conference comes to Plymouth, 135 children will miss one and a half days' schooling because of that conference?

Mr. Newton: I do not suppose that they will be playing truant.

Q4. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 February.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Whittingdale: Has my right hon. Friend had time to study the recent annual survey of grant-maintained schools, which shows that since becoming grant maintained the schools have been able to recruit more teachers, improve their results and offer better facilities to their pupils? Does he not therefore find it extraordinary that the Labour and Liberal parties remain committed to the abolition of grant-maintained schools, and that in local government they are waging a relentless campaign of hostility against GM schools, as typified by the behaviour of Essex county council?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is right that the latest survey confirms the benefit of grant-maintained status. Those schools are achieving improved academic results, better staying-on rates and lower pupil-teacher ratios. They are popular with parents and it is no surprise that well over 1,000 schools have voted in favour of such status. As to my hon. Friend's worries about Essex—his constituency borders mine—he will be as pleased as I am to know that in Essex there are now 63 secondary and 55 primary schools operating with grant-maintained status. That represents 60 per cent. of secondary schools and 17 per cent. of primary schools. In spite of the endeavours to which he refers on the part of Essex county council, the latest school to decide to hold a ballot on such status is The Notley high school, Braintree.

Q6. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 February.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Davies: When my constituents complain about high fuel bills and watch the bosses of privatised utilities coining money, am I to say to them that so far as the Prime Minister is concerned it is nothing to do with him?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman's question appears to be founded on a rather curious premise. Electricity prices have decreased by 6 per cent. in real terms in the past two financial years. If the hon. Gentleman wants to know another interesting statistic, I can tell him that, in 1979, the electricity companies—then nationalised—lost the equivalent at today's prices of £465 million. In 1992-93, they paid £420 million to the Exchequer in corporation tax.

Mr. Butcher: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the use of American, French and British planes to bomb the hills around Sarajevo may not necessarily produce lasting peace in Bosnia? Does he further agree that if the idea is to achieve a demilitarised zone, policed effectively, around Sarajevo, the best chances of so doing are by ensuring that Russian soldiers in United Nations uniform, in integrated units with British and French forces, help in the policing of that zone?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows well that the purpose of what has been said and what is being considered in relation to air strikes is to bring about the cessation of the type of bombardment that has taken place in Sarajevo. I think that everyone will want that effort to be successfully completed.

Q7. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 February.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Leader of the House confirm that the Government will announce today, by means of a written answer, an increase of 50p in the prescription charge? Why will there be no oral statement in the House? Is it because, having taxed the disabled and the divorced, the Government are afraid to face the music and announce that they are to increase tax on the sick?

Mr. Newton: First, I confirm that an announcement will be made today. Secondly, I confirm that it is not usual for such announcements to be made by way of oral statement. Thirdly, 80 per cent. of prescribed items are now free of charge, compared with 60 per cent. in 1979. Fourthly, prescription charges will raise nearly £300 million in the forthcoming year. Fifthly, that amount will pay for more than 200,000 cataract operations or more than 70,000 hip operations. Sixthly, will the hon. Gentleman tell me where he would find the money?

Q8. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 February.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the report from 3i—Investors in Industry—which surveyed 500 of the companies in which it invests? The confidence of those businesses is higher now than it has been since the 3i started the survey in 1988. Is that not further evidence that the Government have the right policies for British business and the British people?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is right. The survey shows that firms in both the north and south of the country report greater improvement than in the previous survey and that they have become more optimistic about their prospects. British business is now increasingly confident about the economy and about the Government's policies for business.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your ruling on the fact that the Secretary of State for Health has declined to make a statement to the House on the 50p increase in prescription charges. The Leader of the House effectively made a statement in Prime Minister's Question Time on the same issue and misled the House into believing that the Government were applying the money to patient care rather than to make up for their political incompetence. Is not it a disgrace that the Government should duck the opportunity to make a clear statement on the increase, which is the 16th increase since they promised in 1979 that they would not increase prescription charges?

Madam Speaker: Ministers always determine whether they answer by means of a written reply or come to the Dispatch Box and make a statement. That is something over which I, as Speaker, have no control.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am seriously concerned that a Minister has misled the House and I seek your general guidance. Last night on the "World in Action" programme, the right hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), the Minister for Health, categorically denied that there was a two-tier system, saying that he had no evidence that such a system was developing in the NHS. The Minister has made the same statement to the House. The programme went on to produce evidence that a two-tier system exists. It showed, for example, that radiotherapy patients were treated, not on the basis of need, but on the ability to pay through GP fundholding. Has the Minister said whether he intends to make a statement to the House to acknowledge that the two-tier system exists and to admit that he has misled the House?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Lady would not expect me to comment on something that was on television last night and which I did not even see. It is up to the Minister to decide whether he wishes to come to the House to make a statement. It is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that it has never been the practice to have oral statements in the House on prescription charges, either under the Conservative Government or the previous Labour Government, who were always deeply embarrassed by increasing prescription charges?

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the *Official Report* tomorrow he will see that the Leader of House has dealt with that matter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You are, of course, aware of the severe weather affecting most of the country. In view of the agonising difficulties faced by so many elderly people on low incomes, is there any way that the House can this week ask the Minister to make a statement on whether cold weather payments can be made and all the red tape regulations removed? Those payments are not made unless there are seven days of freezing weather. The welfare of the old should have priority.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks me for procedural advice across the Floor of the House which he knows that I do not give.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Further to the original point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for the press to hear about the proposed rise in prescription charges before the House? Would it not have been better if the Secretary of State had come and made a statement so that we could have questioned her on the subject?

Madam Speaker: I dealt with that matter earlier. I believe that the answer to the question was available at precisely 3.30 pm today.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have received a fax of a letter sent to the leader of Liverpool city council, Councillor Harry Rimmer, by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) in which he invites him to join the organisation, Team 1000. He has been invited to attend functions and briefings at Westminster at which Cabinet Members, Ministers and Members of Parliament will be present. Is it in order for Ministers of the Crown to abuse their office by inviting people here for party fund-raising purposes?

Madam Speaker: The fax was sent by a Back-Bench Member of the House, not a Minister. I receive all sorts of mail shots inviting me to all manner of functions, all of which find their way into the waste paper basket.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. At Question Time today, the Leader of House said that the Prime Minister had made a further statement on the "back to basics" policy. We are told that that theme has permeated the whole of Government policy since the Prime Minister's speech to the party conference last October. Therefore, is it not time that the Prime Minister was asked not to give statements to correspondents and at press conferences, but to make a statement to the House about that policy? He should, at the very least, place a copy of his speech and his thinking on the "back to basics" policy in the Library.

Madam Speaker: The Prime Minister is normally here a couple of times a week to answer questions. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will catch my eye soon so that he can put his question to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that a major announcement in connection with rail privatisation is being made at this moment by way of a written answer and a press conference. The statement will reveal a huge increase in access charges for railway operators and, ultimately, huge increases in costs for taxpayers and passengers. The announcement has been delayed by almost a year; the firm of Coopers and Lybrand has been paid £1.6 million to come up with the access-charging fiasco. Surely, the House is as entitled as the press to a full statement of Government intentions so that—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will recall that I ruled on that matter in answer to an earlier point of order. It is for Ministers to determine whether they make announcements by means of written answers or through oral statements. It is something over which I have no control. I have already made a ruling on that.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is there some form of sanction that the Chair can take against hon. Members who persistently raise bogus points of order?

Madam Speaker: It is a very good question, but I fear not. It is up to individual hon. Members to exercise restraint and to use the procedures of the House properly and correctly, not abuse them.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand what you say about Ministers determining whether they make announcements by means of an oral statement or a written answer, but surely the Speaker has the power, if he or she so determines, to summon a Minister, especially if there is pressure in Parliament to require a Minister to make a statement here. That must be right; otherwise how could

Speaker Lenthall have told the King that the Speaker could be instructed only by Parliament? Surely Ministers are inferior, not superior, to Parliament and to the Speaker.

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman is fully aware, the Speaker of the House has no authority whatever to demand that Ministers come here to make statements. It is for Ministers themselves to decide whether they do that, and the Speaker has no authority in so determining.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. We understand that the Tory Whips are busily arranging marriages for certain Conservative Members. If such marriages were arranged, would it be in order for them to be performed in St. Stephen's Crypt?

Madam Speaker: That is barely a point of order for me —and on that note we pass on to the presentation of Bills.

BILLS PRESENTED

Referendum (Scotland)

Mrs. Ray Michie, supported by Mr. James Wallace, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Sir Russell Johnston, Sir David Steel and Mr. Menzies Campbell, presented a Bill to make provision for the holding of a referendum, for all persons eligible to vote, on Scotland's future constitutional status: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 March, and to be printed. [Bill 50.]

Marriage (Amendment)

Mr Harry Cohen, supported by Mr. David Clelland, Mr. John Garrett and Mr. Neil Gerrard, presented a Bill to amend the Marriage Act 1949: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 March, and to be printed. [Bill 51.]

Representation of the People (Amendment)

3.40 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to extend and improve methods of electoral registration and to allow disabled people to gain access to polling stations.

My Bill falls into two parts, one of which deals with the need for a full franchise. It is sometimes mistakenly believed that we already have a full franchise in this country, but whereas in the past legislation was enacted to extend the franchise, in recent years we have let the methods used for registration slip considerably, and we can no longer claim to have a full franchise.

The second part of my Bill is intended to provide access for disabled people and others to polling stations. Even if we achieve the objective of a full franchise, it will not work for disabled peopel if they do not have full access to polling stations. Their only option would be to use postal or proxy votes, so they would not be able to exercise the franchise in the same way as able-bodied people. So full rights for disabled people are among the measures in the Bill.

What is wrong with current methods of electoral registrations? Millions of people entitled to be included are missing from the electoral register. The problem is probably greatest among those known as "attainers", who, at the age of 18, qualify for registration for the first time in their lives. The percentage of attainers qualifying has fallen year by year, especially since the introduction of the poll tax, and that has not been rectified by the removal of that tax.

Official figures reveal that only 95 per cent. of the people eligible to be registered in England and Wales appear on the electoral registers. In Greater London, only 88·4 per cent. appear. Even those figures are artificially inflated, because people who have died and not been removed from the register are included. Also included are people who have emigrated or moved to other parts of the country, and it is unreasonable to expect that they will all use postal or proxy voting facilities.

There is also a great deal of double counting. Some hon. Members may appear on two electoral registers, one in London and one in another area in which they reside, normally in their constituencies. Many people are merely carried over from previous registers without any serious canvassing taking place to find out whether they should be on the register or someone else should be put in their place.

We also have a mobile disenchanted society in which people get on their bikes and move around from bed-sitter to bed-sitter with growing elements of homelessness, and there are serious problems with registration. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys estimates that 3·4 million people in England and Wales are missing from electoral registers—probably 4 million people in the United Kingdom and 1 million in Greater London.

The method that we use for registration is outdated. The qualifying date for registration is 10 October and the registers come into operation on 16 February. Registers will come into operation tomorrow. Registers last for one year, so the information is 16 months old by the time they are finished. The Hansard Society says that the information on an average register is likely to be 16 per cent. out by the end of its life.

My Bill seeks to tackle that serious problem by introducing a rolling register to allow for the addition and deletion of names as people move. It will provide extra authority and resources for electoral returning officers so that housing movement information, details of registered deaths, information from statutory undertakings, exchanges of information from other electoral returning officers and regular canvassing can take place. That will be subject to strict confidentiality rules so that the information is used only for electoral returning purposes.

Registers will roll until elections are announced. When an election is announced, the closing date will be the date of the announcement of the election and polling cards will immediately be issued, with massive publicity so that people who do not receive cards will know that they are not on a register and will still have time to qualify to get on a register within a week before the election takes place. After an election, the registers will continue to roll. Annual registration will still be required, but that will be more of a check on the existing state of the rolling register, and extra information may be supplied on which the electoral returning officer can act.

Access to polling stations will require accessibility audits to be undertaken by electoral returning officers and full consultation with relevant voluntary organisations representing disabled people—bodies such as Links and the Spastics Society, which produced a substantial report at the last election to illustrate the problems. Designated polling stations will be established in which various characteristics such as wheelchair access and unaided wheelchair access will be required, although the problem of accessibility is for more people than only those in wheelchairs.

Many people who are not registered as disabled and who are merely old and infirm should have the opportunity to exercise their franchise readily and easily. Initially, designated accessible polling stations will need to cover about 50 per cent. of a constituency and people will be allowed access to a designated station if their own station has not qualified at that time. However, the aim will be 100 per cent. designated polling stations with full access.

The key to the Bill is how the Secretary of State for the Home Department will respond to it, because it is a re-run of the private Member's Bill that I introduced last year. At that time, the Minister said that he accepted the principle of seeking to achieve full registration, but felt that the measure was premature. It was premature in that the Home Office was investigating a number of matters concerning electoral registration and electoral provision arising from experience gained at the general election. It was beginning to be accepted that the poll tax had a serious impact on the electoral register, although there were many other elements that provided great difficulty.

We now must ask whether the Bill has begun to be acceptable to the Home Office. It would be nice if the Minister of State, Home Office, who is on the Government Front Bench, could indicate as I proceed through the measure that the time is now right for the proposal. My previous Bill was not voted against on Second Reading, but merely failed to overcome the hurdle of a closure motion. It was carried by 78 votes to nil, but that was not sufficient to ensure a closure so that the measure could move to Committee.

My proposal might not be appropriate if there were to be an alternative Government Bill to deal with such

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

matters. I am pleased to say that, when I read out the list of sponsors, it will show the names of hon. Members from all parties in Britain who are true democrats.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Robert Maclennan, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Dr. Norman A. Godman, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Richard Shepherd, Mr. David Trimble, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. David Alton and Mr. Bill Michie.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Harry Barnes accordingly presented a Bill to extend and improve methods of electoral registration and to allow disabled people to gain access to polling stations: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 May, and to be printed. [Bill 52.]

Representation of the People

[Relevant documents: European Community Document No. 9882/93, relating to the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament, and the Seventh Report from the Select Committee on European Legislation, HC48—vii of Session 1993-94.]

3.51 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I beg to move,

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 20th January, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that, with this, it will be convenient to discuss the following motions:

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 20th January, be approved.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Changes to the Franchise and Qualifications of Representatives) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 2 February, be approved.

I shall deal first with the two constituencies orders which established new boundaries for European parliamentary constituencies. The orders give effect to the recommendations contained in the reports of the European Parliamentary Constituencies Committee for England and the similar committee for Wales. The committees were set up under the provisions of the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1993 to carry out the task of determining the European parliamentary constituencies into which England and Wales should initially be divided to give effect to the increase that section 1 of the Act made to the number of constituencies.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): May I ask the Minister a straightforward question? There is a suggestion that France may not promulgate the additional seats that were agreed as part of the Maastricht negotiations. If that were so, and the House passed the orders today, would new primary legislation be required to reinstate the old boundaries?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman said that he would ask a straight question, to which I shall give a straight answer —no, it would not.

I will return to my line of explanation, and I remind the House of the background to the matter. Agreement was reached at the European Council in Edinburgh in December 1992 that the European Parliament should be enlarged by allocating additional seats to some member states. The primary reason for that was the large increase in the population of Germany, arising out of the reunification of that country. Eighteen extra seats have been allocated to Germany to take account of the increased electorate there. The United Kingdom received six extra seats under the agreement. Five of those have been allocated to England and one to Wales. The Government believe that that is the fairest distribution on an arithmetical basis.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Can my right hon. Friend explain why, although the German Government made it clear in the run-up to the negotiations about the increase in the number of seats that they did not want the additional

seats, subsequently, for reasons that have never been fully explained, we found that Germany had an additional 18? Can my hon. Friend explain how that came about?

Mr. Lloyd: I cannot tell my hon. Friend the ins and outs of the negotiations. Suffice it to say that the negotiations provided for extra seats for Germany, on account of the additional population that accrued to Germany from the reunification of East and West Germany. At the same time, the opportunity was taken to allot extra seats to some other countries, reflecting more closely the differences in population sizes of the various countries that make up the Community.

The two special committees to which I referred were set up in July 1993. They followed, as far as possible in the time available, the practices and procedures of the permanent parliamentary Boundary Commissions. Indeed, of the six members of the committees, five were members of the parliamentary Boundary Commissions, and they were appointed to the committees after consultation with the Opposition parties.

The committees had to work to a very tight timetable. They published provisional recommendations last September, and allowed one month for representations and counter-proposals to be made. Copies of all the counter-proposals and representations were then placed on local deposit in council offices, and a further period was allowed for representations to be made about them.

The committees made their final recommendations to my right hon. and learned Friend just before Christmas. In making those recommendations, they made it clear that they took into account the representations made and the views expressed to them, while complying with the statutory requirement that they should aim to recommend European parliamentary constituencies with as nearly as possible equal electorates. Although I recognise that they may not have pleased everyone—an aim which I think that the House will agree would be impossible to achieve—I believe that they have carried out their task in an objective and impartial way. The orders give effect, without modification, to their recommendations and I hope that the House will approve them.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I apologise to my right hon. Friend for interrupting, but I wanted clarification of the previous point. I did not quite understand the answer given to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). If the French do not proceed, as they have said that they will not, what will happen to the status of our constituencies? Will we have the constituencies as they were before the additional six seats were created, or will we continue with the additional seats?

Mr. Lloyd: We are empowered by the orders to set up the new constituencies. They will not come into effect to enable the elections to be held in them until all the countries of the EC have agreed to the changes that are necessary to accommodate the new numbers of seats that countries will have. The 1993 Act has a commencement power within it. The commencement power will not be put into effect by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary until he knows that the other countries have accommodated themselves to the new arrangements. If they do not, the commencement will not take place, and we shall continue on the existing boundaries.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lloyd: I will give way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

It would create massive inconvenience if commencement did not take place. I see no real reason why the states that have yet to ratify should not do so. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) wanted to intervene with a further thought on the matter, so I give

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am curious to know whether the commencement order can be taken right up to the tape—say, the day before the elections? What will the time limit be on that?

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, it could. It will be for the judgment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary how far to take it. He would have to balance the likelihood of other countries ratifying and the inconvenience of those taking part in the election here if uncertainty remains to the end, and perhaps have to revert to the current constituencies.

I hope and expect that these matters will be settled in the next few weeks. My right hon. and learned Friend will become increasingly concerned if there is no conclusion by mid-April. I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House may want to animadvert on when the last date should be. No last date has been set into the legislation; it provides only that, when ratification is required, the elections on the new constituency boundaries may, from the first day of the following month, take place under the new European rules. That means that a decision for an election in June will be needed by 1 May. It would be difficult after that.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As my right hon. Friend is well aware, this is causing considerable concern among the small percentage of the population in Southend-on-Sea who are interested in European elections, because, instead of our being linked with Chelmsford, as we are at present, it is proposed that we shall be linked with Thurrock. My constituents would like to know what President Mitterrand wants. What price will we have to pay the French before they agree to this? We really do not know.

Mr. Lloyd: That question would be better directed towards the French, or possibly my colleagues in the Foreign Office. My understanding is that the French assembly has approved ratification, but the French Government are declining to append the appropriate signatures to it until agreement on the Parliamentary building at Strasbourg is completed. My hon. Friend, in true parliamentary form, asked a question to which he already feels he pretty well knows the answer. I suspect that my answer squares with what he knows already.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): Following on directly from that point, will the Minister say whether the British Government support the attitude of the French Government? At the time of the Edinburgh summit, the British Government were wholly in favour of the agreement to require the European Parliament to meet in Brussels and Strasbourg. Therefore, I assume that an identity of interest exists between the British and the French Government on that question, because the French Government are maintaining their oppositioin to the six

[Mr. Geoffrey Hoon]

extra seats, simply because they want a new building constructed in Strasbourg. Do the Government support that position?

Mr. Lloyd: The British Government would like to see a resolution of these matters. Our precise position and attitude, and the assistance that we can give in reaching a conclusion, are much more matters for Ministers at the Foreign Office rather than myself. The hon. Gentleman invites me to tread in areas that do not belong to me and do not belong to the orders that are before us. They are not really relevant to whether we approve the orders.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not there a precedent for all this muddle—an opt-out clause?

Mr. Lloyd: There is, indeed, a precedent for the current situation: when the Labour Government were last in power in 1978, we had to set up the European constituencies. We had a limited time in which to do that. All the countries of Europe had to agree to bring forward the same kind of agreement and put it into effect at the same time.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): I am becoming increasingly intrigued and want to ask my right hon. Friend a question to which I do not know the answer. I thought that I heard him say that some discretion was involved and that, if the French do not go ahead, the British Government will have some discretion. I thought that it was automatic that if the French do not ratify we shall not be able to ratify.

Mr. Lloyd: The original question was whether we would have to pass new primary legislation to revert to our present Euro-constituencies if the French do not go ahead. I said that we would not, because the Home Secretary would not put the commencement date into effect until he was certain that all member countries were on the start line, that the new constituencies could come into effect properly and that the MEPs could be elected.

I said that the Home Secretary would have some discretion when he imposed the commencement date. He would not merely bear in mind what is happening in Community countries and when they are commencing their changes, but would also consider the amount of time that we, the political parties and their candidates would need to run an efficient election campaign here.

Obviously, we do not want to be in two minds until the last day and we would not do that. There is, however, quite some time for discretion, but we would have to make a judgment as the time got shorter. I suspect that the time for a judgment would come in April.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend will remember that, in part II of the Maastricht treaty, entitled "Citizenship of the Union", article 8b states not only that citizens of the Union are given certain powers but that they

"shall enjoy the rights conferred by this Treaty and shall be subject to the duties imposed thereby."

It continues:

Every citizen of the Union residing in a Member State of which he is not a national shall have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate at municipal elections in the Member State in which he resides, under the same conditions as nationals of that State."

It also states that the right "shall"—not may—

"be exercised . . . before 31 December 1994 by the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament; these arrangements may provide for derogation where warranted by problems specific to a Member State."

My right hon. Friend is saying that some solution may need to be found to deal with the problem of the intransigent French. Apparently, the treaty lays down a requirement, which cannot be abrogated by any member state, and which can be enforced only by reference to the European Court of Justice.

In the light of the deep-seated concern of the French about Strasbourg and the European Parliament building, and the knowledge that that has such importance to the comity of voting and representation in the Community and the European elections, do the Government intend, by some means or another, to ensure that that matter is brought before the court so that it can be sorted out?

Mr. Lloyd: If I have followed my hon. Friend, I think that he is confusing two things. He began by mentioning the right of citizens in other member countries to vote in a country where they are not a citizen; we shall come to that when we discuss the regulations. However, that right does not enable anyone to take legal proceedings against France or the French Government for not ratifying the arrangements that would lead to the election of six additional Members of the European Parliament in this country and six more in France. Those matters are quite separate.

The purpose of the regulations to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) alluded is to extend to citizens of other member states of the European Union who are resident here the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament.

Our legislation on elections restricts the right to vote and to be a candidate to British and other Commonwealth citizens and to citizens of the Irish Republic. The treaty on European union signed at Maastricht, however, gave voting and candidacy rights to citizens of the Union who live in a member state without being a national of that state. Article 8b.2 related to elections to the European Parliament, which is the subject of the draft regulations. The regulations extend those electoral rights to citizens of the other member states of the European Union who are resident here, by making a number of technical amendments to existing legislation.

The overall aim of the draft regulations is, therefore, very simple. But the regulations themselves are somewhat long and complex—as those who have tried to read them will have noticed. The reason for the length and complexity is that our electoral legislation rightly goes into often minute details of prescription and practice. That level of prescription is valuable in safeguarding electoral procedures from ambiguity, but it means that even simple changes require complicated amendments to many legislative minutiae. That accounts for the complexity of the document before the House.

The general principle of article 8b.2 of the Maastricht treaty is that non-national residents in a member state should be treated, for electoral purposes, in the same way as the nationals of that state. The draft regulations seek to achieve that equality of treatment in practice, and we are not introducing of our own accord any requirements on citizens of other member states that we do not impose on our own citizens.

To register to vote, for example, a Union citizen must have been resident in Great Britain on the qualifying date of 10 October, or 15 September for Northern Ireland, in

exactly the same way as British or other Commonwealth citizens. Citizens of other member states who wish to be candidates at the election to the European Parliament must also conform to the same nomination procedures as candidates have hitherto.

However, we are placing one or two small differences of procedure on Union citizens. These stem directly from the provisions of the EC directive implementing article 8b.2 of the treaty.

In mentioning the directive, I pause briefly to apologise to the House for the fact that the document was not made available at the draft stage. An unfortunate combination of human error and several failures of communication meant that the Select Committee was deprived of the opportunity to consider the directive at its draft stage. I have noted the Select Committee's report, which has been placed in the Vote Office in the usual way, and I acknowledge that the Government did not meet their scrutiny obligations with regard to this document in the normal way. I can only repeat here the apologies that have been made outside the House.

As I have said, the draft regulations impose on Union citizens a few minor differences from the procedures that we require of our own citizens. The main difference from our normal arrangements is that Union citizens will have to apply to register to vote and will have to do so to their local electoral registration officer by 29 March. We shall not be placing on electoral registration officers a duty to seek out non-British or non-Irish citizens for registration.

A further small difference is that we shall be requiring intending voters and candidates to supply information about their electoral rights in their home member states. Member states will be exchanging information on non-national electors and candidates, on the basis of the information provided, with the aim of preventing double voting or candidacy, and to enforce concurrently disqualifications imposed by a home member state. That requirement stems from the directive to apply the provisions of the treaty and is designed to meet the concerns of some other member states.

As I have said, the regulations seem complex, but they merely effect a simple extension of rights to vote and to candidacy, in conformity with our treaty obligations. I hope that the House will approve them.

4.13 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I am glad that, at last—after some further delay—hon. Members have an opportunity to discuss the important matter of the boundaries on which the European elections of 9 June will be fought and the extension of the vote to European Community citizens in the United Kingdom for those elections.

The European project goes on. For many of the newer generations in the House it is no longer an article of faith but a part of the political landscape that has to be dealt with on merit. It is all the more ludicrous, therefore, that the Conservatives' internal divisions over Maastricht have led to a situation in which, in certain constituencies, candidates in the ever more important European elections are only now being selected—just 14 weeks before the election. Given the size of the European constituencies, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for candidates to be widely known and for an informed choice to be made.

As we argued throughout the proceedings on the European Parliamentary Elections Bill, the Conservatives are entirely responsible for the fact that the process of drawing up the new European boundaries had to be compressed into such a short time. They are also responsible for the fact that the boundaries were drawn up not by the independent Boundary Commission, but by the new European Parliamentary Constituency Committee.

It took from the Edinburgh summit in December 1992, when the current Prime Minister first announced the Government's intention to legislate on the issue, until 30 June 1993 before the European Parliament Elections Bill was given its First Reading. We all know that the reason for this inordinate six-month delay was that the Government could not be sure of carrying a vote on anything European in the face of hostility from its Maastricht rebels—those whom the Prime Minister famously dubbed the illegitimate ones.

I understand that even at this late stage the review could be overturned by the refusal of France to agree the new allocation of seats. We have already had an exchange suggesting that whatever we decide today might be overturned completely by the inability of the French to ratify their part of the arrangement. The Minister referred to that as a massive inconvenience. If we have to resort to fighting the elections using the old boundaries—with all the problems that that will create for the selection of candidates—it will be one of the greatest understatements ever, even in the House.

Opposition Members will seek to press the Minister still further on the latest developments in France and on what influence we can exert to ensure that, if we pass the orders today, they will become the basis of the European elections.

When the Bill was in Committee, the Opposition believed, as we do today, that, had the Government been more efficient in the organisation of their parliamentary business, there would have been sufficient time for proper public inquiries. We now that the organisation of business is not the Government's strong point at the moment. Whether it is being run ragged by their own rebels or clumsily breaking down the usual channels, our non-co-operation policy seems merely an extension of the one that has been working so effectively within the Conservative party under the present Prime Minister.

Amidst all that confusion, it is important that the procedures used in the parliamentary review should never be deployed as a precedent for future boundary revisions for Strasbourg or Westminster. We must be clear that it must be the exception and not the rule. If people are to have confidence in our democratic system, they need to be sure that the electoral boundaries on which our system operates are beyond reproach.

When the Bill last came before the House, I stated that I did not believe that the Home Secretary intended to fiddle the boundaries. Some felt that I was being generous to the Home Secretary, but in his case we should be prepared to understand a little more and condemn a little less. It was always our contention that not only should justice be done, but that it should be seen to be done by the due process of public inquiry.

We have enjoyed the public inquiry process for more than 50 years, and it would be most helpful if the Minister could tell the House that the Conservatives do not intend to sidestep the public inquiry on any future boundary proposals, European or otherwise.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In any boundary changes we would like the full panoply of inquiry. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the timetable was short and we had to follow the model that had been provided by the last Labour Government in 1978 which had similarly to timetable the legislation, took a similarly short time for the reviews and where the normal inquiries had to be dispensed with.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The Government wasted a year.

Mr. Lloyd: One could look back to 1978 and say retrospectively that the process could have been started considerably earlier. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that it was not practicable to launch an inquiry while the European Communities (Amendment) Bill was winding its way through the House—although the processes were started before the governing legislation was on the statute book. I understand why Opposition Members wish to make their party points, especially those who were not in the House in 1978. That does not, however, apply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who knows very well that a similar machinery was used then—as fairly, honestly and impartially as time allowed.

Mr. Allen: I am more concerned about future possibilities—not least the possibility that, if we fight the next European election on the first-past-the-post system, further boundary changes will be needed in the near future as a consequence of the proposals of the parliamentary Boundary Commission.

I hope that the Minister will assure the House that this was a one-off decision caused by time constraints. I shall deal with the reasons for those constraints later. It is sad that the party political considerations to which the Minister alluded—the difficulties experienced by the Conservative party in relation to the Maastricht Bill—caused United Kingdom boundary procedures to be tampered with. We are currently seeing a welcome expansion of democratic forms elsewhere in the world—for instance, in eastern and central Europe, and in South Africa; at the same time, we are witnessing the erosion of such forms in the United Kingdom. We—people in the country and, indeed, the House of Commons—are capable of deep complacency at a time when we should be ever vigilant about our democracy and the precious forms that it takes. An example is the public inquiry stage of the Boundary Commission procedures.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is being rather unfair to Conservative Members in regard to their attitudes to Maastricht. As a Euro-enthusiast, does he accept that an opinion poll published by the European Commission three weeks ago showed that the Labour party's tepid support for Maastricht was wholly out of line with the views of the average Labour voter? It clearly demonstrated that the majority of people in Britain were opposed not only to Maastricht but to the notion that the European Community was a good idea at all.

Mr. Allen: I feel rather like a stranger walking in on a Maastricht annual reunion dinner. I do not wish to cross swords with the hon. Gentleman over the details of the Maastricht Bill, but I must tell him that the false divide between Euro-sceptics and Euro-fanatics does not appeal to a number of people—perhaps including some Conservative Members, who may be prepared to admit it. The new generation of Members of Parliament—on both sides of the House, I suspect—consider that we are now in Europe; we need to make the best of it and treat Europe on its merits, rather than reliving the battles of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The public inquiry process is no mere decoration; it has an important function. During the previous round of European parliamentary proposals, there were 10 European boundary inquiries, five of which overturned provisional recommendations because people's views were listened to in public. In Committee, on the Floor of the House, the Home Secretary admitted that a public inquiry stage would have added seven weeks to the boundary process. That could easily have been accommodated if the Bill had been introduced seven weeks earlier. The problem was not the extra seven weeks but the wasted 32 weeks between the Edinburgh summit and the introduction of the Bill. That delay was caused entirely by party political factors—Conservative splits over Europe in general and Maastricht in particular.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The hon. Gentleman may not know, but perhaps the Home Office will be able to say how many EC nationals are presently registered to vote in the forthcoming election.

Mr. Allen: At the moment no nationals are registered. I shall return to that point, but I understand that, potentially, some 400,000 people could register.

The Labour party looks forward with confidence to the 1994 European elections, within whatever boundaries they take place. At the European elections in 1989, Labour took 45 seats to the Conservative's 32 seats. Labour Members are looking forward to the elections in June when the Conservative party, riddled with divisions and disagreements, will suffer further losses and Labour, we hope, will make further gains.

We all know that there is a fundamental divide in the Conservative party which no amount of packaging can camouflage. The packaging in the previous elections was not as good as it could have been. Perhaps the Conservative party will make a more serious effort in the European elections, given that a potential influence on the outcome of the next leadership contest lies in the balance.

In Europe, the Conservative MEPs are led by Sir Christopher Prout, who is the vice-president of the European People's party.

Mr. Cash: The vice-chairman.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): He is the vice-president.

Mr. Allen: A debate may take place on whether he is the vice-chairman or the vice-president, but my information, until it is corrected, is that he is the vice-president of the European People's party. The Conservatives have a rather ambivalent relationship with the European People's party. They sit with it in the European Parliament. They speak on the European People's party membership of committees—the only way in which they can find a voice in committees—and they take their share of the European People's party funding. There seems to be a close relationship between the European People's party and the Conservative party, if only on that circumstantial basis.

The European People's party manifesto calls for a single currency, a central bank, the incorporation of the

social chapter, a common immigration policy and a constitution for the whole of Europe, all of which have been greeted by Conservative Members with great acclaim as concepts obviously close to their hearts. I wonder whether it will bear much relationship to the manifesto which is finally produced by the Conservative party before the next European election.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I am certain that the hon. Gentleman would not like to finish his speech before mentioning the relationship between the Labour party and the socialist parties in Europe and its own manifesto.

Mr. Allen: I certainly would not dream of finishing my speech without a substantial mention of that close relationship, of which we are proud to tell people. It is a close relationship——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Before the hon. Gentleman goes any further, may I say that it would be of advantage to the debate if he returned to the subject of boundaries.

Mr. Allen: I shall resist the temptation to follow Conservative Members in what could have been an interesting line of debate.

Mr. Cash: Has the hon. Gentleman noted that on 9 February, only a few days ago, the European Parliament, through its rapporteur, Mr. Fernand Herman of the Christian Democrats group, together with socialist MEPs, endorsed a constitution which contains even worse things than the European People's party manifesto? Are the hon. Gentleman and his party to repudiate——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. My recent remarks apply to the hon. Gentleman as they do to the Opposition spokesman.

Mr. Allen: The bad news for the hon. Gentleman is that Mr. Herman is, in fact, a member of the European People's party—*[Interruption.]* With great respect, the hon. Gentleman said that Mr. Herman was a Christian Democrat. He is a member of the European People's party, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take up that point with his Conservative colleagues who have close connections with the European People's party, as I made clear earlier.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, whereas all the Conservatives voted against the Herman report, the socialists voted for it?

Mr. Allen: I am grateful for that information.

It is important that I make clear the Labour party's position in respect of the article of the treaty of Rome which calls for uniform electoral procedures to be established for elections to the European Parliament.

Hon. Members will recall that the matter was raised during a debate on an amendment during the Committee stage of the European Parliamentary Elections Bill of 1993. We argued then that it was not feasible for an entirely new electoral system to be set up for the European elections in June 1994 and that it was silly to apply a different system for the additional six seats from that applying for the other 81. However, we also made it clear that as part of Labour's wider democratic agenda we would view sympathetically the notion of a plurality of electoral systems, which might include legislating for a regional list system of proportional representation for future European elections.

During a debate in the House on 7 July, I said:

"The Plant commission, established by the Labour party to look into electoral systems, proposed, as one of its many recommendations, a system of proportional representation—the regional list system—for the European Parliament. Its report said:

'Such a system could be used by an incoming Labour Government for the 1999 elections at the earliest.'

That report was sent to our national executive committee. On 19 May the leader of the Labour party stated:

'The Committee concludes that different elected bodies can be chosen by different electoral systems. That is a view which I share and I support the proposals made both for a reformed Second Chamber and the European Parliament. The proposal on the European Parliament sensibly recommends consistency of voting for the one election that we share with other members of the European Community.'"—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1993; Vol. 228, c. 401-02.]

The strong sympathy expressed at the time of the last debate on those matters was approved overwhelmingly by the Labour party conference last October. I state that for the record lest there be any misunderstanding of our position on the voting system. It also highlights the fact that the Government are yet again lagging behind even right-wing and Christian Democrat parties in Europe and are utterly isolated in their unwillingness to contemplate electoral change of any kind.

The European parliamentary constituency committees have now made their recommendations. We have a number of specific disagreements about the way in which boundaries have been drawn. In addition, hon. Members will remember that we called strongly for an additional Scottish seat. Nevertheless, we are generally satisfied that the English and Welsh constituency committees have done a thorough job and, on behalf of my colleagues, I pay tribute to those who served on them and discharged their responsibilities with great professionalism in circumstances made unnecessarily difficult by ministerial dithering and delay.

We live in dark days for democracy, days of Executive decree, 'Henry VIII' clauses and Bills being passed without proper parliamentary debate. I suppose that in that context we should be grateful that Ministers have not used their power to modify the recommendations of the boundary committees. It is a sad day when the House is grateful for not being abused, but it is just about all that we have to be thankful for until this wretched system is altered root and branch.

I deal now with the regulations that cover the enfranchisement of EC citizens resident in the United Kingdom. We welcome the change which allows EC citizens resident in the United Kingdom to vote in European elections. The regulations, which will give effect to the European Council directive of 6 December, will of course alter the long-standing position whereby only British and Commonwealth citizens and citizens of the Republic of Ireland are entitled to vote in European parliamentary elections. It is a sensible and a desirable change which is welcomed by Opposition Members. I understand—the Minister may correct me if I am wrong—that the order relating to local government elections and European community citizens will be before the House by the end of 1994.

The Opposition believe that extension of the franchise to EC citizens who are resident in Britain is a clear affirmation of our practical commitment to greater

[Mr. Allen]

European co-operation and rights that apply to all European citizens. Consequently, we have been greatly worried by the Government's delay in bringing forward the legislation, which was adopted in draft on 23 June 1993 and became a Council directive on 6 December 1993.

It is indicative of the Government's approach to all matters European that every obligation under the Maastricht treaty appears to be discharged grudgingly and after unnecessary delay. Often the wheels appear to grind exceeding slow, especially where democratic change is concerned. It was in 1977 that the European Parliament first passed a resolution on voting rights in European elections. I hope that many of the pioneers of that time feel a sense of satisfaction this evening that the Bill and the orders are going through. It may interest them to know that in the past few months the European Parliament has agreed to press for a Bill of Rights for the citizens of Europe and for a written constitution for Europe. Who knows how quickly that may come to fruition?

The principles underlying that change are relatively straightforward. As the Minister has already said, article 8 of the treaty on European Union, passed last year, entitled "Citizenship of the Union", guarantees the right to move and reside freely in the territory of member states.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is it not also true that the European Union or Community—whatever one likes to call it—also intends to introduce a compulsory identity card in the form of a smart card, carrying details of the citizen's health, but on which there will be ample room to put all types of other information?

Mr. Allen: There are no proposals in draft directive form or before the House on that matter, as far as I know. If that were proposed, Opposition Members would object to it strenuously.

Article 8b(2) provides that citizens of the union

"shall have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament".

At present, there are considerable disparities between the way in which the right to vote and the right to stand as a candidate are treated in various member states. On the right to vote, for example, the United Kingdom grants that right to all United Kingdom citizens who have been out of the country for less than 20 years, while Germany extends voting rights to all German nationals residing in another member country of the Council of Europe and those who have lived in a non-member country for less than 10 years.

Certain member states—Denmark, the Netherlands and Portugal—grant such voting rights only to those expatriate nationals who are living in another EC member state. There are also differences between the states on the ability of people to stand as candidates. The order that we are debating this evening will ensure that there is greater harmonisation in respect of elections to the European Parliament.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): When the hon. Gentleman became a Member of the House, it seemed to me that he challenged the establishment, and many of us welcomed that; it seemed to be a breath of fresh air. Now it seems that he has become entirely institutionalised. Can he explain that to the House?

Mr. Allen: Absolutely. I plead guilty. The hon. Member has found me out. I am totally institutionalised, and no doubt the hon. Gentleman will see the truth of that if and when the Jopling report is debated in the House.

The proposals also include additional checks on nationality to prevent multiple candidature and voting. Community voters living outside their home country will be required to meet the same qualifying rules of residence as any other national in that state. That is a reasonable principle, which we support. Regulation 4, rightly, creates an offence of standing as a candidate in more than one member state at the same election.

It is also right that there should be, in new rule 8(5), a declaration on the part of prospective EC candidates that contains details of nationality, address and last constituency in the home member state and evidence that the individual is not standing as a candidate in another member state. We also support the element of flexibility in the new arrangements whereby Community citizens have the option of voting in their country of residence or in their home country via a postal ballot.

While there is much to support, we need to draw attention to the Conservative's half-heartedness in one particular area, registration of voters. We note that the transitional arrangements that apply to the United Kingdom should enable the electoral registers to include as many EC citizens as possible. Regulation 8 authorises electoral registration officers to register relevant citizens of the union as European parliamentary electors. Regulation 9 requires the officer to publish a register of relevant citizens of the union entitled to vote. However, delay has meant that the ordinary electoral register is already published, so regulation 18 substitutes the publication date of 9 May for the European Community citizens register. Applications must therefore be in nine weeks from now at the very latest; in other words, by 22 April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the hon. Gentleman wants to establish that the Government have been extraordinarily dilatory, that there has been massive delay and that there are problems for electoral registration officers; but the regulations depend upon the directive. The directive was agreed and promulgated in December 1993. We have been two months in producing this very complicated set of regulations. That is not slow; it is moving with considerable speed.

Mr. Allen: The directive was promulgated when the Minister said, but it was hardly a bolt out of the blue. It had been around for some considerable time before that, and that excuse hardly applies to the delay in establishing the European parliamentary constituency committees. As the Minister knows well, it was merely a matter of seven weeks, the excuse being that had they had another seven weeks they could have had the public inquiry stage. In reality, there was plenty of time to do this in good order and without the present confusion over the candidatures and the existing European boundaries.

On the registration of electors, if we now have less than nine weeks from this evening for a possible 400,000 people to seek registration, it is essential that the Minister and the Department engage in a serious advertising campaign to ensure that people can exercise their rights. I should like the Minister, in his later remarks, to expand on what, if any,

measures the Government intend to take to publicise EC voting rights for those 400,000 or so European citizens of voting age resident in this country.

Needless to say, other European countries are taking the job more seriously. There is an advertisement, for example, in a recent issue of *The Guardian*, and if my Dutch were a little better, I would quote it into the record, but I am afraid that it does not make very much sense to me. I understand, however, that, literally translated, it says that Dutch citizens in this country should contact their ambassador at 38 Hyde Park Gate and ask for the relevant forms in order to register for the election and vote in the United Kingdom. Our friends in the Binnenhof seem to have taken that a little more seriously than the Home Office has.

Similar exercises are being undertaken by other Governments, and there is a tremendous contrast between what they have done and what our own Government have done. No publicity whatsoever has appeared yet, and once again I offer the Minister the chance to tell us later in the debate how the Government are prepared to exert themselves on this matter and whether they want people to register. It is not clear whether this is part of some idea of the Government that people should not register, and the Minister needs to make this clear so that people outside hear the message. Nine and a half million people did not vote even in the last general election.

May I therefore ask the Minister, on another matter, to agree to the proposal that the right to a postal vote should be highly publicised in the RPF 9A form in the newspapers well before the closing date of 20 May, not least because many people will be away on holiday in the summer and some may well be involved in the D-Day celebrations.

It is self-evident that the Government are utterly unconcerned to carry out an obligation to which they are bound by a treaty freely entered into. The Minister must tell us how he squares this inactivity with regulation 9(3), which obliges registration officers to

"take reasonable steps to obtain information"

about who should be eligible to appear on the electoral roll.

The Government should declare a willingness this evening to put some energy or resources into maximising electoral turn-out among EC voters. The importance of ensuring a high turn-out among EC nationals surely warrants something more than the complacency and drift that has come to characterise the Government's whole policy towards the European Community.

Tonight the Conservatives have gone through the motions. Law and treaty demanded that boundaries be redrawn and EC citizens be given the vote. These statutory instruments fulfil that bare minimum, and it will be left to others to do the job well.

4.46 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): I must confess that it is a matter of some indifference to me how many Members we are to elect to the European Parliament. If 81 is to be the new magic number, so be it, although I suppose that one must make a passing reference to the information which has come out in another place and been publicised this weekend in the press that, at almost £1 million a slug, Members of the European Parliament do not come cheap. I suppose that one should make allowances for the fact that they have three parliamentary buildings, they have to go on trips and they have to pay German rates for their bureaucracy, so there are exceptional factors and I would not want to make too much of that.

What I really want to put before the House is the question of what those Members of the European Parliament will do when they get there, and hence their cost-effectiveness.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In this very short debate it may be advantageous to draw to the attention of the House the scope of the debate. It is confined to the desirability of the proposed boundaries for European parliamentary constituencies and the introduction of changes to the franchise and qualifications of representatives for use in parliamentary elections in the manner specified. If hon. Members will keep to that in the debate, it will be of great advantage to the House. It is a short debate and going outside its main scope leaves less time for other hon. Members to speak.

Mr. Spicer: I accept that ruling entirely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the point that I want to make—I assure you that I intend to speak only very briefly—is that, if we are trying to assess the correctness of the numbers for which we are going to vote and the boundaries associated with those numbers, it is perfectly fair to ask, as they go off from us, what they are going off into. I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I do not plan to speak for more than two minutes and I hope that that will allow me to make a very brief point on this, because otherwise it is almost impossible——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not allowing anything outside the scope of the debate.

Mr. Spicer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for us to discuss the cost-effectiveness of Members of the European Parliament and the costs associated with them?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The simple answer to that is no, it is not in order.

Mr. Spicer: If we are not now to discuss the costs associated with electing a greater number of Members of the European Parliament and the boundaries associated with it, I have nothing further to say.

4.49 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I suspect that the brevity of the speech of the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) will be welcomed if only because a number of us were not sure how much time would be available for our speeches after those of the Front-Bench spokesmen.

I advance two specific arguments: the first relates to the overall boundary review and the second involves my county. If the proposals for electoral reform in the European Union had been adopted, today's debate would not be taking place and boundaries would not be a relevant issue. A common electoral system would mean that the citizens of the European Community could be properly represented. It is unacceptable in any democratic institution for a region to be represented in an unfair and undemocratic way which distorts the Parliament. Under paragraph 3 of article 138 of the treaty, a common electoral system is required.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of your previous

[Mr. Bernard Jenkin]

ruling, is it in order to discuss different voting systems? Are we not discussing those eligible to vote and the parliamentary constituencies?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman can safely leave the matter for the Chair to decide.

Mr. Taylor: If the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) pays attention, he will appreciate that the boundaries are the nub of the issue in terms of the electoral systems. The Commission should have been asked to address the principle of a common electoral system, to which this country is a signatory and towards which it has agreed we should aim. That system should have been introduced long ago, but sadly both Labour and Conservative Governments have preferred to ignore it for their electoral benefit.

The arguments that have been used to block the introduction of a fair electoral system in the United Kingdom Westminster elections should not block the reform of electoral procedure in Europe. The De Gucht proposals, which demand a common electoral system, have been passed by the European Parliament. They rest on the table of the Council of Ministers. It is common knowledge that the Government have shown the greatest reluctance to make any progress. Such reform is necessary.

It is a pity that the Government have not taken the opportunity of the change in the number of seats to bring a measure of proportionality to the British European elections. Even if the Government did not wish to take that opportunity for a full reform leading to a fair voting system, the extra six seats offered them the chance of creating a more proportional system by creating so-called additional member top-up to ensure that under-represented views gained their rightful place in Europe. They could have created a fairer system and avoided the problems such as trying to redraw boundaries at short notice before the European elections and of getting candidates in place. Given that even that partial reform has been rejected, Liberal Democrats cannot be expected to support the proposals.

I also want to deal with a narrower issue—how the proposals affect my county of Cornwall. I may be the only hon. Member to discuss a specific European seat in any detail, but the proposals are important to our region, as we have long argued.

The European Assembly Elections Act 1978 states:

"The electorate of any Assembly constituency in Great Britain shall be as near the electoral quota as is reasonably practicable having regard, where appropriate, to special geographical considerations."

The relative importance given to the second half of that statement is crucial to the argument for a Cornish seat. There is strong evidence that Cornwall fulfils the requirements of those special geographical considerations.

The committee proposals for a Cornwall and West Plymouth European parliamentary constituency provoked an enormous response from those opposing the link with Plymouth. That has occurred on each occasion that the constituency has been reviewed. The late David Penhaligon argued for a separate constituency in 1978 and I argued for it in Select Committee in 1988.

The sheer weight of numbers of democratically elected organisations in Cornwall was the most important feature of those responses. Those organisations included the county council, all six Cornish district councils, the Cornwall Association of Town and Parish Councils and 48 Cornish town and parish councils. Those councils are run by various political groupings or, more importantly, by independent councillors at parish level.

Those organisations have responded with a united voice and have declared their support for a separate Cornish constituency. I think that all hon. Members will recognise that it is remarkable to achieve such widespread agreement among councillors working at different tiers and in different regions.

The responses are all the more impressive when one considers the short period for consultation on the proposals. The case for a Cornish constituency has also been supported by the business community and leading academics. Peter Fitzgerald, one of the largest manufacturing employers in the county, and chairman of the Cornwall Economic Forum, has emphasised the importance to local business of Cornwall having its own Member of the European Parliament. The Institute of Cornish Studies, the University of Exeter and even Cambridge university advanced strong arguments for a separate Cornwall constituency and many individuals took their views personally to the Commission.

I want to explain why Cornwall is a special case and why so many local people advanced that argument. There are five reasons: first, precedents exist for concessions on the electoral quota; secondly, Cornwall has a separate cultural identity; thirdly, it has a special geographical location; fourthly, it has economic needs; and, fifthly, Plymouth also has relevant concerns.

The criteria for the mean electorate size for a European parliamentary constituency have been used as a justification for ignoring Cornwall's case. Yet concessions that have led to the establishment of constituencies which do not meet the size requirement have been given to other regions because it is accepted that European parliamentary constituencies should be created along the lines of natural communities, with common identities and interests. Cornwall has a strong identity as a separate community. The present arrangement that links Cornwall with west Plymouth does not benefit either area.

Although the English review is being conducted independently from the rest of the United Kingdom, it is relevant to examine the overall picture. Northern Ireland returns a representative for every 384,000 electors and even on the mainland, there are marked variations. I understand that the proposed West Wales seat will have an electorate of only 400,000. The electorate in the Highlands and Islands seat is 310,000.

Cornwall's electorate of 372,000 is higher than that of the Highlands and Islands and virtually the same as that of Northern Ireland and West Wales. There are only 36,000 electors per Member of the European Parliament in Luxembourg and 161,000 in the Republic of Ireland. The size of the constituencyt is not the most material issue. The European Parliament has a wide range of electors per Member and, if Cornwall were to obtain its own seat, its electoral quota would not be extraordinary.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What size are the Devon seats?

Mr. Taylor: A wide range of changes would follow. I accept that a change in Cornwall should not create an

over-size Devon seat. We have argued from the first that any change should be part of the review and that Cornwall should not be considered in isolation.

Cornwall has one of the most rapidly growing populations in the country and it is expected that it will not remain much under quota for very long. It is estimated that the population will grow to 500,000 relatively rapidly. The electoral quota argument is not final. Other arguments run counter to the Commission's suggestions and its brief.

Cornwall has a separate identity with its own traditions, history, customs and language. Those attributes are firmly rooted in a Celtic past that bears more relation to Scotland and Wales than to Devon. There would have been objections if regions in Scotland or Wales had been linked with parts of England for the convenience of the review. It seems that Cornwall, which has a distinct and separate identity, continues to be ignored. The European Union recognises that special regard must be paid to areas with strong regional identities. Indeed, the European Parliament's resolution is specific on that point and I believe that the boundary commission has failed to take the opportunity to observe that requirement.

Thirdly, it is disappointing that the committee has ignored the well-defined geographical boundary of Cornwall along the River Tamar. That is still a substantial physical and psychological barrier between Plymouth and Cornwall. The Tamar bridge is the only road vehicle crossing for 23 miles from Rame head northward to Gunnislake bridge. Cornwall is almost an island, with natural boundaries fixed by the coastline and the River Tamar. It is effectively isolated from the rest of the country. That is often forgotten in conversation, when people tend to say, "I was in Bristol at the weekend, in your part of the world," forgetting that Bristol is nearer to London than it is to Cornwall. Indeed, for some Cornish people the distance between their home and Plymouth is longer than the journey from London to Bristol.

My fourth point is probably the single most important reason why Cornwall should be treated as a special case. It is not an emotional reason; it is the fact that there has been a failure to take into account the economic geography of the county. Plymouth and Cornwall have totally different economic identities, so European entanglement between them will be mutually economically detrimental. The economy of Cornwall is still heavily reliant for its income on traditional industries such as fishing, farming, tourism and mining. Plymouth relies mainly on the fact that it is a conurbation with a growing and diversified industrial and commercial base.

The two economies' distinctive and incompatible needs have been recognised in a development that occurred since the committee met. Europe's regional economic development programme has afforded Plymouth objective 2 status, which is targeted at areas fighting industrial decline. Cornwall, on the other hand, has objective 5b status, which is aimed at developing rural areas. That demonstrates the difference between the two. I do not oppose links where they are relevant. I argue for them, encourage them and defend them when I believe that they are important, but I do not believe in links that are irrelevant and unhelpful.

Cornwall is one of the worst black spots in the country for unemployment, poverty and other economic difficulties. It has one of the lowest gross domestic products in Europe. According to the Central Statistical Office's regional figures for Cornwall, the county is so badly off that in 1991 our GDP was only 73 per cent. of the national average. Devon's GDP was 87 per cent. of the national average. The different progress of the two areas is shown by the fact that in 1989 Cornwall's GDP was 75·6 per cent. of the average, so it has fallen comparatively, whereas that of Devon was 85·5 per cent. in 1989 and has since grown. The two areas have been moving in opposite directions. Their economic performance is divergent and they have a different set of problems.

Linking part of Plymouth with Cornwall will create a wholly artificial unit unrelated to geographical, social or economic reality. Indeed, the creation of a split within the city of Plymouth makes that divide even more stark. As Plymouth city council has been keen to point out, it is even clearer that that is not in the interests of Plymouth. Plymouth's interest is as clear as Cornwall's, and its natural links into south Devon provide the basis for a seat in which it could be better represented.

Cornwall needs a voice of its own to argue its case for regional funding to improve its infrastructure, reduce its unemployment and encourage its industry. Funds need to be directed at improving Cornish roads, rail links and other communications.

The Liberal Democrats oppose the basis of the review. We believe that at national level an opportunity has been missed, or perhaps ducked, to encourage the common fair electoral system to which this country is supposedly a signatory. But even if the chance for a fair electoral system has been lost, at least we should have played to what strength there is in a single-Member system and recognised properly the individual communities of the United Kingdom. That chance has been missed, and on that ground I do not believe that the review should take effect.

5.3 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): As the Government and the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen want to introduce the measure fulfilling their commitments to the Maastricht treaty, I accept the methodology and precedents that the Government cite. They are indeed appropriate.

However, I must say briefly that the vote is no longer like the generality of the population voting for membership of a golf club in which we have varying degrees of interest. We are now trying to affirm citizenship through the vote, so the way in which we distribute the seats and the affirmation that we give through the vote will not relate to any of the sentiments expressed by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen). Both he and the spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), ally themselves to an outer reach of lunacy not shared by the general populace outside the House.

I understand that at the previous European election only 31 per cent. of the population could find their way to polling stations, although that may be because they were denied the Liberal Democrat's panacea for everything—proportional representation. There is a profound and deep argument that that system is no more representative and provides no truer a democracy than do single-Member constituencies. That is a legitimate debate and the parroting of proportional representation as the only way forward is inappropriate for serious people trying to discuss the

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

matter. One understands why the Liberal Democrats wish to pursue the idea, but not necessarily why the Labour party wishes to do the same.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Boundaries.

Mr. Shepherd: This has a great deal to do with boundaries, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, but the essence of the argument is that the procedure is wholly inappropriate in terms of trying to attest citizenship through an arrangement of six additional boundaries into a union and a political state. That is the profound objection that Conservative Members have long expressed and it reflects the public mood in the country about the elections and the way in which the boundaries are drawn. In conclusion, we now have further evidence of the irrelevance of the House in reflecting and attesting to public opinion.

5.5 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I do not wish to follow the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), who is one of my parliamentary neighbours, but I believe that it is part of grown-up politics to ensure that the political opinion of a nation is adequately represented in the forums of that nation, whether they be this place or the European Parliament. For that reason, I make no bones about the fact that I wish that we were debating a different electoral system.

I did not wish to intervene in the Minister's speech because this is a short debate and I did not want to take up too much time. However, our electoral system, which is unique in Europe, means that our deadline will be different from that of all the other member states. They all use proportional representation with either national lists or large regional lists, so it is easy for them, even literally the day before, as the Minister said, to change the cut-off point. That will not affect the value of anybody's vote in those countries, but that cannot be the case with single-Member constituencies. For us, there will have to be at least 21 days; that is the rock-bottom minimum.

I suspect that the French have us over a barrel, and we shall have to cough up for the enormous expenditure on an extra building in Strasbourg which I believe is not needed —although I do not have the details of that argument.

I sincerely hope that these are the last boundary changes that we shall have to debate. It has been said that we may have to go through the process again, but I hope that we do not. I suspect that the wipe-out of the Conservative party in the European elections on 9 June may make even Conservative Members think that to save their own skins in future they had better start thinking about a fairer electoral system.

Indeed, I am sure that a unified system is on the way, and if we do not take it upon ourselves to act it will be forced on the House by Europe. That will be our own fault because we will have shirked our responsibilities. As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) said, the Labour party is now firmly committed, both by the voices of the leadership and by the votes and resolutions at our party conference, to a system of proportional representation for the European Parliament.

I hope that when the elections come on 9 June, and people argue about why they are voting for European candidates according to one set of boundaries rather than another, and why there are different rules for European elections—the registration will be different, allowing all kinds of "foreigners" to vote in European elections in this country—we shall be able to say that different arrangements will be made in future.

My second point, which relates wholly to this clutch of 18 articles plus a schedule, which the Minister did not have the time to go through in great detail, explains why I tabled an amendment to provide that the order should not be approved until the citizens of Gibraltar are represented in the European Parliament. I know that my amendment was not selected and I am not complaining about that. Far from it—I would never complain about the Chair. *[Interruption.]* I do not complain about the Chair and I would not do so. I introduced a Bill on this matter yesterday.

If hon. Members have read the orders, which run to at least 10,000 words, they will see that, by and large, all and sundry—citizens of the European Union—will be able to vote on 9 June. On one or two occasions, the Minister said that all citizens of the Union will be able to vote. However, that is not true. Citizens of the Union who live in south America, the West Indies or the Pacific, and are members of the French colonies, will be able to vote in the European elections. But citizens of the European Union who are members of the only mainland European colony belonging to this country—Gibraltar—will not have a vote. That is not right, fair or democratic.

For years, we have shied away from handling this issue. But the House now has total responsibility for the 30,000 citizens of Gibraltar. That is not the electorate—it is the total population. We continue to deny those citizens a vote, yet they are citizens of the European Union under our legislation, and they are accepted as such by the European Parliament.

It is wrong that the boundaries that we are talking about were not drawn—it could easily have been done—in such a way as to incorporate the 20,000 or so European Union citizens of Gibraltar who do not wish to be part of Spain and who will not be until it has been a democracy for 50 years or more. We could easily have given them a right to vote by absorbing them into one of the English constituencies. I accept completely what the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said. It is absolutely right that the cultural and geographical identity of people matters to the European Parliament.

We have a responsibility to the citizens of Gibraltar. If they live in this country on a semi-permanent basis, and if they were here last October, they will have a vote, as will everyone else who is a citizen of the European Union. Peers of the realm who live elsewhere will also have a vote under these and previous regulations, whether or not they are in this country. It is wrong that citizens of France—it is remarkable that the French will be the cause of this whole edifice collapsing if we do not submit to their extra demands—who are living in the colonies in south America, the West Indies, and the Pacific will have a vote in the European elections on 9 June.

We cannot shirk our responsibility to the citizens of Gibraltar. We are denying them that responsibility, and it is time that the House addressed the matter.

5.13 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I shall say three brief things about the boundaries. Before doing so, I must declare a personal interest. I have put my name forward to be considered as a candidate to stand for the Conservative party in the new constituency of South Essex. It is possible that I may not be selected, for all sorts of reasons. However, if I am selected, it may at least give the people of that lovely part of the world the opportunity of having the referendum that they never had on the Maastricht treaty because of the shameful way in which Labour Members were not willing to allow the people to have their say on that vital issue.

The first issue that I want to put to the Minister is: does this matter? My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) rightly said that only 31 per cent. of the people bothered to vote, so why are we bothering with new things at all? Logically, we would ask why on earth, because the Germans are getting more seats and East Germany is being added to the Union, Britain should get more seats as well. It is very difficult to explain why we should have extra seats at all.

Another factor that we should bear in mind is that the great majority of people are not only not interested, but are hostile to the whole business. If hon. Members have looked at *The European,* they may have noticed that 53 per cent. —the highest figure ever—of all the people of Britain are now totally and completely opposed to the whole business of the EC; they do not think that it is a good idea. In that case, why should we have new boundaries?

There is a special interest in south Essex. The people are concerned that while the Government wanted to give aid to south Essex because of its unemployment, unfortunately that was stopped by two Commissioners. Mr. Van Miert and Mr. Millan. The Government requested assisted area status and objective 2 status for south Essex. That was turned down by the two Commissioners simply because we sliced 2 per cent. from the application.

Can the Minister give any more assurance that the orders will come into effect? Has he been in touch with the French Government? It is important that people in, for example, Southend-on-Sea should know where they are going. If the new regulations are passed, they will be part of a new seat. However, if the regulations do not come into effect, they will belong to another seat. As Southend-on-Sea had the lowest recorded percentage voting of any constituency in England at the last European elections, it is important to explain to people whether all this is likely to happen.

People are getting more concerned about the way in which the French Government are disrupting so many worthwhile things for silly reasons. The GATT negotiations were held up for a long time simply because the French wanted even more cash for agriculture—and, of course, they got it. When we are spending £250 million a week on dumping and destroying food, it is silly that we agreed to give more money to the French for agriculture.

Mr. Enright: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the GATT negotiations failed in the end because Caribbean bananas were not protected?

Sir Teddy Taylor: It would not be in order for me to go into that, but I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. The filthy protectionism of the common agricultural policy forces up the price of food by £28 a week for the average family in Britain.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must insist that we get back to the boundaries. I have insisted on that repeatedly this afternoon and I thought that hon. Members had got the message.

Sir Teddy Taylor: You are absolutely right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish that hon. Members would not raise such irrelevant points. The hon. Gentleman's argument is rubbish. It is bad for the third world and bad for the people of Europe. I shall be glad to give the hon. Gentleman an answer outside the House, but I cannot give it here.

I ask the Minister to tell us what we will have to do on these new boundaries. I understand that the European Parliament has many buildings. It built a great building in Brussels at enormous cost, and it wants a new building in Strasbourg. It is now paying rentals of £24 million a year. Frankly, if we want these new constituencies, including South Essex, it seems that we will have to tell the French that they have lots of money to build lots of new buildings for this ridiculous Parliament. In voting for the new boundaries, we will have to decide what we want to do. Will we simply chuck out these extra six constituencies and tell the French that we will not agree to silly extra expenditure, or will we cave in, as we have done so often?

Hon. Members should bear in mind the cost of caving in to French blackmail. We did it over the GATT negotiations at great expense to the people of this country and Europe, and at great damage to the third world. It seems that if we agree to the new constituencies, we will do it only by having additional buildings which are an utter waste. Honestly, I think that our constituents are distressed about the waste, the fraud and the mismanagement of the EC.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Of course, the buildings are all related to these orders, which provide that MEPs can be elected in the first place. It is interesting to note that if agreement cannot be reached, as is the position at present, in what is called the European Union over where the Parliament will sit—one would have thought that agreement could easily be reached on that matter—what on earth is the possibility of reaching agreement on much more substantial matters? We are supposed to believe that the European Union is one—that it is all unanimous and the rest of it. There does not seem to be much evidence of that, even on the question of where MEPs will meet.

Sir Teddy Taylor: How right you were, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to say that I could not go into this matter, because it is out of order. On the other hand, if the hon. Gentleman looks at the basic policies he will see that the flaw of the EC is that it cannot solve problems.

All the new Members of the European Parliament whom we are sending over should bear it in mind that they are going to something where problems cannot be solved. An ideal example is the common agricultural policy, where reform after reform is talked about, but nothing happens.

My final point is that expenditure is at an all-time high, mountains are at an all-time high, and the gap between consumer prices and world prices is the highest ever recorded. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said to me that a sum of £28 a week extra per family——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is testing my patience now. I must insist that he, and hon. Members who make interventions, should stay within the terms of the debate on the boundaries.

Sir Teddy Taylor: How right you are, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been trying hard to stick to the regulations. Unfortunately, hon. Members can ask a direct question and if one does not answer, it gives the impression that one is ignoring them. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) attends European debates with great regularity, and I will be only too glad to speak to the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) to clarify the matters.

My final point is important. Bearing in mind the fact that so few people bother to vote, is there any possibility that, before the regulations come into effect, a little pamphlet can be distributed which says exactly what the additional MEPs—and the existing ones—actually can do? In the progress of democracy, people can sometimes gain the impression that the European Parliament can do things which it cannot. Many people who study it carefully take the view that if it closed down tomorrow, nobody would notice apart from the taxi drivers in Strasbourg.

People ask whether anything can be done by the European Parliament about the export of live cattle—the answer is no. They ask whether the flood of legislation can be stopped—of course not, as it goes through by majority vote in the European Council.

Do we need the order at all? Why should we have extra seats just because Germany is getting more? Are we to cave in to French blackmail again, and what will that cost us? We are to send even more people to Strasbourg, Brussels or anywhere else, and the people of Britain are becoming more worried, concerned and perplexed about the EC. *[Interruption.]* That is particularly the case in places such as the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), where they take a special interest in public affairs. They want to know what is going to happen, and whether it would make any difference if there was not a European Parliament at all.

5.23 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): I am delighted once again to have the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) in a debate on European matters. I wish him well in his efforts to become a candidate for the forthcoming European elections, and I am looking forward to seeing a copy of the election manifesto on which he will fight those elections. I am also looking forward to seeing how it will be possible for the Conservative party to have a manifesto that both the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) will be comfortable with. No doubt that is a matter for the Conservative party.

The great advantage of having a fixed date for the European elections of 9 June—a date well known for a considerable time—should be certainty for the electorate. The electors should know not only the date of the election but the geographical boundary of the constituency in which they live. They should also know the candidates from whom they can choose and the number of MEPs who will represent the United Kingdom. However, even if the House agrees the order, none of those issues will be resolved.

There is a temptation—I regret that the hon. Member for Southend, East succumbed to it—to blame the French, and the French Government, for the present uncertainty. That assertion needs to be examined a little more closely, because the British Government are not without blame in the matter.

The issues affecting the forthcoming elections should have been resolved at the Edinburgh summit during the British presidency in December 1992. It was decided at that summit that Germany would have an extra 18 seats and that France, Italy and the United Kingdom would each have an extra six seats. In addition, however, the Government went along with the French Government's demand that Strasbourg should be recognised as a meeting place for the European Parliament in perpetuity. The British Government agreed to that demand, and that has caused the present difficulties and uncertainties.

The Prime Minister came back from the Edinburgh summit and told the House that he was entirely happy with the negotiations and with the results of the summit. In so doing, he overlooked two crucial aspects of what was decided there. He overlooked the fact that the European Parliament had consistently voted for Brussels as a meeting place. The Parliament was often led by Conservative MEPs on the issue, and they had argued strongly that Brussels should be the single meeting place for the Parliament.

Clearly, there are MEPs who support Strasbourg as a meeting place, but the majority do not; they want to meet in a single city. In so doing, the majority have accepted that there should be a new European Parliament building in Brussels. That building now operates, but on a limited basis. During 1994, it is likely that only eight half-day meetings of the full European Parliament will be in Brussels.

The Prime Minister also overlooked the fact that the existing chamber in Strasbourg is simply not large enough to accommodate the extra MEPs who will be elected. Those extra MEPs will come as a result not so much of the Edinburgh agreement as of the enlargement which is in prospect. That idea has been strongly supported by the Government.

The Government have supported the idea of Strasbourg as a permanent meeting place for the European Parliament. The proposals for the boundary changes are affected by the decisions of the French national assembly and the French Government to make life difficult for the other member states in terms of ratifying the proposals. It is right that we should ask what the Government's position is.

I asked the Minister earlier about this matter, and I appreciate his difficulties. He is a Home Office Minister, rather than a Foreign Office Minister, and I quite understand that he is reluctant to stray too far from his departmental portfolio. The Government agreed that the European Parliament should continue to meet in Strasbourg, but we heard nothing from the Minister as to where the money should come from to make that commitment a reality.

I am sure that every Conservative Member would say that the uncertainty about the present boundaries is the responsibility of the British Government, and they should sort out which boundaries will be in place by 9 June. The reality is that the British Government have gone along with the arrangement of having Strasbourg recognised as a seat of the European Parliament, and they have done so without recognising that there will be a cost.

Conservative Members have consistently criticised the European Parliament for having a number of buildings

from which to operate, and they are right to do so. That is not of the making of the European Parliament, which would be delighted to hold meetings in the new building in Brussels. The truth is that the British Government——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is all very interesting, but can we hear something about the boundaries?

Mr. Hoon: I will certainly stay in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Even if we pass the proposals tonight, the British electorate will not know in which constituencies they will vote on 9 June. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) gave an illustration by referring to his European constituency. If I may, I will give a similar example in my area. The European constituency of Derbyshire and Ashfield will be divided into three different sections if we pass the order. A series of new constituencies will be created across the east midlands, and the electorate will expect to know who the candidates are. The political parties are selecting the candidates in preparation for the elections. There will be an extra constituency in the east midlands as a result of the order. At some stage, the political parties will have to select new candidates for the six extra seats across the United Kingdom. That is under way. The political parties' processes for choosing candidates are an important part of our democratic process.

The political parties undertake considerable organisation in selecting candidates. I assume that that is the case for the Conservative party. I know that it is for the Labour party. I assume that the same is true for the Liberal Democrats and other parties represented in the House. It will cause astonishing confusion among the electorate if the parties undertake the selection process only to find a few weeks before 9 June that, as a result of the difficulties with the French Government's attitude to the elections, we have to revert to the existing arrangement and the new boundaries cannot be put in place. The Government will seek to blame that on the French.

It is important that the record is set straight about the French Government. The British Government not only went along with the agreement at the time of the Edinburgh summit but positively endorsed the arrangement and urged it on other member states of the European Community. That is a relevant matter, with respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that other issues relating to the constituencies are of greater concern to right hon. and hon. Members. However, who is to pay for any new building for the European Parliament is a matter that the Government cannot avoid.

I appreciate the Minister's difficulty. He represents the Home Office, which has no specific responsibility for Europe. Nevertheless, the matter affects the electorate and the House should take note of it.

5.31 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I rise to sum up the debate for the Opposition. We welcome the orders, delayed as they are and besmirched as they are by the usual examples of Government incompetence. The Government failed to send them to the Scrutiny Committee in the proper manner and to allow the usual processes to take place; that is par for the course these days.

I particularly welcome the order relating to Wales because it confers on Wales one additional seat, giving us five altogether. That reflects the rise in the Welsh population in the past 10 years. Wales was under-represented under the previous distribution of seats. We had only four seats. We shall be slightly over-represented when we have five seats because we cannot have four and a half seats—it has to be one or the other.

As the Welsh population is continuing to grow rapidly, it is likely that the over-representation will be put right. In percentage terms, the Welsh population is increasing more rapidly than that of England. By the year 2001, when the next review will take place, we shall certainly fully occupy that seat—if I can put it that way—in terms of average size. In the past 10 years, Welsh Euro-constituencies were slightly larger on average than those in England. So we are moving from under representation to slight over-representation for a temporary period simply because Wales is regarded as indivisible for the purpose of Euro-elections. That is why we welcome the debate.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's argument. Obviously, the integrity of Wales is important to him; otherwise, he would presumably be prepared to accept that part of England could have gone with one of the new seats. Will he deal with the fact that, because the orders for Wales and England are taken separately, it is not possible to apply the quota in the same way in different parts of the United Kingdom? Wales has been given a different quota to that for England, and because Cornwall has been included in England for this purpose we are being unfairly treated while Wales is being generously treated. Would the hon. Gentleman care to comment on that inequality?

Mr. Morgan: Cornwall is a special case. The people of Cornwall are our Celtic cousins. Cornwall is the only non-Anglo-Saxon county in England. As a result, we feel a strong, almost uncle-nephew relationship with Cornwall. The Cornish are certainly not Welsh, but nor are they Anglo-Saxon English. We have a great deal of sympathy with Cornwall. However, we do not think that the ideas that have been floated tonight for a Cornwall and Gibraltar, West seat or some link between Cornwall and the tail end of a Welsh seat are practical. The hon. Gentleman must solve the problem within the confines of Cornwall being regarded as part of England, if not Anglo-Saxon England. It is not a problem with which I can deal.

Wales takes an interest in Europe that most of the Conservative Members who have spoken—in summing up the debate, one has to refer to them—have not been able to show. A definite anti-European theme came through in the speeches of most of the Back-Bench Conservatives who took part in the debate. It is difficult to sum up the debate without some reference to the points that they have made.

Their attitude is in complete contrast to the attitude that we in Wales have to Europe. We are anxious to promote the Wales in Europe theme, because it is important to us. We have built up links with other regions of Europe, including Catalonia, Rhône-Alpes, Lombardy and Baden-Württemberg. They are our strong neighbours and they can teach us a lot about industry. Those are the areas with which we want to link up by having the extra seat in the European Parliament.

We have some sympathy with the occasional point that is made by the anti-Europe Conservative Members. There is an excessive proliferation of European bodies. We have the European Parliament, the new Committee of the

[Mr. Morgan]

Regions and the Economic and Social Committee. In the end, something will have to be done to sort out that excessive proliferation.

We welcome the recognition of the fact that the population of Wales is growing. The additional population is not primarily in industrial south Wales, which people think of as the most typically Welsh area. It is in the two counties of Clwyd and Dyfed which are growing more rapidly as a result of the life style there and retirement migration. That is why the additional seat is the Mid and West Wales seat. It has been taken from the four previous seats.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) compared it to parts of Cornwall. The new Welsh constituency has a population of only 401,000. However, it is an extensive seat because the population is much more sparse than in Cornwall. The constituency will stretch from south of Milford Haven to the Llanrwst area, within about 20 miles of the north Wales coast. It will include two whole counties plus one additional sparsely populated area in the county of Gwynedd. It is an awkward constituency, but we look forward to fighting and winning it, to give us five out of five seats, when the new boundaries are accepted.

The third order deals with the registration of overseas voters. In the 1992 election, overseas voters had their first opportunity to participate in Westminster elections. The Conservatives in Wales have taken the principle much further. They do not merely allow overseas voters to participate in Welsh elections; they encourage them to become chairmen of our quangos. We have David Rowe-Beddoe, the chairman of Conservatives Abroad——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not want to hear anything whatever about quangos. I want to hear something about the boundaries of the European parliamentary constituencies.

Mr. Morgan: We are dealing with three orders. The third order relates not to boundaries but to the registration of overseas voters, to enable them to vote in the European parliamentary elections for United Kingdom constituencies. That is why the position of Mr. David Rowe-Beddoe, as the chairman of Conservatives Abroad in Monte Carlo, is relevant.

For the first time, the European Parliament, with the new constituency boundaries, will be able to remedy part of the democratic deficit. European Members of Parliament will have a voice in choosing the chairman of the European Commission—which is a Euro-quango, in a way. I see a parallel which I want to put to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are remedying the democratic deficit in the giant Euro-quango in the same way as we would like to remedy the democratic deficit with respect to the proliferation of quangos in Wales.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is all very interesting, but let us now talk about the boundaries of the European parliamentary constituencies.

Mr. Morgan: We have heard a great deal about how the bigger European Parliament needs to be incorporated in a bigger building at a cost of £200 million. The extra European Members of Parliament—we shall have one in Wales—would not have anywhere to sit if they could not go to the building in Strasbourg. The Labour party accepts that, if there is to be a bigger Parliament, the logical consequence must be followed right through. That is unlike the attitude that has been displayed by the Conservatives. They are going to take part in the election, but one is never sure whether they are enthusiastic about it. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said that we do not want the additional six seats. The hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) said that he did not give a damn whether it was 81 or 87. The Labour party thinks it important to have the additional six seats.

I can well imagine that, if the Germans had said that they wanted all the additional seats in the European Parliament, the Conservatives would have complained about the Germans grabbing all the sun beds and European seats. That would have been seen as not right, as well.

The Labour party does not share that hypocritical attitude. Either the Conservatives want to be part of Europe, in which case they should take part in all the boundary changes and the debate tonight in an enthusiastic way—as we are doing—or they do not. They are completely hypocritical about it. We read in *The Guardian* only last Saturday of the extraordinary visit to the new European Parliament building by members of the Commons-Lords hockey team. The article said:

"Some MPs turned up with young relatives or assistants including a tall blonde in her mid-twenties who was clad in jodphurs"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have had quite sufficient about that. Let us get back to the European boundaries.

Mr. Morgan: It was a terribly brief point about being clad in jodphurs, riding boots and hacking jacket.

I have heard about riding roughshod over Europe, but that is ridiculous. Hon. Members who took part in that visit to the European Parliament took public money, yet all they do tonight is criticise its existence. Either they——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is trying my patience. Please get back to the European boundaries.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will have observed that hon. Members on the Front Benches have spoken at incredible length and that you have had to reprimand them—certainly the Opposition—for going away from the subject matter. Do you not believe that it would have been far better to allow some Back Benchers to get into the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have no control over the length of speeches, but I am perfectly able to control the debate.

Mr. Morgan: The Labour party believes that the additional six seats are important because the European Parliament elections will be important. We regard it as important to fight the elections on the new boundaries with the minimum of delay, in spite of the delay that was caused by the Government's incompetence. We regard the debate tonight as important to approve the orders. We cannot thus far work out whether the Government will fight the whole campaign on "back to basics" while the European Peoples party will fight it on the basis of some other manifesto —"Vorsprung durch technik". Perhaps the Government will try to merge the two slogans into "Vorsprung durch back to basics".

We do not know whether the Government want to be part of Europe and whether their Back Benchers will be

willing to co-operate with the EPP. They take the money from the EPP but do not want to participate with it in its manifesto. The Labour party has an agreement in fighting the 87 seats. Certainly in terms of Wales, we will win all five of the seats.

5.42 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am sorry that some of my hon. Friends have not been able to speak, as I would have liked to hear them.

I will use the few minutes that are left to me to comment on some of the points that have been raised. I shall start with the remarks made by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen). I was grateful for his tribute to the members of the two boundary committees. They did an excellent job. They did it—as he implied slightly less generously to the Government—in a considerably shorter time than they and we would have liked, but they did it well and fairly.

In organising the new seats, we have taken about the same time as the Labour Government took in 1978. Although I said that earlier, it is worth repeating for the record. Exactly the same pressures were on us as were on them. The timetable for the constituency changes and the problems that we are facing are nothing to do with any action in the compass of the British Government, but because France has yet to ratify. One hopes that it will.

The regulations about candidates and voters from EEC countries are complicated. The directive of December 1993 contained details that we were neither expecting nor looking for, so there was a great deal of new work to take on board. The hon. Gentleman wondered whether we would ever have a truncated view again. We certainly will not under the 1993 legislation, because that was one off, as careful reading of it will show.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) hoped that there would be no more reviews of European boundaries. He was talking about proportional representation. We shall certainly have one new review of Euro constituency boundaries. As soon as the parliamentary boundaries are completed there will have to be a new review of all the European seats. Full inquiries on that will be held in the normal way.

Mr. Allen: If the French do not ratify the proposals, which now appears likely, how late can the Minister leave it before he informs people that they must fight the European elections on the old boundaries, not the new?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not accept that the French are unlikely to ratify—rather the contrary. That remains finally for them and not for me. I think that the final time comes some time in April; otherwise, there would be—I use the term again—massive inconvenience for those fighting the elections here.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to repudiate the comments made by the hon. Member for Perry Barr, who said that we will not have an alien voting system inflicted on this country by the institutions of the European Community? I reiterate what my right hon. Friend said in a meeting last year:

"I do not see that uniformity means adopting a system of proportional representation, and I have yet to see a good case as to the merits of the different states adopting the same procedure."

Will we continue to veto any proposals that do not match our culture in this country?

Mr. Lloyd: What my hon. Friend has just read out is certainly my view. We will of course engage in any discussions on this subject that come up in the Council of Ministers. But it would take a lot to convince me and my colleagues that any other form of election would be an improvement on first past the post.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: I will not give way, because I have only about four minutes left and I want to make a couple of other points. If there is any time left, the hon. Gentleman shall have it.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North said that he was not looking to proportional representation for these elections. He was absolutely right. I hope that he will invest his thoughts in that piece of good sense when we come back to these questions later.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) was unable to make all of his points, as I would have been interested to hear them.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) talked about PR. He thought that, if there was proportional representation for this election, it would save time. It most certainly would not. We would have to decide on the system and who drew up the list. Would it be a United Kingdom list or a regional list? Or would it be one of the separate countries that make up the United Kingdom? There is a huge amount of discussion to be had there. It is not a missed chance at all.

The hon. Gentleman wanted a separate seat for Cornwall. Many other counties would like a conterminous seat—I know that Norfolk would—but the rule is that constituencies should have, as far as possible, equal numbers of electors.

The committees were able to take in special geographical considerations, but those do not apply to Cornwall. The problem with Cornwall having a seat of its own is that its population is too small. No brief was given to the committee. All the criteria that it should have taken into account were included in the legislation. The hon. Gentleman referred to the Highlands and Islands. That is a different matter, because the geographical considerations that do not apply to Cornwall apply in their case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) also spoke about PR. I have mentioned that, so he will excuse me if I do not go over his remarks.

I have considerable sympathy with what the hon. Member for Perry Barr said about Gibraltar. I cannot deal with that matter in this debate. I am afraid that a decision was taken within the Community which was made part of the European Community Act on direct elections of 1976 and there is no way that we can change it without the agreement of all the other members of the Community. I know that my colleagues at the Foreign Office are extremely concerned about that matter, sympathise with what the hon. Gentleman said and certainly sympathise with the feelings of the citizens of Gibraltar.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) asked whether all this mattered. In the sense of whether it matters if there are 651 Members of this House rather than 640 or 655, no it does not. However, the change reflects rather more accurately than the previous arrangements the various sizes of electorates in European countries, and that is the logic and sense behind it.

[Mr. Lloyd]

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East also asked whether I had been in touch with the French Government. I am flattered that he should think that I might help by doing so, but that matter lies with the Foreign Office and I am not able to intervene.

My hon. Friend also wanted to know what the job of a Member of the European Parliament entails. He is applying for a Euro-seat, and I wish him the best of luck. When he has been there a little while, perhaps he will come here with all the authority of a MEP and tell us the answer to his question.

The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) referred to the positioning of the European Parliament and to where it should meet. There are three sites. The British Government regret the inconvenience and expense and would like a sensible resolution, but they know that the matter will be resolved only through unanimity—as the hon. Gentleman knows—and they do not expect that in the near future, although they will work for it.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) replied for the Opposition. I am glad that he is pleased that Wales got an extra seat——

It being two hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [11 February].*

The House divided: Ayes 368, Noes 71.

Division No. 124] **[5.51 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Bellingham, Henry
Benton, Joe
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garrett, John
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McWilliam, John
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri

Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Hara, Edward
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Harvey, Nick
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Redmond, Martin
Rendel, David
Rooney, Terry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Matthew Taylor and
Mr. Paul Tyler.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 20th January, be approved.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the other motions.*

Motion made, and Question put forthwith,

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 20th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

The House divided: *Ayes 365, Noes 28.*

Division No. 125] **[6.06 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Benton, Joe
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Darling, Alistair

Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Fishburn, Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fraser, John
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Garrett, John
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hall, Mike
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Illsley, Eric
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Meale, Alan
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Milburn, Alan
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Murphy, Paul
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wright, Dr Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Clapham, Michael
Connarty, Michael
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Etherington, Bill
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Redmond, Martin
Rooney, Terry
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis

Steinberg, Gerry
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Andrew Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith,

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Changes to the Franchise and Qualifications of Representatives) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 2nd February, be approved.—[*Mr. Peter Lloyd.*]

The House divided: Ayes 364, Noes 45.

Division No. 126] **[6.18 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benton, Joe
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Fishburn, Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Garrett, John
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hall, Mike
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McMaster, Gordon
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Mariand, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela

Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Cabom, Richard
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Clapham, Michael
Connarty, Michael
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Etherington, Bill
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McKelvey, William
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Oiner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Redmond, Martin
Rooney, Terry
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Trimble, David
Winnick, David
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Financial Services

6.31 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I beg to move,

That the draft Auditors (Financial Services Act 1986) Rules 1994, which were laid before this House on 15th December, be approved.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motions:

That the draft Accountants (Banking Act 1987) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 15th December, be approved.

That the draft Building Societies (Auditors) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 15th December, be approved.

That the draft Auditors (Insurance Companies Act 1982) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 14th January, be approved.

Mr. Nelson: The House will recall that Sir Thomas Bingham's report on his inquiry into the supervision of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International was published in October 1992. It concerned perhaps the largest fraud in the history of banking. When BCCI collapsed in 1991, it left behind it a trail of deception and criminality on an epic scale. Sir Thomas Bingham drew some clear lessons from his inquiry and set out a list of recommendations. When he introduced the report in the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) made it clear that he accepted them all and that the Government were committed to carrying them out.

In a subsequent debate on the report on 6 November 1992, I spelled out in some detail how the Government intended to fulfil that commitment. One of the regulations before the House represents the culmination of our actions to give effect to one of Sir Thomas's recommendations —that the existing right, in section 47 of the Banking Act 1987, for auditors to report relevant information to the Bank of England should become a statutory duty.

As hon. Members will recall, Sir Thomas was persuaded to that view by, in part, a conclusion of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service which stated:

"although the existing permissive nature of Section 47 has worked well . . . it seems desirable to tighten the wording of the Act so that there can be no doubt, either from the point of view of the auditor, his client or the regulator, as to an auditor's duty to report."

In announcing the Government's intention, I also made it clear that my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames had decided that a similar duty should be introduced for auditors of building societies and financial service companies and that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade would want the approach extended to the auditors of insurance companies—hence the four statutory instruments before us.

In his speech in that debate, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) welcomed the Government's acceptance of the recommendations of Sir Thomas and the Select Committee recommendations and agreed that it was

"important . . . that the statutory duty of auditors ought to be clear so that"—

to use the hon. Gentleman's colourful phrase—

"if whistles are to be blown they are blown without doubt."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 541.]

Since that debate, the Government have taken the decision to introduce the duty into a fifth regulated sector —friendly societies—and a negative resolution order, under the Friendly Societies Act 1992, is also currently before the House.

There are a number of reasons for taking action across that wide front. First, and most important, the relevant provisions in the various Acts are similar and if we are to bolster the arrangements for banks, we should do the same for the other sectors entrusted with the public's investments, or with insuring their daily risks. It would be difficult for me or for any other Minister to have to defend leaving things unchanged in those other areas if the effect of having done so were subsequently to lead to a case of fraud in an investment firm, building society or insurance company, which the existence of the duty would have helped to prevent.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): It is good to see that the Government are at last acknowledging the justice of the amendments and doing exactly what was proposed in Committees on Bills such as the Building Societies Bill and the Banking Bill when they were discussed in the 1980s. However, Sir Thomas Bingham also said:

"Determination of the correct relationship between client, auditor and supervisor raises an issue of policy more appropriate for decision by Parliament than by the Bank and the accounting profession".

In view of that clear recommendation that Parliament should decide those matters, why has the Minister left regulation of that duty to the Auditing Practices Board—a non-statutory body?

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that those matters were considered during the passage of those Bills. However, it is also true that in the Bingham report there was a broad acceptance that the present system for the supervision of banks should continue. The hon. Gentleman will know, because he has corresponded with me on the subject, that it is the view of the Government that the recognised professional body—the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales—is best placed to supervise that sector of auditors.

An argument may be mounted against that view and, no doubt, the hon. Gentleman may seek to use the debate to do just that and to say that it should be subject to some direct rule from Whitehall. That is neither the history nor the practice of our professional system, not only for accountants, but for the legal system as well. The system has stood the test of the time.

The hon. Gentleman will know that there is a procedure called the joint disciplinary scheme which enables the institute to investigate whether there has been compliance by member firms with the standards promulgated by the Auditing Practices Board. That seems to be the right way forward, but we shall return to those matters if the hon. Gentleman raises them further in the course of the debate.

Having determined the scope of the duty, the Government published a consultation document at the beginning of March. That made it clear that it was not the Government's objective to alter fundamentally the relationship between auditor and client. Nor were we looking to increase the costs of audit. Our objective was the same as Sir Thomas Bingham's—to clarify and strengthen the position of the auditor, not to change it. So the Government held back from imposing a duty on auditors to seek out fraud, malpractice and wrongdoing. That would have meant straying too far from the auditors' traditional role.

The responses that we received to the consultation document were considered carefully and my officials discussed the issues raised with the Auditing Practices Board and with other interested parties in the regulated sectors. Some comments could be dealt with readily by changes to the draft statutory instruments, but others were not so easy to resolve as they raised more fundamental questions. In those cases, my officials were able to explore with the Auditing Practices Board whether issues could be more easily addressed in the statement of auditing standards, which was being developed to accompany the legislation, than in the statutory instruments.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the helpful and co-operative attitude that the Auditing Practices Board displayed in what were often long and complex discussions and to thank it for the clear and helpful statement which it shortly plans to issue to accompany the orders and bring them into practical effect.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Is the board a new quango or is it a SEFRA—a self-financing regulatory authority—which has powers to issue rules and regulations and to charge for the job that it does?

Mr. Nelson: Although I am not entirely familiar with such jargon, I think that it falls within the latter rather than the former definition. The Auditing Practices Board is not a body set up by statute, but it is certainly recognised as responsible. Indeed, under tax law and in various other ways its promulgations and the standards that it sets are generally regarded as acceptable. However, such matters are of course kept under review.

One of the difficulties dealt with during the consultation exercise was that neither the term "auditor" nor the phrase

"in his capacity as auditor"

was defined in the banking statutory instrument or in the Banking Act itself. The Government are mindful of the need to clarify who will be placed under a duty by the statutory instruments and in what circumstances the duty will apply.

Although it is ultimately a question for the courts, we take the view that the duty clearly covers any auditor of a bank appointed under United Kingdom company law, which means any auditor of an authorised institution incorporated in the United Kingdom. It also covers auditors of authorised institutions whose place of incorporation is outside the European Community and whose initial authorisation has been granted by another regulator, even though such auditors may be appointed under a foreign law. The Government also believe that the duty applies to United Kingdom accountants acting as agents of the appointed foreign auditors.

As for the circumstances in which an auditor might come under a duty to report, the Banking Act, as well as the Financial Services Act and the Insurance Companies Act, uses the phrase

"in his capacity as auditor".

Again, we have no powers to clarify the phrase in the regulations. If any greater certainty could be given, it could be done only by an unacceptable narrowing of the duty to restrict it to a part of the auditor's responsibilities. We were also concerned that to do so could have potentially wide-ranging implications for the scope of auditors' functions more generally. It may, however, be helpful if I

[Mr. Nelson]

seek to clarify when an individual auditor is operating in his capacity as such and whether a partner in an auditing practice who is not involved in auditing the regulated institutions is nevertheless deemed to be operating in his capacity as auditor.

In our view, it is reasonable to expect an individual who is conducting an audit to consider information relevant to an audit which is obtained in the course of other work for the same client. It seems realistic to expect the auditor to take such information into account in his review of the audit. The person, acting as auditor, also needs to be aware of other non-audit work on his client—for example, tax work—that partners in his firm may be doing and they, in turn, should consider whether any information that may arise from their work is relevant to the conduct of the audit. If it is, they should also consider whether it is relevant to the duty to report to the regulator. The partner carrying out the audit should also, if possible, discuss it with his client.

In the case of information relating to client A which is obtained by the auditor while auditing client B, the auditor should, as a matter of sound practice, usually use the information to make further inquiries for the purpose of the audit of A. These interpretations have been set out more fully in the statement of auditing standards and the professional guidance issued by the Auditing Practices Board that will accompany this legislation. As a matter of courtesy to the House, I have asked for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Once the extensive consultation process was over, the Government circulated amended versions of the draft statutory instruments for a second, more limited, round before setting them in their final form. In producing the drafts, we bore firmly in mind the fact that if this duty on auditors is to be effective, it is vital that auditors can continue to rely on the trust of their clients. We have therefore tried to set the duty at a level which makes it clear to those who seek to commit financial crime that they are more likely to be caught but which does not impose additional reporting burdens on costs on those who conduct their business honestly. That is a most important balance to strike.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I am grateful to the Minister for his patience. It could be argued, however, that it is no good having a duty to report fraud unless there is also a duty to detect fraud. The Auditing Practices Board's proposals are for passive auditing, but the auditing profession argues that it is difficult to detect fraud. The Local Government Finance Act 1982 places a duty on local authority auditors to search for unlawful acts and report them. If that is good for the local authority goose, why is it not good for the banking gander when so much more money is involved?

Mr. Nelson: As always, the hon. Gentleman makes more than a debating point. He has raised a serious matter that deserves to be considered. It is not our intention that the orders should turn auditors into snoopers or narks. To do so would run the serious risk of undermining the relationship between auditors and their clients and imposing substantial additional cost burdens on auditors, which would have to be borne by companies and, ultimately, by their clients.

In addition, in the example that the hon. Gentleman cited, there must be some difference—I put it no more strongly than that—between public and private money, although I acknowledge that, in certain cases, we are talking about the trusteeship of public deposits and funds. There are difficulties but if we were to adopt the hon. Gentleman's suggestion, we should need to introduce primary legislation because orders introduced under the relevant legislation would not suffice. It is a matter to be discussed another day.

Mr. Steen: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way and making it two-all. He said that the costs of the statutory instrument and of the guidelines, rules, regulations and orders that flow from it will not impact on small businesses, which is the key to the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. Has the issue been considered and is the deregulation unit satisfied that additional costs will not be imposed on small enterprises?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend, who is a prime champion of small businesses, makes an important point. The answer is yes, it has been considered by those dealing with deregulation. In fact, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, who is responsible for deregulation, has sponsored one of the orders that we are debating—that relating to insurance companies. It is our intention that the costs should be negligible or nil and not go beyond what is already required or possible by way of a right to report.

In this case, we are imposing a duty to report but it should not impose any greater costs on auditors. It should, however, bolster the ability of auditors to insist that their client companies are forthcoming and open and, where necessary, enable them to correct problems that might otherwise bring their authorised status into question. That is the crucial point. The order is therefore a welcome enhancement and toughening of the law without imposing additional costs, about which my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) is rightly worried.

Before I conclude, I should mention that there is a European dimension to the issue. In November 1992, the Vice-President of the EC Commission, Sir Leon Brittan, sketched out some general proposals for Community legislation in response to the BCCI affair. The proposals were subsequently turned into a Commission proposal for a directive, one element of which requires member states to impose a duty on auditors of financial undertakings to report breaches of laws or regulations, or other adverse circumstances, to supervisors.

As the House will know, following discussions in Brussels, political agreement has been reached in the Council on an amended draft directive which, if implemented in its present form, would impose on auditors a slightly wider duty to report than that contained in the regulations that we are debating. However, the proposed European directive has a number of further hurdles to be negotiated before it can be finalised and, even when it is, it is unlikely to be implemented before 1996.

Even though some minor changes may subsequently be necessary in order to conform with the directive, the Government do not want to risk a further period of delay before bringing these necessary measures into effect. In view of the widespread support from both parties for Sir Thomas's recommendations, the Government believe that we should now act promptly to pass the changes into law.

I conclude by expressing my gratitude to the Auditing Practices Board and the many other professional

organisations which have been involved in considering the legislation. We believe that the measures will greatly strengthen and clarify the position of the auditor and represent an important step forward in the fight against financial wrongdoing. I commend them to the House.

6.49 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): As the Minister said, the measures impose a new statutory duty on auditors and, as he rightly reminded us, it is something that we welcomed when we held the debate on the Bingham report in November 1992, about 15 months ago. I think that it is fair to say that, although we welcomed that recommendation by Sir Thomas Bingham, we did not say that that was all that was required. Although the measures are welcome, they are only a start in the battle against fraud and other crimes of dishonesty.

Action was promised, as the Minister said, in October 1992, by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Bingham report was published, but I believe that the proposals before us are timid and are the bare minimum that was requested by Sir Thomas Bingham. They hardly live up to the Minister's announcement at the beginning of his speech; indeed, they are being introduced only after much discussion and some opposition from the auditing profession.

Although the Minister, understandably, pays tribute to those people who have spent considerable time and effort in getting the practice notes right and responding to the Government's proposals, it is fair to say that many people —not only people in the auditing industry but people who represent the companies that are audited—have expressed worries. The Minister has mentioned some of those worries —the relationship with clients, for example, bears closer examination. Many people believe that the relationship between client and auditor can be too close and that there ought to be a respectable distance between them. There is a question of professional indemnity, to which I shall return shortly because it might be helpful if the Minister said something about that.

The measures do not pay any attention to a number of matters that are in what I would regard as the public interest. Although the Minister has, rightly, paid tribute to the involvement of professional organisations in the process, we must never forget that we are here to represent the public interest and not just specific professional interests that may be relevant in each case. Indeed, in the light of what has happened in enforcement during the past two years, the Minister must be aware that the public require higher standards of commercial probity.

The Government should have conducted a proper and wide review of the role and duty of auditors, not only the sector covered by the measures but throughout industry. I understand that various professional organisations in accountancy are doing so, but the Government should also do so, because we are worried about the probity of financial institutions and about the auditing of other commercial concerns.

It seems to me that in this case the public interest has taken second place to the Government's wish to do as little as possible. Yet again, the Minister said in the debate, in response to a question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), that if we were to do anything further it would need primary legislation. So what? That is what the House is here for: it is here to introduce primary legislation if we need it, and in my view we need it in this sector. It is high time that the Government recognised that. They should not be afraid to take action simply because primary legislation is required.

The Government have, for example, nothing to say about a central enforcement organisation, which should be part and parcel of a proper and focused attack on crimes of dishonesty in financial institutions. The Government have said nothing about the need to end the fiction of self-regulation and to replace it with efficient, effective and cheaper direct regulation.

We need to tackle several questions specifically relating to the measures. The first question is what exactly the auditor's duty is. I notice that the phraseology adopted in each of the four measures is different. It is clear from the regulations relating to insurance and the order relating to building societies that the auditor has to act in his capacity as auditor.

The Minister said that he thought that the proper interpretation in respect of all the measures was fairly wide. If so, why do the measures relating to insurance and building societies specifically say that the auditor must be working in his capacity as auditor, whereas in the measures relating to banks and banking and financial services it may be implicit that the auditor is working in his capacity as auditor but that is not explicitly stated because the phraseology is different?

The Minister went far wider. He seemed to imply that there was not simply a duty on the accountant acting in his capacity as an auditor, but that the accountant would have the same duty if acting as an accountant or tax adviser or in any other capacity. That is to paint a picture of a far wider duty than I had thought. Indeed, people who follow those matters have suggested that that is a wider duty than the secondary legislation provides for.

Obviously, that will be crucial in any court proceedings. because the court will have to decide whether an auditor was in breach of his or her duty, having regard to what is on the face of the statute. I know, following a fairly recent case in the House of Lords, that the courts are entitled to rely on what Ministers say in debate, but perhaps the Minister would spell out a little more clearly the apparent discrepancy between what he said in his speech and what is in the measures and why the phraseology in the measures relating to banks and banking and financial services differes from that used in those relating to insurance and building societies.

It could be something to do with the regulatory regime. Banks are supervised by the Bank of England and the financial services regime is supervised by the Securities and Investments Board plc. That may be a reason why it is not explicitly stated that the account has to be acting in his capacity as auditor. The Minister should clarify that point because it may be crucial not only to the industry but to the public interest, and the public will want to know the position.

The Chartered Association of Certified Accountants wrote to me recently asking what the position was. Its letter stated:

"Firms of accountants are quite likely to be engaged by the same client to perform services other than the statutory audit".

The letter lists financial planning, and so on. If the Minister is right, a partner or assistant in a firm acting as a tax adviser or financial planner might come across something that, if he were acting as auditor, he would be bound to report. As I understand it, the Minister's position is that the

[Mr. Alistair Darling]

partner or assistant would be bound to refer that matter to the partner responsible for audit, and that partner would be put on notice that he ought to report it to the relevant authority. If that is correct, perhaps the Minister will say so in clear and explicit terms, because it is important.

Increasingly, many firms act in both capacities. Indeed, many of us are aware of the difficulty that now arises for the large firms, in that there are only half a dozen very large accountancy firms that are capable of providing accounting and auditing services. Most were beneficiaries of the Government's largesse in awarding public service contracts to a surprising degree. The Government must, therefore, be well aware of the problem.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The problem is that the centres of accountancy power, the large accountancy firms—I think the big six—are pretty well uncontrolled. They dominate the institutions that are meant to regulate them. When it comes to international affairs, partners do not exchange information with one another. When the Senate inquired into the audit performance of Price Waterhouse, the British partners of Price Waterhouse claimed that they were an entirely separate organisation, that they had no obligation to give information to the Senate and nothing was effectively passed on. An inquiry was therefore conducted there without Price Waterhouse's partners in the United Kingdom co-operating in any way.

Mr. Darling: My hon. Friend mentions an interesting point. When I studied the law relating to partnerships, I learned that one of the basic principles was the personal relationship between partners. When one looks at the headed notepaper of the big multinational accountancy firms, sometimes the names of partners cover most of the letter and there is little room left for the message, and one wonders how on earth they speak to one another, or if they even know who the others are or where their offices are. There is not the personal relationship that one might expect to find in the normal concept of a legal firm.

We could leave the point and have a discussion as to whether a partnership is a suitable legal entity under which those people should trade. That raises an important matter, because in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International inquiry it was obvious that parts of Price Waterhouse were not fully aware of what other parts were doing. Worse still, in fairness to Price Waterhouse, some of the regulators in different parts of the world did not know what the other regulators were doing. The only people who knew what was happening were the principals behind BCCI, who exploited that situation.

Obviously, that is a matter for the accountancy profession, but there is also the problem that Price Waterhouse operating in the United States presumably comes within the jurisdiction of the accountancy profession in the United States. That is something to which the Government will have to address themselves. It is already accepted in money laundering, for example, that fraud is an international crime. It would be interesting to hear what steps the Minister proposes to take to look at the problem that was undoubtedly raised in the BCCI report.

Before I leave this particular part of my criticism, and in case the Minister does not accept what I am saying, perhaps I can quote the words of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) who, writing before he was President of the Board of Trade, in his book "Where There's a Will" said:

> "Accountancy firms ought, I believe, to be debarred from doing any other work for a company for which they act as auditors. In a number of other countries there are laws which circumscribe the auditors in this way to prevent any possible conflict of interest. This discipline should be extended across the publicly quoted private sector."

That was certainly the view of the President of the Board of Trade before he returned to the Cabinet. I am not sure if he has now departed from it, but it is worthy of some weight. I acknowledge that there are problems but, as a general principle, that matter needs to be looked at.

The Minister has said that many of these matters will be dealt with by a statement of practice. He was asked by the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) what the status of these people was. To me, it does not matter very much. This is a matter of public interest; it should not be just a matter of professional interest. For those reasons, the Government should take a rather livelier interest than perhaps they do.

The question of the rotation of auditors has often been canvassed. Is it wise to have the same firm of auditors year in, year out? We are all familiar with the last item at an annual general meeting, a motion to propose the re-election of the auditors. I can understand the question of expense, but there is also the question of transparency and efficiency. Firms ought to look at audit as a useful discipline. It is not a matter of snoopers or narks, as the Minister said. Audit is an essential function to provide for the efficiency of a firm as well as for the protection of the public.

To whom is the duty of care owed? As I understand it, the present law is clear: the auditors owe a duty of care to the shareholders collectively, not to individual shareholders or to what are called stakeholders—employees, for example. Nor do they have a general duty as regards the public interest. That aspect needs examination. If the Government were prepared to embark on a review of auditing generally, there would be some useful point in pursuing that further.

Bingham examined that point at paragraph 3.39 in his report. It is interesting that he had a long paragraph discussing those matters and, in the end, did not come to a concluded view, although he acknowledged that there were many people—for example, depositors, shareholders and employees—who might have an interest in a particular company. In paragraph 3.40 he went on to point out that the law, which was then recently established, was that auditors owed a duty of care to their client company and to the whole body of shareholders but not to individual shareholders and not to non-shareholding depositors. He was talking in the context of a bank.

The Government need to look at that matter. Given the nature of multinational companies or even publicly quoted or private companies in this country, where there is a public interest not just in efficiency but in probity, it is time that we looked at the role of auditors to see whether they should have a wider duty. We do not have a concluded view on the matter, but we need to look at it.

There is also substantial merit in the point put in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby on the duty of auditors. He drew attention to the fact that, under the Local Government Finance Act 1982, auditors have a far wider duty than is proposed in the measures before us because the duty is to detect fraud. To

my mind, that is not a question of being a snooper, a nark or even a policeman. It is interesting to see the words used in section 15 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982. The auditor is under a duty, among other things, to see

"that the accounts are prepared in accordance with regulations made under"

the Act, to see that "proper practices" are followed and to see

"that the body whose accounts are being audited has made proper arrangements for securing enconomy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources."

That, particularly the last point, is something at which the audit committees which are established in most efficient companies want to look.

I come back to the point that audit ought to be regarded as something that assists a company in being efficient as well as being a mechanism for detecting fraud. The Government do not appear to be examining that point. They seem to be saying that it is entirely a matter for the profession. I should have thought that it was in the Government's interest to promote efficiency and it is certainly in their interest to maintain the public interest with regard to fraud or other wrong-doing. If there was a proper inquiry, that matter ought to be examined.

I note that reference is made in the measures to information that may be of material significance. It would be interesting to know how the Minister proposes to define material significance. Who will issue guidance on this point? Will it be the professional associations? Will the Government turn their mind to that? What does it mean?

For instance, if an auditor were looking at the Maxwell accounts, what would be a matter of material significance? Would it be materially significant that just about everyone to whom one spoke at the time thought that Maxwell was a crook, although, interstingly, that was not apparently the view of the regulators directly responsible for those matters? Even before Maxwell was exposed for the crook that he was, many people knew it from his conduct. The Department of Trade and Industry itself had said that he was a manifestly unsuitable person to be in charge of a company. Is that an example of what might be information of material significance? It would be helpful if the Government would say something about that.

There is another matter of broader significance. Although the measures cover certain financial institutions, they do not cover others. They do not cover Lloyd's of London, as far as I can see. I had half-expected to see the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) in his place to pursue his campaign—apparently, he is unable to be here—and to see others who sit on the Government Benches and who lost large sums of money at Lloyd's. They might have had something to say about it.

It seems odd that Lloyd's is not covered. No doubt the Minister will say that primary legislation is needed. I am sure that the Government would move heaven and earth not to introduce another Lloyd's Bill because of the problems that that would cause. But I wish that the Minister would tell us why Lloyd's is not covered and why, in particular, non-United Kingdom banks with branches in this country are not covered either. I may be wrong about that, but perhaps the Minister will address himself specifically to that point, and also to pension schemes. They may be covered by other legislation, but they are matters of some concern.

The Government have already accepted, with the introduction of provisions on money laundering in the Criminal Justice Act 1993, that there are far wider interests and implications than there have ever been before. The Government need to do a little more to show that they are aware of the international implications and of the sheer scale of what we are dealing with.

I touched on indemnity earlier. Perhaps the Minister will specifically address that point. I note that section 109 of the Financial Services Act 1986 explicitly provides an indemnity. What is the position with regard to auditors in this case? What is the indemnity? I assume that if they can bring themselves within the terms of the measures they will be indemnified. But if they can bring themselves only within the words used by the Minister, will they be protected?

I am thinking of the case of, say, a young accountant advising on financial management who finds something odd and perhaps reports it direct to the authorities. Will he be covered or will he have to go through some procedure to bring himself under that protection? That is important because, if the suspicion turns out to have been reasonable but not to bear further examination, an accountant could find himself in great pecuniary and professional difficulty. The Minister needs to look at that matter.

There are two substantial points that the House ought to address. I have mentioned the first again and again in debates such as this: the lack of a central enforcement agency. It has been brought to my attention on a number of occasions by reputable bodies such as the stock exchange that, because of the multiplicity of regulations, the complex nature of the legislation and the comparatively large number of regulatory or supervisory bodies, and because there are so many differences and standards, there is a need for a central enforcement body to bring together whatever evidence is available so that these matters may be prosecuted, if I may use that general term.

Mr. Steen: That is a mistaken view. The hon. Gentleman is probably right to believe that, because of the proliferation of rules and regulations, another quango or organisation is needed. That may not have an effect, but Conservative Members are saying, although not loudly enough, that we must reduce the number of rules and regulations, so avoiding the need for another organisation. We do not want another organisation to be set up as a result of rules and regulations; we want to reduce the number of rules and regulations

Mr. Darling: I agree with the hon. Gentleman to some extent. As he knows, we would scrap the self-regulatory system and make the Securities and Investments Board responsible for the regulation of industry. In time, we would merge the SIB with a banking regulatory organisation, which answers one of his arguments. The SIB could also be responsible for the enforcement of such matters—an extra quango would not be needed.

The hon. Gentleman is probably aware of the financial fraud information network which consists of a group of regulators and about which the Chancellor of the Exchequer made an announcement. It would be far better to have a streamlined regulatory system that would be much cheaper and more efficient. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman seems to agree. Perhaps he will try to persuade his hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury that primary legislation is needed.

Mr. Steen: I am working on it.

Mr. Darling: I am glad to hear it.

I am not sure that I would agree with the hon. Gentleman that the best way to solve the problem is to have fewer regulations. I agree with the general thrust of what he might mean—it would help if the regulatory system concentrated on promoting higher professional standards and placed less emphasis on rules and regulations. To deal with fraud, as we are, there must be regulations and primary legislation. I am not the only who says that: the stock exchange and the SIB believe that we need a single enforcement organisation to consider such matters. Perhaps the Minister accepts that, but the Government should do so, too.

There is a feeling that, without such an organisation, many people who defraud the system or commit other crimes can exploit the different rules and regulations because they know that they will never be caught and there will be little chance of prosecution. They know that, even if they are prosecuted, the chances of conviction are remote. The judicial system shows that, even if they are convicted, the worst that they can expect is a few hours mowing the grass in front of an old folks' home or perhaps a few months in a country residence, albeit one owned by Her Majesty. The Government need to consider that issue, which goes hand in hand with the need to overhaul the regulatory system. Although I have often mentioned that subject before, I have no hesitation in doing so again.

There is a feeling abroad in the country that an audit certificate is rather like an MOT certificate: it is good for the minute when it is granted, but useless thereafter. That feeling must be dispelled. It is for those reasons that the Government need to turn their attention a little more to the issues that I have raised.

I refer the Minister to the Bank of England's memorandum, which was included in the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. Page 185 of that report, which was published on 8 December last year, draws attention to the European directives to which the Minister referred. I understand that the proposal has run into difficulty, but I urge the Minister to press the Commission to get a move on, because the problem affects not only this country but Europe, particularly the European Union, and the rest of the world.

The problem needs international action. We in this country had a bitter experience with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. Not only did it give a knock to the regulatory system, but—as I hardly need remind hon. Members—thousands of people lost all that they had. Many of those people believe that the House has not taken their concerns seriously. The Minister must give an assurance that the Government are willing to pursue the matter, even if it means introducing primary legislation.

I read in the newspapers today that there has been criticism of the fact that these measures are being taken on the Floor of the House, but they are serious matters and should be discussed here. Perhaps the debate will not be as lively and controversial as the one that we arranged to have on insider dealing, but it is important because auditing not only provides assistance to companies but reassures the public, who need great reassurance that the financial services industry and industry generally are being properly looked after. Although we support the measures, we have no hesitation in ensuring that they are debated properly and are not simply passed on the nod.

7.14 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): As you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have kindly called me, I shall try to make the debate a little more lively, although I am not sure that I shall be controversial. Last week I made a speech about the significance of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. I said:

"The Bill is so important because it is the first major attempt by the Government to slay the red tape dragon. The maxim that man learns nothing from history is often proved true, but the Bill shows the Government learning from history. Throughout the ages Governments have repealed legislation. There is nothing new about repealing legislation. It is repealed either because it has proved unworkable or because it has simply outlived its shelf life.

In the new world in which we live, legislation has grown like Topsy and thus requires more drastic pruning. Those in the House who are gardeners know that shrubs grow irregularly. To keep trees and shrubs in prime condition, pruning is essential."

I continued:

"In 1989 there were five times more pages of legislation than in 1979. Brussels churned out five volumes of legislation before we joined the European Community. It now churns out 37 volumes each year. However, the cause is not simply too many Eurocrats in Brussels. Directives from the Commission are often sensible and come to Britain suggesting a simple way of dealing with the problem. Once the directive hits Whitehall, bevies of officials are stirred into action, taking time and effort to interpret and rewrite the directive."—[*Official Report,* 8 February 1994; Vol. 237, c. 191-92.]

Throughout my speech last week, whenever I said anything about deregulation, I won approval from the Front-Bench team and approving nods, winks and cries of "Hear, hear" from my colleagues. The President of the Board of Trade made a stirring speech, stating that the 440 proposals that resulted from the booklet "Cutting Red Tape" were either being implemented or under active consideration. He talked about the explanatory guide to the Bill and the new security committees that might be set up in each House. He spoke about the business task forces that had made more than 600 recommendations.

I thought that the debate heralded a new age in which over-zealous officialdom would be a thing of the past and Whitehall mandarins would be sat on, especially those who over-interpreted general directives from Brussels. I am told that Conservative Members have been jostling for position to win a place on the Standing Committee which is about to start consideration of the Bill. The aim of the Bill is to cut rules and regulations and to reduce the number of statutory instruments, which in 1992 reached the record level of 3,359. Today we are debating banks——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman treating us to a re-run of the speech he made recently? It would be more appropriate if we were to discuss the orders. If he does not do so, there will be a bit of pruning from the Chair.

Mr. Steen: There will be no need for any pruning from the Chair. I just mentioned the word "banks" when you, Madam Deputy Speaker, rose to your feet. I assure you that pruning would not be in order. We are debating banks and banking regulations, building society orders, auditors' regulations and financial services rules. I did not mention those matters in the speech that I made last week, which was so warmly received by the House.

My colleagues are rushing upstairs with great enthusiasm and diving into the Committee Room anxious to start work on curbing the ever-growing number of rules

and regulations. While they merrily start to do so upstairs, we downstairs pass more regulations, which we say we do not want.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: In his pursuit of deregulation, is the hon. Gentleman in favour of scrapping all regulations and controls on fraud, and all attempts to stop it? Will his deregulation be a fraudsters' fun day?

Mr. Steen: That is the problem. There is always a good reason for passing every regulation that the House passes. If it is anything to do with safety, hygiene, security or fraud there will always, rightly, be a pressure group or an interest group to push for the regulation. I do not for a moment suggest that some rules and regulations are not needed. The trouble is that there is always an excuse, and usually a good reason, for all the rules and regulations passed by the House. That is the problem that the Government face.

Clearly the Treasury, too, faced that problem when it produced the statutory instruments before us. No one can disagree with the idea that fraud must be stamped out. I simply say that unfortunately, while we have a deregulation Bill in Committee going ahead at full speed with dozens of clauses and new rules to try to reduce the number of regulations, here we are on the Floor of the House passing—perhaps for good reasons—more rules and regulations. So tonight there will be four more sets of rules.

I believe that in every Department a Minister has been especially appointed to keep an eye on deregulation. The Minister said that the Department of Trade and Industry Minister responsible for deregulation has considered the statutory instruments, but is there a Minister in the Treasury responsible for deregulation, or is the Treasury above deregulation? I had the impression that every Department would have a deregulation Minister, and it would be useful to know who the deregulation Minister in the Treasury is.

Unless we are careful, deregulation could become simply another layer of bureaucracy, with a whole new subculture of civil servants being consulted on whether something should be deregulated, gloriously oblivious of what is going on next door. There could be a huge sub-structure, and deregulation would be the new in thing. There would be a new quango, a new self-financing regulatory body—a SEFRA—with a Minister and a lot of civil servants. We have already seen the deregulation unit. I am worried that we may all be being hoodwinked into believing that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill is opening a new chapter in our legislative history, when deregulation may be no more than a weasel word, describing one thing while something else is really happening.

I am sure that the Minister has a good reason why the four statutory instruments are necessary, and I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise that reason. However, I have sat on an immense number of Committees on statutory instruments, and hon. Members always say that the new rules are greatly needed. They usually say that because they want to leave in three or four minutes; 10.30 arrives, and by 10.35 they have all gone.

The deregulation Bill may not affect the number of statutory instruments going through the House, but I believe that the City would still continue without the statutory instruments, and the country would still be a able to go on if we had not passed the regulations. Will those four statutory instruments really help to run the country more effectively? We are imposing duties on auditors and regulators in the Securities and Investments Board, another quango. Do we need all that?

The insurance regulations have a compliance cost assessment. Have the other statutory instruments had an assessment, too? Apparently the consultees found it difficult to assess the extent of any additional costs arising from the regulations. First there was a regulation, then there was a compliance cost assessment, and employed people were consulted on whether the statutory instrument would cost more. I wonder how much that cost. It could all become a dangerous industry, which could get out of hand.

We seem to live in gobbledegook land. We seem to be able to argue vigorously and passionately about anything and then, on reflection, to argue equally passionately that we did not really need the rule or regulation in the first place. As a nation we are now obsessed to the point of paralysis with rules and regulations. It is surprising that one can move without some rule impinging on one's freedom, so concerned is the state about issues of welfare, hygiene, security and safety.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten my previous warning. We are not discussing all manner of rules and regulations. We have four statutory instruments before us, and he must address himself to those.

Mr. Steen: I hear what you say, Madam Deputy Speaker, but those four regulations stand in the framework of the whole Government policy towards rules and regulations. One may try, but one cannot separate them from all the other rules and regulations that we are passing all over the place.

I am questioning the wisdom of introducing more rules and regulations, but every time that I try to raise the issue, whether in Standing Committee or on the Floor of the House, the Chairman, Speaker or Deputy Speaker, understandably, says that I am going beyond the rules and regulations under consideration. The result is that one can never challenge the general principle. Every time that one tries to do so one is picked up—that is a symptom of the disease facing the country.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that there is no reason why he should not tear the four statutory instruments to pieces, if that is what he wishes—but that is what he must do. He must not deal with all the others.

Mr. Steen: I am grateful for that ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker. In my own way, although not as clearly as some hon. Members, that is what I was doing. I was pointing out that the statutory instruments before us are better than most, although perhaps we could have done without them.

I was about to give an example of what I am talking about, but perhaps I shall tell the House about it on another occasion, because I should prefer not to be prevented from telling you, Madam Deputy Speaker, the most vivid story illustrating what I am talking about—and clearly this is not the right time and place. In fact, I am never sure what is the right time, but it certainly does not appear to be now.

With reference to the statutory instruments before us, I have already asked the Minister about the drain on the private sector every time that a rule or regulation is passed. It was reassuring to learn that the rules and regulations

[Mr. Steen]

before us would not impact upon private enterprise. It would be bad news for the country if we were to witness another fight between the private sector and the state. I hope that in the "rules and regulations industry *v.* the public" story we shall not see a repeat of the final fight between Moriarty and Sherlock Holmes, never knowing who wins in the end.

I intended to make a short speech, and I shall return to the subject from time to time, because it is a perennial annual problem. Every time that the Minister introduces a rule or regulation we understand that it is extremely useful. How can one say that regulations on fraud are not useful? However, the culture of our country seems to have been besieged by rules and regulations, and I am surprised that anyone can make a profit or do business, with all the weight of officialdom and all the rules and regulations that prevent anything from getting off the ground.

That is my message, and I am sure that the Economic Secretary to the Treasury has heard it. I apologise if I have laboured the point, but I shall continue my argument until we cease to pass more rules and regulations which all the legislation that comes before the House is designed to repeal, and we do not need fresh legislation but simply repeal what we introduced before because it was not helpful to the prosperity of this country.

7.27 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I shall not attempt to follow the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), with his re-run of the speech that he made last week on the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, except to note that now that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is issuing his former speeches as a video, it is a bit cheap to come and repeat one's former speeches in the Chamber, rather than publishing them for public consumption.

There are appropriate places in which the hon. Gentleman could repeat speeches such as the one that he has just made, but unfortunately the Government are closing most of them down and sending the inhabitants out into the community. The hon. Gentleman's speech was not relevant to the subject with which we are dealing.

Talking of re-runs, I feel as if I am involved in a series of re-runs with the Minister. In a series of Standing Committees in the 1980s, such as those on the Building Societies Act 1986, the Financial Services Act 1986 and the Banking Act 1987, he spoke in favour of more effective regulation, and sought the votes of Opposition Members for the kind of policies he is introducing today. Then he spoke in favour, but now—regrettably, because he is well informed on such subjects, and made a powerful and effective contribution to those Committees—we find ourselves on opposite sides.

As we are on opposite sides, I must say that what the Minister is introducing now is too little and far too late. It is inadequate. Indeed, it creates the impression that the Government are in favour of fraud, because they are doing too little. These rules are too little to stop fraud. Are the fraudsters the only people in society who will vote for the Tories at the next election? The reputation of the City of London is going down all the time because of the squalid frauds that are being perpetrated, and the Government are lagging behind in providing an effective regulatory framework to deal with them.

These rules are not the way to regulate on a major issue. We have not had an inquiry. The rules are not based on a thorough inquiry into the way in which audits of financial institutions are conducted. There has not been a thorough inquiry into what happened in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International case. We cannot regulate without a thorough inquiry, yet rules have been introduced without inquiry. The rules will not fit into any framework of stronger structures to back the proposals before us.

We have a confused and overlapping structure. The hon. Member for South Hams may be interested in how confused the structure is and how it can be simplified by agreeing with the proposals put forward by Labour Members. As there are so many overlapping authorities, it is not clear who is responsible for enforcement and compliance.

The regulatory area that we are dealing with today consists of the Bank of England, the Securities and Investments Board and the 24 organisations—the siblings—under it, the Building Societies Commission, the Serious Fraud Office, the Department of Trade and Industry, the stock exchange, Inland Revenue and five recognised supervisory bodies that deal with auditors. It is chaos. No one knows who is responsible for what. In that chaos, we get overlapping decisions and conflicting regulations. Everyone tries to insure themselves by regulating too much. The situation drastically needs simplification.

There are no proposals to make the framework more effective and back up the simple proposals before us. All we have is the Government tweaking the regulations from time to time, as they are doing here. We cannot rely, as the Government are doing in these rules, on auditors to be effective and the only police force of financial institutions. Auditors cannot be relied on as a guarantee of public interest and propriety as a counter against fraud because their powers, their role, their functions and the way in which they carry on their business are inadequate to deal with fraud.

Mr. Steen: I understand that the hon. Gentleman is saying that there is too much bureaucracy, which will prevent anyone from acting because it is all overlapping and, presumably, it is paid out of the public purse. An enormous number of public officials are preventing a clear, direct executive arm. Is that what the hon. Gentleman is saying?

Mr. Mitchell: I am saying that there are too many overlapping institutions; self-regulation has not worked, and has no adequate and firm base on which to work; and we can be effective against fraud only by replacing self-regulation with an independent, statutorily based regulator who has the power to strike hard, rather than obfuscating everything with the plethora of regulations in the financial sector.

We cannot rely on auditors to be the effective police force that will be required under these rules. We do not even have an effective definition of whom the auditors are responsible to. What the Government are proposing is the bare minimum. As it is so minimal, we must ask whether they are serious about dealing with the sort of fraud that has lead to this attempt to close the stable door after the horse has bolted.

Effectively, we know little about what went wrong with BCCI and especially the audit of it, because, in this country, we have not had an inquiry into what went wrong. That case is the justification for these rules. We do not know exactly what happened because the Government have not seen fit to institute an inquiry. We need the information.

When there was a banking crisis in the early 1970s, the last Labour Government instituted a series of inquiries. There were inquiries into London and Counties and London and Capital. The information from those inquiries was published. We knew what went wrong, so we knew how to deal with it. In this instance, there is nothing.

Lord Justice Bingham specifically said that he was not pursuing the matter of audits because it was not his responsibility. The Government should have repaired that omission by pursuing the matter and inquiring into what went wrong. Ministers say that the Serious Fraud Office is looking into the matter. However, that has not precluded inquiries into other cases such as London United Investments and Maxwell. There should be an inquiry into the audits of BCCI so that we know exactly what went wrong.

During debate on the Companies Bill in 1989, the Minister argued that for any system to be effective, there had to be a distance between the regulators and the regulated. However, the only people who have inquired into BCCI, is the Mafia regulating the Mafia. It is auditors trying to regulate auditors. There is not that distance which the Minister asked for in the Committee on which we both sat in 1989.

The only inquiry into BCCI has been the American one. That was handicapped because the British partners of Price Waterhouse did not pass either to that inquiry or to the American partners of Price Waterhouse their information on what had gone wrong. Therefore, the inquiry was inadequate; but it is the only one. What that inquiry found was appalling. The report states:

"BCCI's accountants failed to protect BCCI's innocent depositors and creditors from the consequences of poor practices at the bank of which the auditors were aware for years."

That is a crashing indictment of the auditors

"BCCI provided loans and financial benefits to some of its auditors . . . Those benefits included loans to two Price Waterhouse partnerships in the Caribbean. In addition, there are serious questions concerning the acceptance of payments and possibly housing from BCCI or its affiliates by Price Waterhouse partners in the Grand Caymans, and possible acceptance of sexual favors"—

the report is more interesting than the book written by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), although it does not have as much sex——

"provided by BCCI officials to certain persons affiliated with the firm."

That is an appalling situation. BCCI's books were certified by the auditors as a true and fair record from 31 December 1987 forward. That meant that people had confidence in BCCI. We are told that the auditors gave certificates as a true and fair view and, therefore, encouraged people to invest, yet before 1989 Price Waterhouse knew of gross irregularities in BCCI's handling of loans, especially to CCAH which was the holding company of First American Bank shares. All that was known to the auditors, but they did not spill the beans. Why have we not had an inquiry to reveal what happened in BCCI so that we can base proper and effective regulations on that inquiry?

The Government feel that they can rely on audit firms to protect the interests of shareholders, creditors and other stock holders. That reliance, which is strengthened by the rules before us, has always proved inadequate because poor auditing practices are always covered up. There is no way for anyone to know how good or bad an audit is as long as the company survives. We have not developed the proper institutional framework to regulate auditors effectively and make them accountable. In debates on the Building Societies Bill and the Financial Services Bill, Labour Members proposed much stronger provisions on the detection of fraud.

These rules have been introduced much too late because the Government are continuing to rely on an industry and a framework which have a history of failure. They cannot rely on the auditors, who are, effectively, a replacement for regulations.

In the United States, state inspectors quite rightly visit and monitor banks. That is the only effective way in which we can know what is going on. There should be such a requirement in Britain instead of our relying—as we do by the statutory instruments—on the auditors themselves.

I mentioned earlier that Price Waterhouse partners in this country would not give evidence or provide information to Price Waterhouse partners in the United States. The Government can only deal with that by effective regulation of auditing, and by an effective independent regulator. A banking commission is needed to take those functions away from the Bank of England, which performed so poorly and was shown to have done so by the Bingham report.

My preference is for a securities and exchange commission, as in the United States. That would be an independent commission, with a banking commission and an accountancy commission under it. That would provide an effective framework of independent regulators to whom auditors could report when they found fraud.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) said that the gaps in regulations do not cover Lloyd's, pension schemes and funds, or banks that are not domiciled in the United States. I have pointed out to the Minister that unless there is a duty to detect fraud as well as to report it, it is doubtful whether auditors could perform their functions.

The Local Government Finance Act 1982 imposes both duties, and the audit industry was in favour of that at the time. The industry saw that it would be able to get its fingers into local authority audits, and so was prepared to accept it then. The industry is only now balking at the proposition, and saying that it is horrendous and it cannot do it.

The firms are advertising fraud detection services all the time. KPMG Peat Marwick advertises that

"investigating financial frauds, and rectifying and recovering from them, requires specialised accounting skills. KPMG Forensic Accounting offers: experience of the techniques of fraudsters and the procedures they may have followed; awareness of the indicators of possible irregularities; the resources needed for a fast and accurate investigation; experience of the quality of evidence required to support a successful case, and the expertise to assemble and present that evidence . . . we can assist in tracing funds and unravelling the most complex international cases".

The firm can provide all that for a fee. Why cannot the firm do it as a compulsory and necessary part of the service? The Minister may claim that it would be more expensive.

[Mr. Mitchell]

If a proper audit is done, it cannot be more expensive as it is the effective way to detect fraud. That needs to be a requirement which is imposed on the industry.

I have pointed out that, at present, auditors are not effectively regulated, Lord Justice Bingham said that the

"relationship between client, auditor and supervisor raises an issue of policy more appropriate for decision by parliament"

than by the accounting profession. However, that is subject to control by the Auditing Practices Board, which is not a statutory body. We have already been told that the board will impose passive requirements on auditors in this very difficult area. Passive requirements are just not adequate for the detection of fraud.

The board's draft standard states:

"the duty to make a report direct to a regulator does not impose upon auditors a duty to carry out specific work".

It does not have to do specific work, and it has been told not to do anything. That is ludicrous. Unless the board does the work, it cannot make the report. The standard adds:

"no auditing procedures in addition to those carried out in the normal course of auditing the financial statements . . . are carried out . . . auditors are not responsible for reporting on a regulated entity's overall compliance with rules with which it is required to comply nor are they required to conduct their work in such a way that there is reasonable certainty that they will discover breaches."

The board is not actually required to go out and look for things—it will just sit there, be passive, and it will all come pouring in.

Fraud does not work that way. A fraudster will not rush in saying "Here's the evidence, Mr. Auditor!" It is all well concealed, and unless the auditor has an obligation to hunt fraud down—become the "white hunter" of the British economy—fraud will not be detected. A passive approach to audit, such as the Audit Practices Board is recommending, is simply a recipe for further disasters and further audit failings.

The Government should surely have clarified the responsibility of auditors. Whom are they responsible to and to whom do they owe a duty of care? It is no good saying that they can report fraud to the regulator. Auditors should be responsible also to shareholders and to everyone involved in a company. In fact, they are not, and they have responsibility to no one except the directors who appoint them. The company's shareholders are given little information, and the choice of auditors is firmly in the hands of the directors. The depositors, consumers and employees have no say in the appointment of auditors.

Recent legal cases such as Caparo, Al Saudi Banque and Berg Son and Co. Ltd. have shown that auditors do not owe a duty of care to individual shareholders, potential investors or current or potential creditors, even though that information is supposed to be there to help markets understand what is happening to that company.

The Government have given no indication that they want to reverse those judgments, but they should do so. There should be a specific responsibility attached to auditors to give them a duty of care, so that information is spread more widely and the shareholders and stakeholders know what is going on, as well as the bank or financial institution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central quoted the President of the Board of Trade's book "Where There's a Will"—there's a corpse. The President stated that there should not be a conflict of interest and that accountancy firms should not do other work. That should be a paramount objective of the financial institutions, because DTI inquiries have indicated that work is less adequate when it relies on a man

"checking either his own figures or those of a colleague."

The DTI report on Burnholme and Forder was critical of audit reports in that context.

None of the auditors who have been criticised by DTI reports over the years has been disbarred from practice. What kind of sanction is that to make auditors do their jobs properly? We need an effective, independent regulator, not the Mafia regulating the Mafia and saying, "It was quite understandable—we'll let you off this time." That is what happens now with the Institute of Chartered Accountants as a recognised supervisory body.

We must have effective control and discipline of auditors. In a written reply to me, the Secretary of State said:

"there has been no occasion where criticism of a company's auditors by my Department's inspectors in reports published since June 1979 has led to an audit partner being excluded from membership of a professional accountancy body".—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1990; Vol. 170, c. *25*.]

He added in another written reply to me:

"no auditor criticised in an inspector's report has been debarred from auditing as a result of information in that report."—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. *341*.]

The Government have never initiated any criminal proceedings against auditors criticised in DTI report, so there are no effective sanctions. For all those reasons, the instruments are inadequate—they are too little, too late.

The Opposition cannot vote against them, although the hon. Member for South Hams seemed inclinded to vote against them. I only wish that the hon. Gentleman had the courage of his convictions. The Opposition are far more responsible that than. Voting against the measures might give an indication that we were as much in favour of fraud as Conservative Members are. We are not in favour of fraud, and we welcome any progress in its detection. That progress includes measures that we asked for when the relevant legislation was passed. For that reason, we must welcome the instruments, but they are just not good enough.

7.48 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): The last half hour has shown that the quality of debate in the House remains extremely high. Even on an issue which, on the face of it, looks as dry as dust, some hon. Members will pick an argument when there should not be much of one.

I cannot say that I agreed with much of what the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said. He implied early in his speech that most of the City of London was collapsing into a sea of sleaze and other goings on which are extremely to be regretted. We should remind him that all four measures follow the recommendations of the Bingham inquiry into what happened at the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, which was not a British bank but an international bank based overseas. I think that I am right in saying—my hon. Friend the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—that BCCI was the first difficulty that we had experienced for a long time.

I want to explore what role an auditor should play in the insurance and financial services industry in looking at particular firms. I have several interests, of which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) is aware. The one that is relevant to tonight's debate is that I am an

elected member of the Insurance Brokers Registration Council. The way in which we regulate insurance brokers is laid down by statute. It demonstrates the benefit of a statutory requirement for audit and for proper oversight of how the regulator reacts to what the auditor may say.

I greatly welcome the four measures, which are some of the most beneficial things to come out of the BCCI disaster. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby and I have debated the matter on many occasions. We usually do so on television, not on the Floor of the House and, therefore, not for quite so long. He said that what went wrong with BCCI was that Price Waterhouse knew that there was fraud but did not say so. Lord Justice Bingham pointed out that there was a clear conflict of interest between the interest of the client, for whom the auditor worked, and the public interest. He said that some amendment to the Banking Act 1987 was needed to clarify that, and that is precisely what the measures provide.

No one can seriously criticise the Government when they have not only come up with the regulations to deal with the problem, but have gone further and applied them to financial services, building societies and insurance companies, just to be absolutely sure. I am not a chartered accountant. I am an insurance broker. I am not aware of all the rules and regulations that affect accountants and the way in which audits are carried out. However, I was surprised to hear during the debate that the problem with BCCI was the conflict of interest. Fraud was known and was not declared. The regulations should make that considerably more clear.

I have sat through the debate because I wished to make one particular point. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central called for stronger regulation. I expected that. We had the argument the other week about whether we should have statutory regulation or make the self-regulation system for the financial services industry work. I believe that we should try to make the existing arrangements work. We are fast approaching a key point in that process.

I understand that on Thursday the Securities and Investments Board will consider the proposed Personal Investment Authority prospectus. Within a week or so we shall all be able to read it. The key question tonight is what regulatory framework the PIA should place on intermediaries, life assurance companies, pension funds and financial advisers in general, to ensure that the public interest is protected.

We heard earlier about the Levitt case. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central referred to community service punishment, so I think that he had that case in mind. What should we do to ensure that malpractice and fraud are picked up quickly? The order relating to financial services certainly helps because it places on the auditor the obligation to report any malpractice and potential fraud that he may see immediately to the regulator. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, there will be quite an argument when we see the prospectus. I have not had the privilege of seeing it, although I have had the opportunity to discuss its contents with the chairman and the chief executive of the PIA.

It is important that we do not have too many regulations. That is why I have some sympathy with what my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) said. We must not regulate to the point at which firms simply go out of business and give up because it is too expensive and burdensome to operate. We need to get the balance right between the amount and cost of regulation and making it effective.

I plead with my hon. Friend the Minister to bear in mind to what extent the Government should support the PIA prospectus and what should be done. We want a specific requirement not that firms must have this much or that much capital and so on, but that there is a regular audit trail and an annual look is taken at the figures and accounts of all the intermediaries and the firms with which difficulties have occurred in the past.

As I have told my hon. Friend the Minister before on the Floor of the House, that is what the Insurance Brokers Registration Council is required to do for all insurance broking firms. That is what Parliament required in the Insurance Brokers (Registration) Act 1977. It is not an onerous requirement on firms, nor is it excessively expensive. So it would meet any cost compliance test that the Department of Trade and Industry might wish to insist on. It would ensure that a proper look was taken each year at the finances of each firm and, if things were wrong, that they were reported immediately.

That is the lesson of BCCI. When things are not all that they should be, they must be dealt with and reported quickly. The orders go a long way to helping to ensure that. For that reason, the House should warmly welcome them.

7.56 pm

Mr. Nelson: This has been a curiously old-fashioned debate in some ways, with hon. Members on one side of the House calling for more regulation and hon. Members on the other side calling for less. My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) eloquently called for less regulation again this evening.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) takes a close interest in and is well informed on matters of financial regulation. I am grateful to him for the welcome that he gave to the measures. He is right that we have gone beyond what was strictly called for by Bingham. We have extended it to other sectors of the financial services industry. That is all to the good. Therefore, I reject roundly the accusation of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) that the orders are timid. They are what was called for by the Treasury Select Committee. They are what was proposed by Bingham and we have introduced them here tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale will have an early opportunity to consider the Personal Investment Authority prospectus, which is being published. I take seriously his point about adequate monitoring procedures and the need for an audit trail. A central criterion for the effectiveness of self-regulating organisations is the methodical nature of their monitoring. I hope that all concerned will consider the matter carefully.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams made an amusing but perceptive speech about the growth of deregulation. Some would say that deregulation is the fastest growing part of bureaucracy in Whitehall. There have been calls to deregulate the deregulators. My hon. Friend is right to say that Parkinson's theory can be extended and that deregulation can acquire a life and momentum of its own. The underlying purpose of reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and stripping away the red tape that hinders enterprise and good governance in Britian is

[Mr. Nelson]

one to which the Government are very committed. We intend to promulgate that doctrine throughout all areas and it is being taken forward in legislation.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central said there was a case for a wider inquiry into the auditing of companies. That was not specifically called for by Bingham, although I acknowledge that such a case can be made. We should be extremely careful before extending that, as was proposed by the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, beyond the direct responsibility to the members or owners of the company. It must be right for auditors to audit and regulators to regulate. It does not help the argument for there to be an overlap in responsibilities and in some way turn auditors into snoopers and narks and make one's regulators more supine. I do not think that there is a case for a widened inquiry into the auditing of companies.

It was said that there was a case for extending the duty of care of auditors beyond members, but again Bingham did not find that necessary as a result of his inquiry into BCCI. I was asked what "material significance" meant. That is set out in the guidelines in the statement on auditing standards. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby asked about Lloyd's. He is quite right that it is not covered by the measures, but it is a condition of the appointment of auditors into syndicates that they shall report. They have a duty to report where those circumstances arise.

I do not have time to deal with the other points, but if I have missed anything in particular, I will write to the hon. Members concerned. The whole import of these measures is to ensure that they look at the criteria of authorisation. They are concerned with the authorisation of firms that take public deposits and investments. When that is brought into question, and when there is evidence to suggest that those criteria are not being adequately met, it must be right to impose a non-costly duty on the auditors to bring that about. That is what the measures do and they are an extremely welcome addition to the stable of measures of regulation. They will improve depositor protection materially.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [11 February].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Auditors (Financial Services Act 1986) Rules 1994, which were laid before this House on 15th December, be approved.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Questions necessary to dispose of the other motions to be decided at that hour.*

Resolved,

That the draft Accountants (Banking Act 1987) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 15th December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Building Societies (Auditors) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 15th December be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Auditors (Insurance Companies Act 1982) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 14 January, be approved.—*[Mr. Nelson.]*

Local Government Finance (Wales)

8.1 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): I beg to move,

That the Local Government Finance (Amendment) Report (Wales) 1993-94 (House of Commons Paper No. 169), which was laid before this House on 31st January, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this, it may be convenient to consider the following motion:

That the Local Government Finance (Amendment) Report (Wales) 1994-95 (House of Commons Paper No. 168), which was laid before this House on 31st January, be approved.

Mr. Redwood: The report sets out my decisions on the local government revenue settlement for 1994-95.

The Second report puts right a mistake in the description of the basis for distributing the distributable amount for 1993-94 which was approved on 8 February 1993. I can assure the House that the amendment in this document does not affect the money that authorities should receive.

I announced my provisional settlement proposals to the House on 30 November last. I have given careful consideration to the representations that I have received on the level of the settlement and the views of the local authority associations in coming to my final decisions. I believe that my provisional proposals remain appropriate.

I propose to set total standard spending for 1994-95 at £2,704·8 million. That includes a sum of £86 million for care in the community—an increase of 4·2 per cent., or more than £100 million extra cash compared with 1993-94.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Secretary of State said that the figures in the reports were in a sense provisional at the end of last year, but that he feels that nothing has happened to change his view. Will he tell us what impact he believes the pay settlements will have on the spending that he has allowed local authorities? It seems to me that there must be a cut in staff and services if they are to keep within the sums of money that he made available at the time when he was not aware of the settlements.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for posing the central question. I hope that during my remarks I will satisfy the House, if not all Labour Members, that the settlement proposals are fair and will mean that good quality services can be delivered by councils throughout Wales, and that they offer enough money to avoid sacking essential staff. They certainly offer enough money to avoid sacking any teacher who is needed in the classroom. I do not want to see that happen. I trust that hon. Members do not, too. It is up to local authorities. I believe that the extra grant—the extra spending permission—means that a good quality education can be delivered to children in Wales without it in any way being jeopardised by the proposals. I shall illustrate later the fact that local government has considerable flexibility to spend wisely and well. It has resources at its disposal to do a good job.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): When the Secretary of State made his provisional announcement on the total standard spending assessment for Wales, was he aware that

the various salary review bodies would be making a recommendation that was almost twice the current rate of inflation?

Mr. Redwood: I did not know the exact amount of the recommendation, but I assumed that some pay increase was likely. I have made an increase in grant, which I am just about to explain to the House, and which will go some way to meeting the requirements of local authorities. They have other assets and resources. I will illustrate them later.

I propose to provide £2,419·2 million in central Government support towards this spending, an increase of 3·3 per cent. on 1993-94. Opposition Members will see that that is a good rate of increase compared with the current rate of inflation. The support package will comprise £1,740·1 million in revenue support grant, £464 million in distributable non-domestic rates and £215·1 million in other revenue grants. More than £89 in every £100 of Welsh local authority expenditure on revenue account will be funded by central Government support. That generous level means that Welsh council tax payers benefit from substantially lowered levels of tax than their English counterparts. Welsh taxpayers should continue to benefit from relatively low levels of tax next year, assuming sensible budgeting decisions.

The revenue settlement is matched by the substantial local government capital settlement for 1994-95 which I announced on 30 November. This totals £503 million in capital grants and credit approvals, a 4 per cent. increase on 1993-94. It means welcome permissions to improve capital stock in housing, education and other crucial local government service areas.

The Welsh non-domestic rate poundage—or business rate—for 1994-95 will increase by 1·8 per cent. in line with inflation to 44·8 p. That modest increase, coupled with the transitional arrangements announced in the Budget, will be of considerable benefit to business. About 20,000 business ratepayers who faced the largest increases following the 1990 revaluation will benefit by £5·3 million from the transitional changes.

This is a decent settlement for local government in Wales. It gives local authorities an additional £100 million to spend when the low level of inflation is helping them to keep down the cost of providing their services. The £86 million that I am providing for care in the community is an increase of almost £50 million on 1993-94 and will enable local authorities to build on the introduction of the service in 1993-94. Since the 1990-91 settlement, revenue resources for local authorities have increased by almost £530 million, or 27 per cent.

My provisional settlement proposals were met by some criticism that they could lead to substantial increases in council tax levels. Increases as high as 15 per cent. were suggested. Most local authorities have yet to set their budgets, but I am glad to report to the House that press reports indicate a far more modest level of increase.

Clwyd council council and Cardiff city council are reported to be proposing a reduction in their council taxes. South Glamorgan county council and the Vale of Glamorgan borough council are reported to be planning increases limited to 3 per cent. or below. That shows that it can be done and I hope that other councils will look after the interests of their taxpayers.

On 14 December, I announced my provisional capping criteria. I will give careful consideration to local authority budgets and make my capping decisions in the light of all the information available to me when I have received it.

May I commend Welsh billing authorities for their better than expected performance in collecting the council tax? They estimate an overall surplus on collection funds of £17·6 million as at 31 March 1994, which translates into an average £18 reduction in council tax for a band D dwelling, which could be passed on to taxpayers in their 1994-95 bills or allows the council more flexibility in its general finance planning.

Local councillors have considerable flexibility in their budgeting. The sums of money that I am describing are large. Revenue and capital spending combined of more than £3,000 million is many times the amount spent by quangos in Wales, outside the health service, and represents a large share of my total budget for Wales. *[Interruption.]* I hope that Opposition Members are not suggesting that I should cut spending on health—that is a vital service, which I thought they also supported.

Flexibility is increased by the payment of rate support grant and distributable non-domestic rates as a block grant. It is for local authorities to decide how to spend the money that they are given, in line with their priorities and with local needs. Councils can raise income through fees and charges; they have balances which they can choose to spend or retain; and they have assets which they use for service provision or sell to raise capital. They have large administrations, which they should always be looking to make more effective. In education, there are surplus places to be removed, there is energy to be used more efficiently and there are ancillary services to be contracted out, if that can provide better value for money for local taxpayers.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I apologise for interrupting the Secretary of State. No doubt he is aware of the serious problems facing the South Wales constabulary and its funding by local authorities. Is there any hope that he and the Home Office Minister responsible might get around the table with the police and local authorities to sort out the problems? People are seriously worried about the growing crime problem and the lack of policemen on the beat. I hope that he will agree to that request, which I have made on behalf of many of my constituents and many people in other constituencies.

Mr. Redwood: I am about to come to the subject of the South Wales police, but I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's question directly. I and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales are always willing to discuss with local government matters relating to local government finance, and have done so during the months leading up to the settlement. My hon. and right hon. Friends at the Home Office are always willing to discuss police matters, if they are important and warrant a ministerial meeting. There was such a meeting recently, and a Home Office Minister discussed that very issue.

The last thing I want is for local authorities to skimp on the police. The budget problems of the South Wales police have been much in the news. Recently published Audit Commission profiles show that the South Wales constabulary's expenditure per head of population is above average for comparable forces and that more police are on

[Mr. Redwood]

duty there than in similar forces. I trust that local authorities and the police authorities will make sensible decisions about future services.

Most of the issues that have been raised tonight are for the police authority, and I hope that it will get on with its job. Where necessary, police stations should be kept open and enough policemen should be made available for beat duties and detection work.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Wherever blame lies as regards the South Wales constabulary, surely it would be madness to merge the Gwent and South Wales forces at this unfortunate time. Gwent has a very good record and we want it to stay like that.

Mr. Redwood: I will ensure that the Home Office sees a transcript of this debate, and I have noted what the hon. Gentleman has said.

The last thing that I want is for local authorities——

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fact that the Home Office planned to allow £7 million extra for the police budget in Wales whereas local government has chosen to allow only £2·2 million is a disgrace and reflects very badly on the running of the police authority and the chairmanship of the committee involved?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is right. The allocation of budgets is a matter for the local authority, and that issue is a matter for public debate in the council chamber.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): In that case, can the Secretary of State explain why in England we can get a straight answer from the Secretary of State for the Environment and the figures for standard spending assessments for the past five years, this year and next, but we cannot get the same information for Wales from either the Home Secretary or the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Redwood: As the hon. Gentleman knows, standard spending assessment calculations for England are carried out on a slightly different basis from those for Wales, which we set out in the report. Local authorities should have the maximum flexibility to make their own decisions. It is therefore a matter for local debate whether the community values its police service enough and whether that service needs more money to do a good job or the authority should take a look at how it is being run.

Mr. Michael: I take it that that is an implicit criticism of the right hon. Gentleman's colleague, the Secretary of State for the Environment, because he and the Home Secretary—who has responsibility—can produce figures for England. The right hon. Gentleman cannot produce them for Wales. Why? Surely it is because he is not providing the money to Welsh local authorities.

Mr. Redwood: That was a fatuous remark. I have already answered the underlying question. Local authorities should have the maximum discretion and should be answerable for their decisions to local electors, who want good police and education services. The money is there for authorities to do it if that is their wish.

Alongside skimping on the police, the last thing I want is for local authorities to reduce the number of teachers if they are needed to teach pupils. I am delighted to report that education standards in Wales have been rising during the past few years, following the introduction of the national curriculum and our other reforms. As I said recently, we have much further to go and more progress to make. That is very much at the top of my agenda and that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

Local authorities in Wales reduced the level of rent arrears by more than 10 per cent. between 1990-91 and 1992-93, but more progress must be made. Since 1987, the number of vacant local authority dwellings has also decreased. Those are the cuts that I want—cuts in the number of empty houses, in rent arrears and in tax arrears, so that the money is there to spend on the services that people want.

I am pleased to report that care in the community has in general been introduced successfully. It is a good example of a major service being given to local government so that local rather than national democracy can determine the details of its future. How that flies in the face of Opposition criticisms that we always take important decisions away from local government. Care in the community will be one of the fastest growing services in the public sector during the decade to come, and we have entrusted it to local government.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): By defining community care—by that I mean social care as opposed to health care—in a certain way, the Secretary of State might be seeking to increase the proportion of our vulnerable population who are pushed into the means-tested category. He must be careful that he does not end up by defining health care in one way and social care in another and thus denying health care its proper role. That can clearly be seen from the fact that elderly people are being discharged into the community—as he knows because he has heard it from me before—without the necessary facilities for the disabled. His Department has decided to put the disabled facilities grant in the basic credit allowance, where it must compete against other local authority priorities. Why does he not put it back into the special credit allowance?

Mr. Redwood: Opposition Members speak with forked tongues. They say that they want local government to be more responsible and more trusted and to have more freedom, and when I provide that freedom, they complain that I am not telling local government what to do. I do not intend to lay down every detail. I too happen to believe that the disabled should be a high priority. The money is available, and in my settlement for next year I have explicitly recognised the needs of the disabled by providing a substantial increase. I hope that local government will respond by doing the decent thing. I want elderly people to be looked after well. If they can be cared for at home, well and good, but the necessary facilities must be available.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the right hon. Gentleman know that, during the current winter, an increasing number of homes for the elderly, particularly nursing homes in the private sector—in referring to the private sector, I make no value judgment—are experiencing difficulty in filling beds as a result of the policy that is being pursued in this field? Does he realise that in some cases only half of the beds in a home are occupied and that therefore people are vulnerable because they are uncertain as to whether their home—their only home—will remain

in existence? May we have an assurance that there will be coherent planning to ensure that the transition to care in the community will not make anyone vulnerable in this way?

Mr. Redwood: That is exactly what the authorities are asked to ensure. Of course, they must have sensible plans so that beds and facilities are always available for those who need them. In a way, the fact that more elderly people are now being looked after in their own homes is an indication of the success of the concept of care in the community. We have arrested the very rapid growth in the number of permanent residential places that we saw before the policy was introduced.

As we now see, local authorities, despite some gloomy warnings, have, in general, managed well in the first year of their responsibilities. They have examined thousands of cases, and many people have been helped to make decisions about their own future. Many are able to continue living, as they wish, in their own homes. This has meant a fall in the demand for residential care, which was increasing rapidly in previous years. It is the duty of the relevant authorities to plan future provision so that everything will work smoothly for those most in need.

I trust that local authorities will respond positively to this settlement. I believe in good local government. I believe that councils have an important role to play. I am disturbed if I learn of cases of alleged impropriety or irregularity in their financial performance or in their accounting. I trust that all parties in the Hosue will unite not only in believing in local government but also in agreeing that local government should set and maintain the highest possible standards of conduct when spending the very substantial sums of money that parliament votes to it.

This is a large settlement. It is a good settlement in an era of low inflation. It gives local government in Wales the money that it needs to provide high-quality services and to get on with the job. It need not lead to high tax increases or to the redundancy of crucial workers. Well run councils will flourish as a result of this settlement, and I offer them every encouragement to do so. I commend the settlement to the House.

8.23 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): We have just seen a new model Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman came to the Dispatch Box and talked about conciliation. He said that he had taken into account the views of local authorities put to him since he met them last year. He may have taken authorities' views into account, but he did not accept any of their observations. He commended Labour-controlled local authorities for their council tax and rent collection rates. He actually praised democratic local government for its value and compared it with his own quango state. He really is a new model Secretary of State, but his reality is quite different from his rhetoric.

The reality is that this is a poor settlement for local government in Wales. It has been roundly condemned, not least by the county councils, which, as the largest employers in Wales, will have to face the considerable burden imposed on them by the Government's acceptance of the public sector review body's recommendations without the additional cash to meet the awards.

This settlement represents a further step along the road that we have been travelling since 1979. The financing of local government is again circumscribed. Local government's ability to respond to the needs of the community it serves as it and its electors deem appropriate is being curtailed yet again, and local government is losing its independence to central Government. The centralising tendency of which this settlement is a further representation is one of the most pernicious and corrosive characteristics of the modern Conservative party.

It will not be lost on anyone who is concerned with the application of the settlement that, despite the Secretary of State's earlier remarks, as the democratically controlled public sector represented by local government faces further cuts, the undemocratic sector represented by the 111 Welsh quangos has seen budget increases. In the case of the major bodies—the Development Board for Rural Wales, the Welsh Development Authority and the Cardiff Bay development corporation—the figure is more than 8 per cent. Given the succession of scandals and the aura of sleaze hanging over the Secretary of State's quango sector, I do not think anyone will deny that, in terms of value for money and financial probity, direct democratic control is a far better watchdog than the financial control systems of the Welsh Office.

The total standard spending of £2,705 million is £105 million above the settlement for the current financial year. The Secretary of State has argued that this is an increase of nearly 4 per cent. In the strictest sense, it is an increase of nearly 4 per cent., but that statistic itself is absolutely meaningless. In the current financial year, budgets—what authorities will have spent on delivering services, not on what the Welsh Office considers that they should spend —amounted to £2,688 million. Against that, next year's settlement, which we are debating tonight, represents an increase of only 0·6 per cent.

Even that is not itself a true reflection of reality. As the Secretary of State indicated, the current settlement includes provision for community care to the tune of £86 million. That is some £40 million below the Assembly of Welsh Counties' assessment of what is required to meet the needs of the community. In any event, it is not available for general spending. If that figure is removed from the spending total, the current increase is only 2·3 per cent. above the settlement for 1993-94 and, being £28 million or 1 per cent. below the current year's budgets, represents a real terms reduction of 4 per cent.

That is a measure of the cuts that the Government wish to force on local government this year. In any circumstances it would be difficult enough, but this year Welsh local government has to suffer the cumulative burden of previous years' cuts. It has also to struggle with the social and economic consequences of the recession foisted on the country by central Government, and it is expected this year to meet the costs of an unwanted, costly and unsatisfactory reorganisation of local government.

Predictably, while the Government with one hand are distorting their expenditure and creating unnecessary expense, with the other hand they are reducing the discretion available to county councils to raise their own resources. The capping limits, unfair and arbitrary as they are, are again imposing a straitjacket. All Welsh counties, for instance, are limited to a budget increase of 1·75 per cent. over 1993-94, as are the cities of Cardiff and Swansea and the borough of Newport. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) pointed out, this cap of 1·75 per cent. is at the root of the funding problems of the South Wales police authority area.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the difficulties of the South Wales police authority are at least partly due to the authority's belief that it would underspend in the current year and the fact that its calculations were out by about £2 million? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is at least a factor?

Mr. Davies: Coming from the party that controls the Welsh Office and has £208 million unaccounted for last year, it ill behoves the hon. Gentleman to lecture anyone. There have been cumulative expenditure problems in the South Wales police authority going back to 1988. Since then, the authority has faced underfunding of £38 million and experienced enormous difficulties.

The hon. Gentleman will know that the South Wales police authority committee, its officers and its chief constable have visited Parliament to put their cases to hon. Members representing the South Wales police authority area and to Earl Ferrers, the Minister responsible for the police. They certainly have not encountered any criticism from the Government. If the hon. Gentleman believes that there is some criticism to be made, I suggest that he takes a leaf out of the Secretary of State's book and refers the matter so that it can be properly audited. He will then see that no blame whatsoever can be attached to the members or the officers of the police authority.

Mr. Evans: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the district auditor has suggested that there is a total lack of accountability or any proper financial control in the police authority? As the shadow spokesman for Wales, is he unaware of that?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman might well have seen a copy of the provisional report. That report was made on the same basis as the one presented to Westminster city council, which referred not to a difficulty of £2 million created as a direct result of Government underfunding of the police authority, but to the expropriation of millions of pounds to line the pockets and further the political interests of his party. However, I did not notice the hon. Gentleman's vociferous condemnation of Westminster city council or any other Tory-controlled councils.

If there is any evidence of financial mismanagement in the policy authority, it has to be properly investigated; it has to be the subject of a proper report by the district auditor. If the district auditor finds any wrongdoing, wilful neglect or unacceptable maladministration, I shall certainly join the Secretary of State in condemning it.

I have the advantage of being condemning such maladministration, whether it applies in the democratic sector or the quango sector. Unfortunately, despite the corruption, mismanagement and fraud for which the Secretary of State is personally responsible in the quango sector, we have heard not one word of condemnation either from him or from his colleagues.

Mr. Sweeney: The hon. Gentleman has brought the case of Westminster city council into the debate, no doubt for comparison. Is not the difference between those issues that Westminster city council implemented a highly successful policy that resulted in political benefit to the party which introduced it, whereas in this case there was clearly no benefit, and the policy was disastrous for policing in south Wales?

Mr. Davies: I note the look of intense embarrassment on the faces of the Secretary of State, his Parliamentary Private Secretary and the Minister of State. The hon. Gentleman would do well to read the *Official Report* of tonight's debate. I am sure that he will want to reflect carefully on the justification that he has just made of corruption in local government.

Mr. Redwood: I wish to make it crystal clear to the hon. Gentleman, as I thought I had in the past, that of course I condemn fraud, wherever it is discovered and proven. That applies to my own staff and to outside bodies as well as to elected local government bodies. It must be condemned and rooted out if there is suspicion of it and it can be proven. Now that the hon. Gentleman has performed his mirrors vanishing trick with the extra billions, does he agree with two simple points—that there will be 3·3 per cent. more money available next year in central Government support, and that the RSG alone is up £71 million? Where is he spiriting it all away?

Mr. Davies: Nothing is being spirited away. The Secretary of State has raised two points and I shall deal with them both. First, he is anxious to ensure that corruption in public life is rooted out. I shall take the right hon. Gentleman at his word. I put it to him, however, that there is abundant evidence that the part of public life where corruption, sleaze and fraud flourish is that for which he is responsible. The democratic sector in Wales—the local authority sector—shows no such evidence of corruption, sleaze and fraud. If the Secretary of State wishes to root out the endemic corruption in Welsh public life, he should ensure that the 40 per cent. of his expenditure currently accounted for by quangos is brought under direct democratic control. That is how to ensure that corruption no longer exists.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, I am replying to the Secretary of State. I know that the hon. Gentleman has only recently arrived in the Chamber; he is what we might call a sioni-come-lately. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman when I have dealt with sioni coed coch.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Will the hon. Gentleman translate that into English for the benefit of the Chair?

Mr. Davies: I am afraid that I cannot. If I were to do that, you would rule me out of order Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we all know to whom I am referring.

Secondly, the Secretary of State referred to a vanishing act. It is not a vanishing act. The most valuable comparison is between this year's standard spending assessment and last year's budget. The Secretary of State continues to compare this year's standard spending assessment with last year's standard spending assessment. The SSA last year bore no relationship whatsoever to the democratically expressed needs of Welsh local authorities. That is the heart of the difference between us. I see that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) has regained his composure, so I happily give way to him.

Mr. Richards: The thrust of the hon. Gentleman's argument seems to be that the central Government

contribution to local government expenditure is underfunded. Will he tell us by how much he believes it is underfunded, and how much more the Government ought to be contributing towards local government expenditure?

Mr. Davies: The heart of the problem is that, since 1979, the Government's policies have led to economic failure.

Mr. Richards: Answer the question.

Mr. Davies: It is a direct answer to the question. Since 1979, there has been a succession of economic failures. The Government have increased the tax burden on the British public and cut on local authority expenditure. Had we had a Labour Government for the past 15 years, we would not be in the state we are in now. That is the only answer that the hon. Gentleman will get.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I will happily give way to the hon. Gentleman again, but he must understand that I shall repeat the answer that I have just given him, so there is not much point in repeating that question.

Welsh local government is underfunded. Had we had a Labour Government since 1979, we would not have experienced the disastrous economic performance, nor the increased tax burden, nor would we have the waste, fraud and corruption of the quango state. That is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. If he asks the same question again, I will merely refer him to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Richards: Thankfully, we have not had a Labour Government since 1979. The question was quite specific. We were talking about the revenue support grant for 1994-95. By how much would the hon. Gentleman recommend that the Government should increase their contribution to local government?

Mr. Davies: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave a few moments ago, as I said I would. He might find it more fruitful to represent his own local authority, whose director of finance is clearly dissatisfied with the amount of representation that he receives from his Member of Parliament. In a letter dated 10 February, he wrote to me:

"The final local government revenue settlement for 1994-95 has resulted in a position where the Borough Council's draft budget for the new year is some £200,000 greater than the council tax limitation capping figure set by the Secretary of State."

That has obviously created substantial budgeting problems for the authority. The hon. Gentleman would do his constituents a better service by making his representations directly to the Secretary of State, thus ensuring adequate funding for his local authority.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Richards: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I hope that it is a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Richards: It is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has quoted a communication that he says came from a constituent of mine, but he did not relay it to me. Is it in order for him to raise the matter on the Floor of the House in such circumstances?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is perfectly in order for any such reference to be made; if a particular matter is to be raised, however, it is courteous to inform the hon. Member involved.

Mr. Davies: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask you to reflect on that ruling. I certainly did not know that I was to be subjected to a barrage of interruptions from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will have made his own judgment on what material to use; he will have noted which hon. Members were present, and I assume that he made his judgment on that basis. My ruling stands.

Mr. Davies: I do not dispute your ruling for a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we find ourselves in bizarre circumstances: it appears that I should have anticipated the precise nature of the interventions of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West. I suppose, however, that that was rather predictable, and that I should have known better.

Let me return to what I was saying about the increase in aggregate external finance. It is 1 per cent. lower than the increase in total standard spending, and there will be an increase in the percentage raised by local taxation. We must welcome the principle, which would enhance democracy and extend freedom of choice at local level; if that principle is to be acceptable in practice, however, we need a central Government who both honour the role of local government and are themselves a Government of sound finance.

Unfortunately, the present Government meet neither criterion. The 2·5 per cent. VAT surcharge to pay for the poll tax fiasco is still with us, and from April this year the average family in Wales will pay an extra £14 per month in income tax, insurance charges and indirect tax. Moreover, if this financial settlement is approved tonight, it may mean a 10 per cent. increase in the average Welsh council tax—a rise from £328 in the current financial year to £360 in 1994-95. Perversely, if all authorities spend to their capping limits, the increase may be even higher, bringing the average council tax bill to £377.

The impact of the settlement on revenue expenditure will be both direct and severe. I shall give specific examples shortly; but, before I do so, I wish to comment on the capital programme, which gives the clearest possible demonstration of the Government's unwillingness to respond to the proven ability of local councils to be partners in the enterprise of economic development.

In cash terms, over £13 million has been cut from the capital expenditure plans, with programmes such as housing, environmental services and roads bearing the brunt. Most significant, more than £70 million has been cut from capital programmes under local authority control to allow supplementary credit approvals under Welsh Office control for European regional development fund schemes.

As a result of those policies, projects throughout Wales have now been approved for European regional development fund funding, but have been shelved because of insufficient credit approval. What attitudes prevail in the Welsh Office to allow such a waste of both additional resources and local opportunities? Alyn and Deeside has

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had to shelve nearly £1 million of infrastructure work; Brecknock has had to shelve a tourism venture; Meirionnydd has had to abandon £650,000 worth of seafront and townscape works. All those projects could have been financed with the aid of European moneys, but for Welsh Office policy.

The five urban counties—the three Glamorgans, Clwyd and Gwent—all report the loss of millions of pounds of available grant. I hope that the present Secretary of State will set aside his Europhobia, and ensure that Wales maximises its benefits from the European Union.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I will, because I mentioned the hon. Gentleman's local authority. Let me point out, however, that I have been very generous in giving way, and I want to allow others to speak.

Mr. Evans: I accept that the hon. Gentleman allowed me to intervene earlier, and I thank him for his courtesy for giving way now.

The hon. Gentleman specifically said that a tourist project in my constituency had been deferred. I know of a significant number of tourist projects that are being undertaken by Brecknock borough council in the current financial year; perhaps the hon. Gentleman will give details of the project that is not proceeding.

Mr. Davies: I will, but, if I may, I will convey them via my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). I have the information in my files, but I want to proceed with my speech. My hon. Friend the member for Torfaen will reply in winding up—if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Let me refer specifically to two services which illustrate just how damaging are the policies reflected in the revenue support grant settlement. The Secretary of State would have us believe that he is concerned about educational standards; no doubt we shall debate that at some length in the near future. I do not know whether the Secretary of State has had any relevant experience, or whether his children attend a state school, but I know, from my experience and that of my constituents, just how difficult it is to strive for high standards in decrepit buildings with not enough resources, too few teachers and inadequate LEA support. That is what exists throughout much of Wales nowadays, and that is the situation that the settlement will perpetuate.

In the most cynical move of all, the Government have accepted the recommendations of their review bodies on public sector pay, and then left the cash-strapped LEAs to face the consequences. Let me put it in the words of the financial adviser to the AWC, Steve Dunster:

"All of the Counties are now wrestling with the problem of the pay award for school teachers of 2·9 per cent. The Government is not pretending that adequate funds have been provided, but rather that the additional costs must be met from efficiency savings and improvements in productivity. Frankly it is impossible to apply that sort of policy to a small primary school with a handful of teachers. West Glamorgan is struggling to find a contribution to schools budgets for the pay award of 2 per cent., leaving the schools to find the balance from their reserves if they have any. I would expect this to be a common experience across Wales —the first reaction of my colleague County Treasurers is that some shortfall will arise everywhere".

Put simply, that means that LEAs will have to cut other parts of their education budgets to meet the cost of the pay awards independently calculated and approved by Government.

The problem of cuts is of precisely the same order as last year's. In our debate 12 months ago, I forecast that that settlement would mean the loss of 2,500 local authority jobs; that estimate proved correct. Two thousand of those 2,500 jobs were lost from the education sector alone. The pattern will be repeated next year as a result of this settlement.

In Dyfed, cuts across the board have been overshadowed by the ending of discretionary grants. Talented young people wishing to develop skills in areas such as the arts, or those wishing to further their studies to improve their chances of employment, will be denied the opportunity by the squeeze that central Government have imposed on local finances.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Does my hon. Friend agree that, under local management of schools, the Audit Commission report "Adding Up the Sums" informs governing bodies that they should consider carefully when it comes to giving teachers their annual increases? They must often choose to employ young, untrained, inexperienced teachers and get rid of experienced teachers, which will lead to a radical decline to educational standards.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He has reminded me of the comment by Baroness Blatch, who I believe has some authority in such matters. She said that she was of the view that governing bodies and parents would be happy to see increased class sizes so that the teachers' pay bill could be met. I should be grateful if the Secretary of State would confirm that that is now the view of the Government. I am more than happy to give way to the Secretary of State if he wishes to confirm that the Education Minister who speaks for the Government in another place is speaking for him.

Mr. Richards *rose*——

Mr. Redwood: I have made my position clear on that matter. I want high-quality education and I think that the money is there to achieve it. Of course I do not intend to gainsay what my colleagues say.

Mr. Davies: The last comment was significant. The Secretary of State does not gainsay what his colleague says. Let us put on the record clearly that his colleague said that she believed that governing bodies and parents would be happy to see increased class sizes so that the teachers' pay bill could be met. We have that as official Government policy.

Mr. Richards *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I must proceed. I have given way.

Discretionary grants are also the main casualty of a £1·3 million cut in education spending in South Glamorgan and a £2·5 million cut in Gwent. Gwynedd faces a cut between £2 million and £3 million, redundancies are expected in Powys, and almost £5 million will be cut from education alone in Clwyd, with at least 200 teaching jobs at risk. My own county of Mid Glamorgan, the poorest and most deprived of any in England and Wales by any criteria, has to face cuts totalling £15 million, of which education has to take its share of the brunt.

Mr. Richards *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I have told the hon. Gentleman that I shall not give way.

My second illustration concerns the ability of Welsh local authorities to contribute to effective levels of policing. Every Opposition Member will testify to the sense of bitterness and bewilderment felt across whole communities whose collective experience tells them that policing levels have fallen below the minimum that can be regarded as adequate. Senior police officers and chief constables are being forced to speak out and to testify publicly that the services are inadequately funded by central Government and that they are unable to provide the level of funding which they, in their professional judgment, deem necessary.

The failure of the Government's economic and social policies has led to an increase in crime of 125 per cent. since they took office and to an increase of nearly 50 per cent. since 1989. Whole communities feel threatened. City centres are unsafe and elderly people cower in their homes. The response of the Government, the party that once prided itself on being the party of law and order, has been to cut, through the settlement, the resources available to police authorities.

In the South Wales police authority, on the basis of existing budgets, the chief constable is facing the prospect of closing 40 police stations. That is from a financial position of, at the end of the current financial year, being 220 officers below strength. The basic problem is that the county authorities are constrained to a 1·75 per cent. increase in overall spending by the capping procedures. That increase does not even meet the additional costs of previous pension increases.

Despite all the representations to the Secretary of State for Wales and the Home Secretary, the Government have remained intransigent and have refused to make adequate resources available to the police. Presumably, they are content to read headlines such as that in the *Western Mail* on 2 February 1994:

"Police 'volunteers' save crisis-hit force".

The article says:

"Police are working for nothing to stop criminals overtaking the crisis-hit South Wales force.

Officers are patrolling the streets knowing they will not be paid for their 'goodwill' overtime . . .

Barry, Townhill in Swansea, Llanedeyrn and Ely in Cardiff, Merthyr and Aberdare are among the places where police men and women are 'volunteering' to maintain the service.

One officer, who asked not to be named, said, 'it's happening all the time'.

Some admit being motivated by fears about the consequences to their own families if they clocked off on time".

It is patently clear from the Secretary of State's speech that the Government have no regard for the independence of local government and are indifferent to the damage being done to vital public services as a result of the cuts that they are enforcing. Like so much else to which the Government have turned their hand, their policies are heading for failure. Their central economic policy has failed and the British people are having to pay the price through the heaviest ever tax burden and through cuts in public services. The Government clearly care nothing for the principles of democratic accountability, but they will eventually have to face the electorate. They will then pay the price for their arrogance. The sooner that opportunity arises, the better.

8.56 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), the Opposition spokesman, seemed to blame defects in policing in Wales on failures by the Government to provide sufficient budgetary resources. I should like to put that in the context of some figures that I have obtained from the Home Office, to which I wrote seeking reassurance on that point. I understand that expenditure on the police service in England and Wales has risen from £1,100 million in 1978-79 to an estimated £5,862 million in 1992-93. That represents an increase in real terms of 83 per cent. since our Government came to office.

Mr. Michael: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the success of the Government is an increase in crime of more than 124 per cent. and that the reality of the spending on the police is that there has been an increase of only some 7 to 8 per cent. in the number of policemen and women on the streets? Is he proud of that?

Mr. Sweeney: What I am proud of is that the pay and conditions of the police have been tremendously improved while the Conservative Government have been in office. I am also pleased that absolute numbers, not only of police, but of civilians have been considerably increased over that period.

If one considers south Wales alone, one sees that at the end of October 1993, South Wales police had 3,159 police officers and 1,171 civilian staff. That represents an increase in actual strength of 515—214 police officers and 301 civilians—since May 1979.

My understanding is that there are two prime causes for the present financial situation affecting the South Wales police. The first is inadequate accounting arrangements by the South Wales police authority. The force budget for 1993-94 was set on the assumption that there would be an underspend for the previous year of something over £1 million. In fact, there was an overspend of well over £500,000. Moreover, the force was not told of that outcome until July last year.

I understand that the chief constable asked for a budget of £139·8 million for the present financial year in order to meet the expected demands on the force. That would have meant an increase of 8 per cent. on the previous year. The budget approved by the police authority provides an increase of only 1·6 per cent. Provision from central Government for police expenditure for the present financial year has increased by well over 5 per cent.

Mr. Michael: Will the hon. Gentleman explain how he has arrived at the conclusion that the increase for police purposes is 5 per cent? He said that he had received an answer from the Home Office, but the Home Secretary has refused to tell the House about Welsh local police authorities. The hon. Gentleman has produced a figure out of thin air and it cannot have come from the Home Office. Where does it come from? If the hon. Gentleman is basing this argument on the figure for England and Wales, he should know that only 1·75 per cent. of additional expenditure is allowed for by the Secretary of State for Wales. He should come clean.

Mr. Sweeney: If the hon. Gentleman is a little more patient, he will learn where the figures come from.

Overall provision for Wales for local authority funding of policing has been increased by 5·6 per cent. over last

[Mr. Sweeney]

year. Provision for central Government specific grant, which meets 51 per cent. of police expenditure, has more than matched that figure. In other words, the police authority has given its force an increase of £2·2 million for the present year and central Government provision would have provided for an increase of some £7 million—only £1 million less than the chief constable asked for.

I submit that these are matters for the South Wales police authority to put right. It is the duty of the police authority to ensure that its police force receives an adequate budget, and it is regrettable that the budget provided by the South Wales policy authority to the force is insufficient to meet the demands being made on it.

The chief constable is tackling the problems by reducing overtime, cutting transport costs and adjusting recruitment. I deplore the fact that it has been necessary to take such drastic action, but we need to place the blame where it clearly lies—with the police authority and the three county councils that comprise its membership. It is their fault that there has been underfunding and a lack of budgetary control.

The problems have arisen partly because the police took on civilians, which was an approved policy. The intention was that civilians would be recruited and their salaries paid from the moneys saved by the reduction in the number of police which would be achieved through retirement. Unfortunately, it appears that the civilians were taken on, but the officers nearing retirement have not left the force, so the books have not been balanced.

Another problem is that the payment of overtime seems not to have been properly recorded. That matter needs to be examined and the South Wales police authority must get a grip on the situation to achieve proper value for money. All the elected representatives on the three county councils involved need to recognise the importance that the public attach to effective levels of policing.

9.2 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I begin by taking up the point on which the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) surprisingly left the debate. It involves the relative merits of the Government's settlement for the South Wales police authority and the ability of the county council to finance it.

Even if the Home Office had provided double the amount that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, the capping criterion—the 1·75 per cent.—used for local authority expenditure means that the only way in which the council could provide the 5·5 per cent. would be to cut other aspects of their budget. They would have to sack more teachers or people involved in administration. The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan should have waited for a response to the issues that he raised, but he has now deserted the debate, presumably because he knew that he did not have a leg to stand on.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: In all fairness, I should point out that my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan is a member of the Standing Committee that is debating the Coal Industry Bill and which resumed at 9 pm.

Mr. Griffiths: All I can say is that the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan should have had the courtesy to tell us that he would not be able to stay for the rest of the debate. It is a pity that he did not stay, because there is the fundamental flaw in his argument that, whatever amount in excess of 1·75 per cent. might have been made available —I emphasise "might"—the county councils in the South Wales police authority region were always left with the difficulty of the capping criteria. If they put more money into the police force budget, they would have to cut other parts of their budget, and that cannot be gainsaid.

That is why police stations, such as those in Porthcawl and Kenfig Hill and Pyle in my constituency, will be no base from which the police can operate. In fact, all that I will have in my constituency is the major police station in Bridgend town. Elsewhere, there will be no police presence in those very important police stations.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way a second time. Does he recognise that many of us in many parts of Wales may feel that our police authorities should have additional resources? It is well known that I have visited the Home Office many times, arguing for more resources for Dyfed-Powys police. The key thing, however, is that, whatever budget is set, it is the responsibility of a police authority to operate within the budget. The hon. Gentleman misses the point. The South Wales police authority has demonstrably not lived within its budget.

Mr. Griffiths: The key point to be made is that, whatever amount has been given to the South Wales police authority theoretically through Home Office funding, as a result of the 1·75 per cent. capping criteria on the county council the only way in which it could have made that amount of extra funding available to the South Wales police force would have been to cut other services. As a result of the way in which the Government have pressed and pressed upon local authority finance for years, there is no longer any fat to cut, and the muscle and bone are now being attacked. That can be demonstrated throughout Wales.

I shall draw attention to one special crisis point—I hesitate to say "bone of contention" in that context—of funding in my constituency, concerning the A4229 link from the M4 near South Cornelly down to Porthcawl, where that A road is nothing more than a country lane for a few miles. It passes a few houses called Jubilee gardens where, virtually every week, there is an accident involving motor vehicles, and every week cars plough into the front gardens of those properties. Fortunately, of late there have been no serious accidents to people, but there have been in the past.

Yet, as a result of the way in which the capping criteria work—the limitations on the spending of the county council—funding from the European Community that could be made avilable to upgrade and improve that road and remove a serious hazard to the public has had to be repeatedly postponed. The residents of Jubilee gardens—barely 20 of them—have laboured long and hard to present a petition to Mid Glamorgan county council, which is the responsible authority, but they have charged me with the duty of giving a photocopy of it to the Secretary of State for Wales. Fewer than 20 people have gathered together a petition of more than 10,000 names, demanding the improvement of that road.

Having mentioned Porthcawl, I will conclude on this point. I believe that the Secretary of State was enjoying himself in Porthcawl this very day, where I have no doubt

many Conservative councillors in the area bent his ear about obtaining a change to the local authority boundaries for the unitary authorities. Money is being spent on those changes where there are three communities, Ewenny, in St. Brides Major and Wick, where more than 80 per cent. of the people who returned ballot papers from the Electoral Reform Society said that they wanted to stay with Bridgend. Indeed, there is one street there of which, one side is Bridgend and the other side could become the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Secretary of State had time to go to Porthcawl today but he has no time to come with me and meet the people in these communities so that he can see, first, what a foolish stand he is taking on this issue and, secondly, a great opportunity for money to be saved if he were only to leave the map as it is. Even at this late stage, I appeal to him to save money and let these communities stay with Bridgend.

9.9 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): The report needs to be seen in the context of the financial situation that the Government and the country face.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Ignore it.

Mr. Evans: We cannot ignore, as we hear from the hon. Gentleman from a sedentary position, the fact that there was a £50 billion deficit in the national finances, and we addressed that issue in the Budget. Subsequently, we have heard complaints from the Opposition about tax rises. Tax rises are inevitable if we are to address the deficit. Labour Members lack all credibility if they suggest to the House or to the country that if they were in government they could avoid this situation; presumably, if they are opposed to dealing with he deficit, they would be in favour of carrying on with it and thereafter adding to it all the costs of the various promises that they have made to local government and to their friends in various lobby groups.

I call these things "promises" because we now know, do we not, that they do not count as pledges unless they are declared in the House itself? That is the context of the announcement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has had to make concerning local government finance in the current year.

In spite of these difficulties, Opposition Members seek to quote from reports by treasurers of various local authorities in Wales. *[Interruption.]* I cannot hear all these sedentary interventions. I cannot deal with them all. If any hon. Member cares to make one on his feet, I should be more than happy to give way.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): The hon. Member mentioned promises about tax. Perhaps he would explain why his Government have made promises about tax which they have now broken.

Mr. Evans: I do not recognise that the Government made any promise in relation to tax, other than maintaining that we are a party that believes in low taxation and that we will always maintain significantly lower levels of taxation than Opposition Members.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Evans: I should like to return to the kernel of the debate, which is the quotation that we heard from the treasurer of a district council in Clwyd, North-West. No doubt the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) was delighted to receive the letter from the treasurer of that council. I should like to quote from a letter written to me by the treasurer of Radnorshire district council:

"The Government and the Secretary of State for Wales could take much pride in this year's settlement. With a 3 per cent. increase in SSA the average Welsh District can increase spending by nearly double inflation."

Mr. Ron Davies *rose*——

Mr. Evans: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, because he will know, as I know, that Radnorshire and Newport were the only authorities to suffer reductions in the SSA. On behalf of Radnorshire, I have been making my concern about that plain.

Furthermore, the treasurer says that, when the overall settlement for Wales was announced, it was better than people in Radnorshire had been warned to expect. But the way in which the formula works in order to split spending between the various authorities in Wales means that it has worked substantially to the disadvantage of Radnorshire district council.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State knows, because I have raised the matter with him in correspondence, that I am concerned about the difficulties of rural local authorities. Local authorities in the rural parts of Wales have presented their case for a long time. We all recognise that they face additional costs in the delivery of local government services primarily because of the sparsity of population. We had always understood that the formula recognised the difficulties that such local authorities face. I have considered the documents that have been provided.

Mr. Ron Davies: For the sake of the completeness of the record, will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the letter to which he referred was dated 13 January? In a letter to me dated 13 January, the treasurer of Radnorshire district council states:

"I enclose herewith copies of letters which I have sent to the Welsh Office and also to Mr. Jonathan Evans, M.P. for Brecon and Radnor.

You will see from these letters that the Council is not at all satisfied with either the Revenue Settlement or the Capital Settlement for the 1994/95."

Mr. Evans: The letter from which I quoted directly was dated 24 December 1993. It made it clear that the specific problem was that Radnorshire district council and Newport district council, which lies in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) faced a reduction in their standard spending assessment. That presented them with particular difficulties.

There are three reasons for the problems. I have mentioned that a sparsity factor should be built into the formula to meet the difficulties faced by some rural local authorities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be aware that the European regional development fund grants, which were given to Radnorshire district council in 1992-93, had a disproportionate effect on its SSA. They affected the composition of the formula for working out the council's SSA in the current financial year and that is likely to cause a problem next year.

I have received from my right hon. Friend an explanation of those difficulties, but he will be aware that Radnorshire district council has always spent at or below its SSA and has charged at or below standard levels. It has not been a profligate authority. It serves a small population, and the difficulties it faces are not caused, as the Labour

[Mr. Evans]

party would claim, by the fact that the overall settlement for Wales is inadequate. The representations that I have received show that that is far from the truth. The council's difficulties are caused by the way in which the settlement has impinged on it and on the authority in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newport, East.

I was surprised when the hon. Member for Caerphilly informed the House that my local authority, Brecknock borough council, would not proceed with a project. You may recall my surprise when I learnt that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and my challenge to the hon. Member to give some details. I was aware that, during the past financial year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State approved the new Brecon leisure centre, a major project in my constituency. I was also pleased that only some months ago he provided a further £100,000 towards the centre's grandstand facilities around the athletics track. You can understand my surprise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I heard the Labour Front-Bench team suggest that the leisure centre project, or another project, would not proceed.

During the debate, I was challenged by Opposition Members for having disappeared briefly from the Chamber. I confess that I did leave the Chamber; I spoke to the chief executive of Brecknock borough council, Mr. Doylend, to check the information that the hon. Member for Caerphilly gave the House an hour or so ago. Mr. Doylend has told me that the council is pleased with the settlement as it affects itself. The borough council does not experience the same disadvantages from the working of the formula as Radnorshire does, so Mr. Doylend is perfectly happy for me to report to the House that it is pleased with the settlement.

Mr. Doylend also informed me that in the current financial year there will be an increase of 3 per cent. in the local council tax. He spoke to the treasurer of Brecknock borough council only this afternoon, and he knows of no project whatever within the council's area that is to be cancelled as a result of the settlement, yet the House was told of one only an hour or so ago by the hon. Member for Caerphilly.

When I challenged the hon. Gentleman he said that the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) would give us some details of the project. In view of my conversation with the chief executive, which took place only a few minutes ago, I shall certainly give way to the hon. Gentleman if he is now in a position to give us some details about the project that he claimed was to be cancelled.

Mr. Ron Davies: I am happy to confirm that that was precisely the information given to me by the Council of Welsh Districts. I shall give the hon. Gentleman full sight of the information at the end of the debate; it appeared in a list of projects that had fallen foul of the rules on the European regional development fund, and I assure him that it was given to me in good faith.

Mr. Evans: In the circumstances, may I say with equal courtesy that I accept the hon. Gentleman's explanation for the erroneous information that he put before the House. The briefing from the Labour-controlled Council of Welsh Districts is demonstrably inaccurate yet again. With respect, I offer the hon. Gentleman the suggestion that if in future he wants to inform the House about projects that are to be cancelled, he might speak to the chief executives or to members of the councils, rather than to the Council of Welsh Districts, which provides so much of the briefing that he conveys to us from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Redwood: I confirm that my hon. Friend has been assiduous in putting the case for Radnorshire. However, is he aware that, although Radnorshire does not benefit from the formula this year, it has benefited considerably in the past, for reasons that include its rural nature? The total SSA in 1991-92 was £2·493 million, in 1992-93 it was £2·971 million and in 1993-94 it was £3·281 million. That is one of the biggest rates of increase. I hope that it has been of benefit to Radnorshire, and I am glad that Brecknock is happy with this year's settlement.

Mr. Evans: I am very much aware of the point that my right hon. Friend makes, and I recognise the fact that those settlements were welcomed in previous years. However, the fact remains that Radnorshire district council has on-going programmes, and they must be funded during the coming financial year. Clear difficulties have been caused to the district council, although it has not joined in the misleading of public opinion that we hear from so many Opposition Members. What I have said during the debate shows that the settlement for Welsh local authorities in general has been welcome, but for Radnorshire in this specific year it has caused great difficulties.

I draw my remarks to a close by saying that this is a difficult financial time. The settlement announced by the Secretary of State is better than could have been expected, and the speeches that we have heard from Opposition Members have been as erroneous as the briefing that many of them received from the Council of Welsh Districts.

9.24 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I do not want to enter into the argument between the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) and the Labour Front Bench. However, the hon. Gentleman made two statements which, frankly, cannot go unchallenged. The first was the amazing proposition that, because the Government have a public sector deficit of £50 billion, Opposition parties must somehow tailor their policies as a result. It is an amazing proposition that our policies should be coloured because the Government have created this massive deficit.

The second statement that must be challenged is that the hon. Gentleman was not aware that the Tories made any statements at the last election that the Government would not raise taxes. The reality is that they made statements time and again that the Government had no intention whatever of imposing value added tax on fuel. I remember the former Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, telling the House that the Government had no plans to impose VAT on fuel. However, that is what happened in last year's Budget.

The hon. Gentleman must accept that we are not constrained by the difficulties that the Government face because we have the opportunity to tell them what sort of settlement local authorities should receive and the level and range of services that they should provide.

The Secretary of State told us that he believed in good government. The test of whether he means what he says will be if, first, local authorities are given proper resources for the range of services that they provide and, secondly and just as importantly, if local authorities are given the freedom to deliver those services. For the past 10 years or

more, local authorities have had their powers stripped one by one in the sort of salami-slicing approach of taking a bit year after year. Clearly, if powers are taken from local authorities, they will not be able to provide the range of services that one normally associates with them.

The hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) told us about the difficulties that many education authorities now face and I shall mention one or two of them. Following the transfer of higher and further education to the new quangos set up by the Welsh Office, and the transfer of some responsibility from education authorities to schools, local authorities are no longer able to provide the range of services that they provided 10 years ago. The difficulty is that schools are in the invidious position of having to choose to cut teacher numbers and increase the size of classes, or cut extra-curricular activities which have provided children in Wales with the breadth of education that was provided when we were at school. By that I mean provision of music, art and drama.

How many generations of young people from rural parts of Wales and the valleys of south Wales have made it in the international arena because local authorities were able to provide those services? Why are young people no longer able to participate in such activities unless they belong to middle-class families or families which can pay for the services? It is a shame that we are letting our young people down in this way. I would like local authorities and schools to be given the freedom, the opportunity and the resources to ensure that they can give this generation the opportunities that we had. Our parents fought to give us that opportunity, but I fear that our generation is letting down our children.

My final point relates to the resourcing of police authorities. We have heard a great deal about the difficulties of the South Wales police authority. I would not like the debate to go by without mentioning also the difficulties faced by the North Wales police authority. Year after year, the authority has asked the Home Office to provide the resources that would enable it to increase the numbers of personnel, and year after year it has been turned down.

Last year, the authority was given no increases. The difficulties which may be peculiar to the South Wales police should not cloud the fact that police authorities all over Wales are having problems. I hope that the Government recognise the need properly to resource police authorities in Wales.

We have heard about the massive increase in crime rates in rural Wales—rates that were unheard of a generation ago. It is essential that the police are given the resources necessary to allow them to carry out their task properly. We need to have more policemen on the beat, walking the streets and making sure that the elderly are safe in their homes. The police understand that they need more money to be made available, not only through the Home Office, but through the county councils.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Will my hon. Friend add to his list the fundamental importance of the forensic science service? Unless the police have the resources to buy those services, they will be unable to undertake proper criminal investigations. There will be insufficient cash for the evidence collected to be made available to the Crown Prosecution Service, if a prosecution is necessary.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am sure that his intervention will have been heard by the Government.

It is right that criminals should be dealt with properly and that we should have a range of sentences in our courts, it is equally necessary for the police to have proper resources to do their job. I hope that the Welsh Office now understands the crisis facing local authorities on a range of issues. Even if the Government were unable to address that crisis in this year's settlement, it will not be forgotten next year.

9.33 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I am glad to acknowledge the support of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) regarding the financial difficulties of Newport borough—directly, of course, as a result of the decisions of this Administration. It was most magnanimous of the hon. Gentleman.

We all recognise that local government is highly complex and no one can deny that fact. For a Government intent on curbing local government activity at every turn, that complexity is a godsend. Tonight was no exception, of course. We had the usual juggling act from the Secretary of State, when he gave us the "now you see it, now you don't" act.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said that we live in an age of quangos; there are 117 of them. They are a blot on the landscape and many people feel that the sooner they are got rid of, the better. Those bodies are accountable only to the Secretary of State and they are invariably filled with Tory placemen. I am sad to say that there have been increasing examples of corruption in high places. By comparison, local government in Wales has been of a high order. In England, there have been minor difficulties in Lambeth, but they have been dwarfed into insignificance by what has happened in Tory-controlled Westminster. Our local government in Wales has been first class by comparison.

The democratic nature of local government needs encouraging, not throttling. The simple fact of the Welsh rate support grant settlement is that the council tax payer will pay at least an extra 10 per cent. That is several times the level of inflation. What is more, the 10 per cent. increase imposed on the council tax payer is in addition to all the other increases announced in the previous two Budgets. I shall briefly list but a few: VAT on domestic fuel will increase to 8 per cent. from 1 April, with more to come the following year; petrol tax is up; vehicle excise duty is up; national insurance contributions are up. Many more examples could be cited. Where are families to get the money to pay the additional council tax and other taxes?

I have been informed that in Newport borough, standard spending, instead of increasing by 2·3 per cent. as it should, has fallen by 0·5 per cent. The Government are shifting more of the burden on to taxpayers. In Newport, male unemployment is between 13 and 14 per cent. There is a need for economic regeneration. Yet our local authority is denied resources. Newport could provide jobs not only for the town itself but for so many of the areas in the valleys.

On housing, so much more could be done to house the homeless, let alone put construction workers back to do the work that they have been trained to do. Instead, many of them are languishing in the dole queue. Local government

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should be allowed to spend receipts from the sale of council houses. That could do a great deal to regenerate the economy of Wales and elsewhere. Local authorities have had to cope with much new legislation, including the *Children Act 1989 and legislation on community care,* the national curriculum and mental health services. In respect of those items, the settlement is harsh.

In conclusion, local government in Wales needs a better deal, but it is not likely to get one from the Conservative Government. They are a millstone round the neck of local government and of Wales in general. The sooner they are ousted the better. We need a Labour Administration who will create a democratically elected assembly for Wales.

9.37 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I shall be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A few weeks ago, the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) stopped me and asked me whether I could please tell him the Welsh word for "idea". So I told him. The Welsh word for "idea" is "syniad". I said, "But surely what you want to know is the Welsh for no idea—'dim syniad'." What we heard from the hon. Gentleman this evening was absolutely no idea about the financing of local government. He said time and again that local government in Wales was underfunded. He said that the police were underfunded. He said that education was underfunded. Yet when he was challenged to be precise about by how much the police were underfunded, he could not say. When he was challenged to say by how much education was underfunded, he could not say.

I challenge the hon. Gentleman, through his spokesman who will reply to the debate for the Opposition, the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). The hon. Member for Caerphilly said that he was unhappy with the settlement for teachers' pay. Will the hon. Member for Torfaen tell the House what he believes would be a fair settlement for teachers' pay in 1994-95? He must think that the people of Wales are naive if he thinks that his party would not spend more on local government, because his party proposes a Welsh assembly to oversee local government in Wales costing £1 million a day. Will he commit himself to £1 million a day?

The hon. Member for Torfaen said that education has been underfunded. It has been underfunded by Clwyd education authority in my constituency. I refer him to Llandrillo college of further education, on which Clwyd education authority has not spent a bean in 15 years. thanks to the Conservative Government, the college is about to receive its first tranche—£1·6 million—of a £6 million investment this year.

Mr. Wyn Griffiths (Bridgend): Does the hon. Gentleman recall what it cost Wales when the Conservative Government of the day last reformed local government? Will he tell us how much extra money the proposed reform will cost?

Mr. Richards: I am more than happy to answer that question. It will cost less than the proposals of the Labour party, which wishes to add an assembly to the cost of the reform of local Government in Wales.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, West): on this, the hon. Gentleman has said boldly that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has finished his speech.

9.41 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I must apologise to the House for my absence during the early part of the debate, particularly to the Secretary of State. I have been following the Government's advice and getting "back to basics". I spent much of this evening with my own wife, but unfortunately underestimated the time at which the debate would start.

I will not detain the House long, but I want to tell the House something of what is happening in Powys in so far as it affects my constituency in Montgomeryshire. I hope that we shall hear a good deal more of the name Montgomeryshire in the years to come, despite the current ill intentions of the Secretary of State.

There are certain things with which we can possibly live. If highways are not repaired—the Government insists on failing to provide the money to repair them—I suppose that we can live with a few broken roads. We in Montgomeryshire are becoming used to broken roads. I have often raised problems relating to country roads with the county surveyor. I have letter after letter saying that Powys county council, which is not profligate—I do not think that it has ever been so accused—does not have the money to repair them.

Let us turn to other issues, such as social services and care in the community. We cannot afford to live with broken people. In some cases in Montgomeryshire, people are being forced to go "into the community". But they are sent not into their own community or to where their nearest and dearest are—if they have any surviving relations—but to the most convenient pigeonhole which falls within the Government's policy. That leads to broken people. I do not consider that an acceptable way of dealing with local government requirements.

I do not know whether the Secretary of State has asked the chairmen of social services committees or directors of social services about funding for care in the community, but if he does they will tell him and his hon. Friends on the Front Bench that it simply is not enough to meet the task. I take no issue with the task, as resettling patients in the community is entirely desirable, but I take issue with the failure to provide the wherewithal for that task. Nor can we afford broken futures.

Education provision in the county of Powys will be frozen in real terms for the forthcoming financial year. Powys will only achieve that freeze by cutting other services, such as the opportunity for adults, especially the elderly, to enjoy their share of knowledge. The mobile library service in Montgomeryshire, which is something of a lifeline to many pensioners who live in remote villages, is being cut to save the miserable sum of £25,000. Powys county council does not want to cut it, but feels that it has no choice. It is a disgrace that we should have reached the stage where, because of the Government's local government finance policy, the mobile library service has to be cut. Pensioners will not be able to obtain books because there is no public transport for them to get to libraries in Welshpool, Newtown or the other towns in my constituency.

What about education? The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) mentioned some of the effects of what are, in

real terms, cuts in education. He mentioned music teaching. I am not so concerned about the cases he cited of international musicians of great stature who have come from rural Wales. Such people are likely to appear in any event, as great natural talent shows itself.

I am more concerned about the majority who are amateur musicians—there are probably many in the House—who sing in choirs, play the piano for their own enjoyment or play in small amateur orchestras. There are thousands of them and they form the basis for musical enjoyment in this country. They will not be able to become musicians because many schools are not able to buy music tuition for young people, which is so essential as a base on which to build their future enjoyment of music.

The other day, I received a letter from parents at one school in my constituency, which revealed that they are being forced to buy music tuition at a very high price—if they can buy it at all—from a commercial organisation, whereas only a few years ago such tuition was free *[Interruption.]* I wish that the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) who is sitting behind the Secretary of State and is not a Welsh Member of Parliament, would show a little less exasperation and amusement. Local government finance cuts matter in Wales. They may not matter to him, but they matter to us. Another aspect of education—*[Interruption.]* I wish that the hon. Gentleman would keep quiet.

Wales has produced its share of good artists, who learned art at school. Art teaching is not a luxury, but should be a part of every child's education. That provision, too, has been cut in Powys as a result of the Government's local government finance policies.

Teaching through the medium of Welsh is a core area of education that is facing privatisation in Montgomeryshire. Montgomeryshire—indeed, Powys—is the only county in Wales that does not have a Welsh-medium secondary school. Welsh teaching is provided in some schools in my constituency and it is done very well, but some parents reasonably wish to send their children to a Welsh-medium school. Plans for such a school have been prepared time and again. An entire school—or at least part of one—has been proposed, but the possibility has probably been put back for yet another year because of the Government's policies. Why is it that, in respect of all subjects and at all levels, children should suffer and possibly face broken futures as a result of the Government's policies?

The issue that causes most concern in education is class size. There is no doubt that the increase in teachers' pay will not be met in Powys this year without a significant increase in the size of classes. Powys county council, acting on what it believed, on the basis of Government policy, to be the likely outcome, made an allowance of 1 per cent. to cover the increase in teachers' salaries for the forthcoming year. The council got it wrong, and the result is that class sizes will increase.

Mr. Redwood *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Carlile: The Secretary of State shakes his head. I do not know what magic the right hon. Gentleman can conjure up to ensure that class sizes will not increase if there is not enough money to meet the teachers' pay increase.

Mr. Redwood: If the hon. and learned Gentleman had had the courtesy to be present for the entire debate, he would realise that exactly those points were covered extensively in some lively exchanges between Opposition Members and myself. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will read the record of the debate so that he may understand the position that his constituents will face next year.

Mr. Carlile: I shall read the record with great interest. The fact is that the right hon. Gentleman did not begin to attempt to answer my question. If he can show Powys county council how to avoid cuts in the numbers of teachers and increased class sizes I shall certainly write to him in proper apology, as I hope he would expect me to do.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, I represent the other half of Powys—the major proportion of Powys; a bigger proportion than is represented by the hon. and learned Gentleman. He will know that the former director of education, Mr. Robert Bevan—now a member of the Powys authority—has come up with the very proposition that the hon. and learned Gentleman is putting forward: that there will be teacher redundancies.

The hon. and learned Gentleman will be reassured to hear that I spoke to the chairman of the education committee about this on Saturday and was informed that he hopes that it will be possible to make an arrangement whereby the matter can be dealt with without teacher redundancies. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will welcome that statement from the chairman of the education committee.

Mr. Carlile: We have all this hoping that arrangements can be made; but the fact is that Councillor Robert Bevan, the immediate past director of education for Powys, made it quite clear, from his great fund of experience and his knowledge of the education system in the county, what will happen. I put it to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), who represents what he describes as the other half of Powys—a description which may give rise to some interest in debates on another piece of legislation—that what Mr. Bevan said is what will happen.

The basic point that I wish to make is that, once again, we are witnessing cuts in local government services in rural Wales. Powys county council is not to blame—neither its members nor its officers. The public do not understand what the Government are up to when they see, in particular, every aspect of their children's education being hammered by the policies of the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). Month after month, people feel that Wales is being ruled more and more from London, and that is not acceptable.

9.53 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I should like to raise the question of the specific effect on Clwyd of the inadequate revenue support grant provision. Before doing so, however, I remind the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) that the Welsh for "promise" is "addewyd". The Government promised that they would not raise taxes or increase VAT, but they did just that. We face real cuts in services in Clwyd—indeed, throughout Wales—as a result of the Government's policies over the past 15 years. Significantly, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West mentioned that fact that for 15 years—precisely the Conservatives' period in office—Llandrillo college in Clwyd had not received any money for repairs.

[Mr. Martyn Jones]

We learnt from my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) that there is a real-terms cut in revenue support grant provision throughout Wales. Despite the flannel from the Government, that applies to Clwyd. Excluding community care provision, Clwyd will receive only 1.66 per cent. more than last year. Admittedly, inflation is low, but the figure is below inflation and hides the necessity for extra provision to meet the needs of new legislation such as the Children Act 1989, and measures relating to the national curriculum and mental health.

Central Government have agreed to wage rises but have not funded them, having said previously that they would not agree to any pay increases for teachers. Those increases now have to be funded out of already inadequate budgets. Even the additional community care money for 1994-95 is estimated by the Association of Welsh Councils to be £40 million below requirements.

Total standard spending is up by 4 per cent., but the aggregate external finance, including revenue support grant, non-domestic rates and specific grants, has increased by only 3·2 per cent. The gearing means that council tax payers in Clwyd face an increase of 11·8 per cent., or £20, on band D. The specific grants for the police and the courts have increased by 5·1 per cent. but that reduces the amount available for other services such as education. To add insult to injury, the Secretary of State assesses council tax at £233 for counties and £53 for districts, based on 100 per cent. collection, which is clearly unrealistic. A 5 per cent. loss on collection means another £15 on band D. Those factors affect all counties, but Clwyd has particular problems.

The standard spending formula for Clwyd is based on composite social indicators, including some features which do not exist in Clwyd, but mask its real needs. Although the sparsity of population provision which applies to large areas of Clwyd is some compensation, it is not sufficient, so Clwyd suffers lack of provision for sparsity population and for social deprivation indicators.

Despite that, Clwyd is the lowest spender in Wales. Last year it received £30 per head below the average for Wales. The grant we are debating tonight will mean £24 per head below the average this year. By pure coincidence, £24 per head in Clwyd represents £10 million in funding for Clwyd —exactly the amount that will have to be cut from education and other services this year. It will mean huge class size increases and redundancies among teachers. The councils do not want to do that. They have already had to charge for mentally handicapped day centres.

I realise that we are reaching the end of the debate, so I shall make just one further point on capping. If the Secretary of State will not put right the underfunding of education and social services in Clwyd, why does he not allow council tax payers to take the decision?

Mr. Wardell: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government have a simple solution to the problem—the market, of course? They are giving schools the opportunity to increase pupil numbers by poaching children from neighbouring schools. They are setting one school against another. That is the formula that the Government want to put in place to solve the problem.

Mr. Jones: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that that is a recipe for chaos in the education service throughout Wales.

If the council tax payers of Clwyd were told that they could avoid charges for day centres for the mentally handicapped and cuts in the number of teachers and that they would have adequate discretionary grants if they were prepared to pay only £14 a year per head more in grant, I am sure that the overwhelming majority of people in Clwyd would accept that. After all, that is only the equivalent of a Mars bar a week for every person in Clwyd, which is peanuts compared with the cuts and their effects on the pupils in our schools.

9.59 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I remind the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) that the councillor to whom he referred, Robert Bevan, was one of the many directors of education in Wales who resigned because they could no longer stomach the cuts introduced by the Government. Mr. Bevan did so in his early fifties.

In response to what was said by the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), let me issue the bold challenge presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies): will he tell us the precise amount by which provision should have been increased? Do I recall his saying that he believed that Clwyd county council's local education authority had underfunded its own provision? Of course, he will be unable to specify the precise amount.

Mr. Richards: I am more than happy to reply. During the past three years, all the education authorities in Wales have underfunded schools by £33 million in terms of capital provision.

Mr. Anderson: I wonder from what hat the hon. Gentleman pulled that figure. He said earlier that the Government had not resiled from any election promises about taxation; let me remind him that, in an Orwellian manner, the Government no longer describe themselves as the party of low taxation, preferring to style themselves as the party of lowest possible taxation.

The Under-Secretary of State must recognise that this is another example of the Government's centralisation tendency. That tendency can be seen in every sector of local government—with, I concede, the exception of community care—at a time when the quangocracy is increasing enormously and the accompanying sleaze is increasing as well. Although the Secretary of State is trying to civilise at the edges, the beast that he and his colleagues have created is growing.

The essence of the problem lies in the Conservative party's awareness that it can never achieve power in Wales through normal democratic means; it must create quangos to form a sort of authority through which it can work, bypassing the local authorities, whose power is being increasingly eroded and diminishing the morale of local councillors.

We have already heard about the effect of the settlement on public sector pay increases and local authorities' difficulty in accommodating the teachers' 2·9 per cent. pay increase—and other expected increases—in their budgets. Something will have to give, and what will give is other necessary services.

The Government assume that local authorities will be able to collect 100 per cent. of the council tax. That contrasts with the collection rate of taxes in direct Government control. The income tax collection rate, for

example, is about 98 per cent.; the VAT collection rate is about 97 per cent.; and the BBC estimates that the television licence collection rate is 10 per cent. lower than it should be, while the Home Office accepts that it is 7·5 per cent. to 8 per cent. lower than the desired figure. Yet the Government boldly assume that local authorities can do what they cannot.

There have also been effects on council tax bills. The Government's contribution to spending in my city of Swansea, for example, is limited to an increase of only £60,000, or 0·2 per cent., on the previous year. When compared with the provision for the standard spending assessment and the gearing effect, it means an increase in the council tax of 15·3 per cent. in the city of Swansea. In that sector, the Government are trying to throw the blame for their own policy failure on to local authorities and, as a result, forcing them to put up the council tax.

My hon. Friends have already made forceful points about the effects of the elimination of discretionary grants on music, the arts and so on. It is clear that the position now is worse than ever. What earlier generations of school children were able to take for granted is no longer available because there is a clear deterioration in the provision in the education sector. In addition to music and the arts, we should consider the lack of discretionary grants for those who wish to become lawyers. The withdrawal of those grants will certainly mean that, in future, our solicitors and barristers will come only from those families who are able to pay for the training. I believe that that is socially wrong, and it derives directly from the policies of the Government.

10.5 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): As always, the debate on the rate support grant settlement for Wales has been interesting, informed and, on occasions, quite exciting. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) talked about the lack of knowledge or experience of Opposition Members in local government finance. I calculated that among all the Labour Members who have spoken in the debate, there were over 50 years of experience of local authorities. My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and I were chairmen of the finance committees of our local authorities. So I must tell the hon. Gentleman that we have some knowledge and experience of what has occurred under both Governments over the past two decades.

My hon. Friends the Members for Caerphilly and for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) referred to the backcloth of the reform of Welsh local government. The House will consider that in a few weeks; it is currently being dealt with in another place. When we see cuts in county and district council budgets that are a direct result of the 4 per cent. reduction in the settlement, we must contrast them with the £100 to £200 million that the people of Wales will have to pay to reform local government. There is no enthusiasm for that among people in the Principality.

The Secretary of State said in his press release that the settlement

"gives local authorities adequate resources to maintain services."

The vast majority of local authorities of all political persuasions in Wales do not agree with him. No more did they agree in July 1979 when the former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), said:

"We will sweep away tiresome and excessive control over local government. They do not need, they do not want, the fussy supervision of detail that now exists."

Over the past 15 years, almost 150 Acts have taken away the powers and responsibilities of local authorities, and Wales is now the most centralised and the least democratic part of the European Union.

My hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) and for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) and the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) all said that, in their respective areas, the system of standard spending assessments had broken down. The formula on which the SSAs are based has also broken down. The Audit Commission said exactly the same thing when it stated that SSAs were used for capping, not for grant distribution. The Select Committee on the Environment recently said that the SSA formula was oversimplified and based on outdated information and did not take into account long-term unemployment and chronic ill health, both of which are extremely important factors in Wales.

What happened last year? We had the spectacle of the Secretary of State for Wales standing at the Dispatch Box wanting to cap Aberconwy council, of all councils. It is a small authority which has hardly been regarded as profligate and has nothing to hide. Capping is not only unfair but undermines democracy and does not work. Experts from the London School of Economics tell us that capping has led to higher spending because councils spend to their capping limit.

In June 1993, when he was quite new to his present responsibilities, the Secretary of State for Wales said:

"I believe that we have a good system".

He said that he was

"proud to inherit the Welsh model."—[*Official Report*, 23 June 1993; Vol. 227, c. 418.]

I have to tell him that the Welsh model existed until about a year ago. Successive Secretaries of State for Wales—the former right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) and the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt)—said that they would not publish the criteria for capping. Since the right hon. Member for Wokingham has been Secretary of State for Wales, we have had slavishly to follow the English example on capping.

Some hon. Members have asked whether the Council of Welsh Districts is good at providing briefing information. I am sure that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor will join the council in congratulating the Secretary of State on overcoming the wild variations in SSAs about which it complained for a number of years. I suppose that the council is right in some aspects of its briefing.

Eighty per cent. of districts will still have problems in setting their budgets and gearing is still a great problem: a 2·1 per cent. increase in spending will mean an increase of 11·3 per cent. in the council tax in Wales. Some of my hon. Friends have mentioned the impact on district councils. Homelessness in Wales has increased in the past 12 months by 10 per cent., but, despite what the Secretary of State said, the capital available to local authorities to spend on housing has been cut by £10 million. That is why the district councils say that the settlement is inadequate for the provision of public sector housing.

Reference has also been made to taxes. Conservative Members said that it was important that taxes were increased in order to help the economy. Taxes are certainly going up in Wales, even though the Government are supposed to be anti-tax. For example, the cost of rent rebates will now have to be borne wholly by the local

[Mr. Paul Murphy]

authorities, which will mean a significant increase in council house rents in the next financial year. At the same time, the Secretary of State has told Welsh housing associations that they face a cut of 9 per cent. in their grant. They now have the lowest grant since their inception in Wales.

The chairman of Tai Cymru has written to tell housing associations that he does not want rents to be increased, but how can it be avoided when the grant has been cut by 9 per cent? Ultimately, the cuts mean that the Government and the Secretary of State are unaware of how important it is to have a viable public rented sector in the Principality in order to do something about the 80,000 people who are on council house waiting lists in north and south Wales.

The biggest blow has been to the county councils. We heard about the impact of cuts on county councils from my hon. Friends the Members for Newport, East, for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), for Clwyd, South-West and for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). Mid Glamorgan will have to make cuts of £15 million which, by any standard or measurement of deprivation, will mean cuts in public services. Gwynedd has to cut between £2 million and £3 million; South Glamorgan is cutting nearly £1 million off social services and £500,000 off highways; and in Gwent, the 1·6 per cent. increase must cover pay, inflation and capital development.

The worst effect on counties, as many of my hon. Friends have said, is the impact on the police service and on education. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend spoke about the importance of considering the formulae for the police. The Home Office has already said that, for every police authority in England and Wales, it expects a 5·5 per cent. increase in expenditure to maintain the forces of law and order in England and Wales. How can police authorities increase their expenditure to that extent when the Secretary of State for Wales is saying that county councils can increase spending by only 1·75 per cent? It is impossible for those figures to match; as a result, there will be a reduction in the services provided by our police authorities throughout the Principality.

In education, we shall find that there is insufficient money to pay for the 2·9 per cent teachers' pay award. It will mean that that award will be paid for with other teachers' jobs, with larger classes and a reduced education service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West rightly spoke about Clwyd. A cut of £6 million to £7 million has to be made in the education service for north-east Wales. Cuts are taking place in South Glamorgan, Gwent and Dyfed. As the chairman of the local education authorities' employing body recently said:

"The real problem for local education authorities is the crippling financial limits imposed by this Government",

and nowhere is that truer than in Wales.

The Welsh Office claims that the average council tax will be about £280. All its claims that we have heard in the Chamber in rate support grant debates over the years have proved to be wrong. We believe that the council tax is much more likely to reach about £350. Part of the reason for that is that local government has had to grapple with a system of finance that has changed more dramatically in seven years than it has done in seven centuries. Another part of the reason is that councillors in Wales are still genuinely attempting to preserve our schools, to safeguard our communities, to maintain law and order, to house the homeless and to improve the quality of life of the people whom we represent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly said that our councils have experienced constant underfunding of vital services for 15 years. The cumulative effect of all that is affecting and endangering the fabric of Welsh society.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman keeps speaking about underfunding, and he mentioned South Glamorgan county council. Will he therefore explain to the House how the chairman of South Glamorgan county council can put advertisements, with large photographs of himself, costing £500 a time, in the *Western Mail* and the *South Wales Echo*, wishing the readers a happy new year and a happy Christmas?

Mr. Murphy: The good people of South Glamorgan need to have some good will in their lives around Christmas time and I think that that is the only good news they have. Last year, for example, they had to cut their music departments, they had to cut their outdoor pursuits departments and they had to witness the spectable of their discretionary grant system being cut altogether. I could describe a litany of problems that South Glamorgan and other councils have had.

Mr. Sweeney *rose*——

Mr. Murphy: I will not give way.

If the hon. Gentleman can find only that example of what he would regard as reckless council spending, I am sorry for him. My hon. Friends the Members for Swansea, East, for Caerphilly, for Newport, East and others have pointed to the real problems of government in Wales, not what the hon. Gentleman has just been talking about. They mentioned the shame of the fact that we have to witness democratically elected Welsh councils being starved of funds year after year, while unaccountable and appointed quangos are responsible for nearly £2·5 billion in the Principality.

Worse, some of those organisations fritter away thousands of pounds—much more than the cost of the so-called photograph that the hon. Gentleman spoke about. Let him read the report of the Public Accounts Committee to see what it has revealed of the squandering of public funds—Welsh money—by those quangos in the past few months alone. They get little more than a mild rebuke from the Secretary of State.

What happens to our local authorities? They have to face the most savage capping restrictions and the inevitable suspicion that goes with them. Is it any wonder that the people of Wales now regard our system of government as potentially rotten and distinctly unwholesome? For that reason alone, I urge the House to vote down these measures.

10.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): It would be desirable if I could come to the Dispatch Box now and say that we have had a good, constructive and worthwhile debate this evening. I noticed that the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) began his lengthy summing-up by referring to what I think he would want to describe as the wealth of

local government experience on the Opposition Benches. But did that contribute to ordered, constructive debate? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] No.

All we have had from the Opposition Benches tonight is a bunch of uncosted wish lists. Possibly one of the lengthiest came from the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). The one point on which I would find myself in agreement with the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) is in his description of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery as a Johnny-come-lately. Perhaps he has just rushed in from the robing room, as described in the *Western Mail* yesterday. He had a list that managed to cover practically every service of local government.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) referred to education services, and the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) to forensic services. We have had a parade of hon. Members wanting to give the impression that they supported the police, that they wanted to support more money for the South Wales police authority: the hon. Members for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), for Caerphilly, for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), for Torfaen and for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths).

I welcomed the contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) and for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), who referred to the reality of the budget of the South Wales police authority. I understand that the authority is studying a report by the district auditor on its financial arrangements. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already made clear, police funding is a matter for the police authority and its constituent local authorities, and I see that the South Wales police are already taking the steps that they see fit to resolve the budget problem.

The wish lists carried on. The hon. Member for Bridgend brought in the need to spend on roads in Porthcawl. He seemed especially stunned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pursuing him into Porthcawl today, but he felt the need to mention it in *Hansard* tonight. An equally lengthy list came from the hon. Member for Caerphilly. He was concerned about pay increases. That was matched by a number of hon. Gentlemen who alluded to the teachers' pay settlement. They referred to the cost of the settlement, but at no time have I heard any of them say that the teachers' pay increase was justified. I wonder why some of them are here as representatives of teachers' unions.

Surprisingly, the hon. Member for Caerphilly volunteered one figure among the almost total lack of costings that we have been given tonight. He quoted the county councils as saying that they wanted to spend another £40 million on care in the community. Generally, the hon. Gentleman in his lament about insufficient money for local government was also concerned about the alleged loss of independence for local government.

Interestingly, in that the hon. Gentleman was echoed by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn, who made a plea for more power for Welsh councils. That is odd coming from the party that we would all identify as the devolutionary party, Plaid Cymru. He would effectively take powers away from the people and give them back to councils instead. He would take the power away from parents to have more influence and control over what happens in their schools. Presumably, he would take power away from council tenants so that they would have less control over housing, and the control would be given back to local authorities.

I can at least acknowledge the contribution of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) who echoed the fact that community care was yet another example of the practical devolution that we have introduced, giving opportunities to local government to take that forward.

Perhaps the nutshell of today's debate was supplied by the contribution by the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes). He wanted more spending here and more spending there, with more spending on housing, but he preceded these comments by voicing his regret at extra taxation. The hon. Member for Caerphilly presented us with the same dichotomy. He wanted more spending but was not, so he said, in favour of more taxation.

I think that all hon. Members will have noticed that, when my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly, he received no answer from him about costings and how the extra expenditure would be met by the Labour party. On local government spending, as with every other sort of spending, the Labour party will not come clean, just as it did not come clean at the last general election. The Labour party is already showing that it will not come clean at the next general election.

Perhaps most worrying to many of us were the wild, sweeping statements of the hon. Member for Caerphilly. It was incredible that he appeared to equate the South Wales police authority with Westminster city council. Members of the Labour party rushed to judge Westminster city council, and the hon. Member gave the clearest impression that he applies the same judgment to members of the South Wales police authority. What confidence can any Labour member of that authority have in the man who is supposed to be Labour's shadow Secretary of State for Wales?

The hon. Member for Caerphilly made allegations about the endemic corruption in public life in Wales, and once more alluded to sleaze. It is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder—sleaze must be in the eye of the sleazy. People such as the hon. Gentleman should realise the damage that they do and the way that they demoralise all those working in public service in Wales. It is true that there have been some failings in public service in Wales, none of which should be ignored. Such failings should be pursued as firmly as possible. The firmest line has been taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Above all, when maintaining a proper balance, one cannot ignore the wilful damage that such people do to Wales. There are many fine people in public service in Wales who do fine work, but the Labour party smears them all with the same brush.

In his opening speech my right hon. Friend emphasised the Government's commitment to local government, and the facts speak for themselves. Even at a time of necessary restraint in public expenditure, the settlement proposals before the House increase the resources available to local government by more than £100 million or 4·2 per cent. —well ahead of inflation. Since 1990-91, the level of revenue resources has increased by 27 per cent.—if the functional changes are taken into account, the increase is well over 30 per cent. The amount of money that we are making available for care in the community will more than double.

Local authorities must budget within their means and those of the taxpayers they serve. Local government is not

[Mr. Gwilym Jones]

being singled out—it is the duty of all organisations that spend taxpayers' money to exercise prudence and restraint in their spending. That is vital if we are to maintain the momentum of economic recovery and build for the future.

I have confidence in the ability and willingness of local government in Wales to act responsibly. It is to be hoped that even the Labour councils will take forward the settlement with far more confidence than has been displayed among the Opposition tonight. I am sure that local government in Wales will do so.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 303, Noes 269.

Division No. 127] **[10.28 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*

Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Local Government Finance (Amendment) Report (Wales) 1993-94 (House of Commons Paper No. 169), which was laid before this House on 31st January, be approved.

Motion made, and Question put,

That the Local Government Finance Report (Wales) 1994-95 (House of Commons Paper No. 168), which was laid before this House on 31st January, be approved.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

The House divided: Ayes 292, Noes 178.

Division No. 128] **[10.43 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alton, David
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Terry Lewis.

Question accordingly agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 21 February, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Michael Lennon

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

10.56 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I wish to introduce a short debate on the case of Mr. Michael Lennon, the nephew of a constituent of mine, Mrs. Clair Palmer.

Michael Lennon, who is in his late twenties, is a Jamaican citizen in full-time employment and lives in Jamaica with his two children. Mrs. Palmer invited Michael to stay with her and her husband and family in Bradford for Christmas and the new year. She arranged for him to come on a special Air UK charter flight, which offered seats about £150 cheaper than those on scheduled or regular charter flights. The flight—ULE 966—arrived at Gatwick on 21 December four hours late.

We now know that, on landing, it was sent by immigration to stand 21, which has a closed lounge. Immigration officers boarded the plane. British and European Communities passport holders were allowed to leave the aircraft. Jamaican passport holders were not allowed to leave for some hours. Anxious relatives and friends waiting were told that the delay was due to a baggage handling dispute. Eventually, Jamaican passport holders were taken off the plane in small groups.

Large numbers of officials were on duty at Gatwick that day—114 immigration officers, 93 Customs and Excise officers and 15 police officers. Each passenger was interviewed. Some were interviewed a second time after a long delay—in some cases, lasting hours. One woman, four months pregnant with a visa issued by the British high commission in Jamaica entitling her to settle in Britain, waited 11 hours to be interviewed and admitted.

Michael Lennon was interviewed. He was also strip-searched, as were two other passengers, including one woman. No illegal substances were found on anybody. Indeed, no illegal substance was found on any passenger on four Caribbean flights that arrived at Gatwick on 21 December. A small quantity of herbal cannabis was found by police on one person when he was placed in a police cell late on 21 December.

Michael Lennon, together with other passengers from his flight, including 14 children under 16, were refused entry to Britain. Four of those children were travelling unaccompanied.

[Mr. Max Madden]

Several requests that I made over the next three days for Michael Lennon to be granted temporary admission so that he could go back to Jamaica on a booked return flight on 17 January were rejected. I spent hours on the telephone with Home Office officials, immigration officers and other officials. I was told that temporary admission was refused because officials could not be confident that Mr. Lennon would abide by the terms of any temporary admission. Their only evidence was that he was carrying a letter which suggested that he, rather than his aunt, had suggested the holiday and that he knew a young woman who had gone to Gatwick to meet him.

Who suggested the holiday seems to me to be wholly irrelevant. The young woman vigorously denied ever having met Michael Lennon, still less having any relationship with him. She had to take a photograph of Mr. Lennon to Gatwick to enable her to identify him. She was there to meet him only because Mrs. Palmer, a close friend of the young woman's deceased mother, was too ill to travel by road from Bradford to Gatwick.

I was told that Michael Lennon and another 26 Jamaican citizens refused entry would be returned to Jamaica in early January. The Home Office, desperately concerned that passengers refused entry might use solicitors to obtain applications for judicial review, bundled them out of Britain in extreme secrecy on Christmas night. Television cameras and reporters were prevented from witnessing the special charter which included 10 Group 4 staff at a cost of £126,000.

Flight ULE 966 was targeted. It was met by an unusually large number of officials. Special arrangements were made for interviewing the passengers and an unusually large number of passengers were refused entry, detained and deported.

A week before that flight, another charter flight, BA 1262/KT 310 from Jamaica to Gatwick, arriving on 16 December received the same special treatment; 38 passengers were refused entry, 33 of whom were deported.

The Air UK charter was warned to expect the same special treatment. In a bid to avoid such problems, contact was made with the immigration service at senior level at Gatwick airport. An offer was made to take two immigration officers to Jamaica without cost to check on passengers. The offer was refused by the immigration service, again at senior level. Other discussions were inconclusive. Eventually, immigration at Gatwick was supplied with a passenger list for the Air UK flight several hours before th plane landed. It is believed that the delay in the plane landing was due to passengers being checked against the Home Office computer records.

I should like to ask the Minister some questions of which I gave him notice. First, what were the ages of the unaccompanied children who arrived at Gatwick on flight ULE 966 who were removed from the United Kingdom to Jamaica? Secondly, did Ministers authorise the refusal of the offer to take British immigration officers to Jamaica to pre-check the travel documents of passengers before they boarded the flight? Thirdly, did Ministers authorise the unorthodox procedure whereby passenger lists on flight ULE 966 were checked on the computer before the flight arrived at Gatwick? What procedures are used at Gatwick and other points of entry to count and check visitors leaving the United Kingdom at or before the expiry of their leave to enter?

Did Ministers authorise any agencies at Gatwick, including the immigration service, to give the media information about Jamaican citizens leaving the United Kingdom; about Jamaican citizens, given temporary admission to the United Kingdom, failing to leave the United Kingdom or absconding; and about Jamaican citizens given leave to enter the United Kingdom for up to six months? What was the total cost of removing, detaining and escorting Jamaican citizens who arrived on flights BA 1262/KT 310 and ULE 966? Is there a dispute between the Home Office and the carrier, agent or tour operators over the defraying of all or part of the total costs, and what are the costs currently outstanding?

Why were so many passengers refused entry to Britain? The Minister and Home Office officials constantly told the media that it was because some had tried to enter Britain before, either to live here or to visit. In fact, only 10 passengers came into that category; four of those were allowed to enter the United Kingdom for up to six months. Leaks to the media suggested that many of the passengers were "yardies", violent criminals or drug dealers. I was assured that Mr. Lennon had no criminal convictions in Jamaica, or links with any known criminals here.

In a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) dated 12 January, the Minister said that all the passengers on flight ULE 966 who were refused entry were refused for immigration reasons; there was no substantive evidence that any of them were known criminals.

The whole incident attracted massive public attention and considerable media coverage. *The Guardian* and *The Times* published extremely critical editorials; more surprising was an editorial that appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on 28 December. Under the heading "Race relations fiasco", it thundered:

> "Immigration regulations were tightened this year in the Asylum and Immigration Appeal Act. Those like ourselves who supported a measure designed to cut down the abuse of refugee status will be alarmed to see it being used to inflict inconvenience, humiliation or worse on foreign citizens lawfully visiting friends and family in Britain for Christmas. The signals this sends out are all the wrong ones—that people of Jamaican origin living in Britain are suspect, that the abuse of their rights is acceptable, and that officialdom may single them out for unfair treatment with impunity (would white American tourists have been subjected to such a battery of indignities as this?)."

I believe that this was indeed a race relations fiasco: that is extremely clear from all the evidence that has been provided. I have asked more than 50 parliamentary questions about the incident, but obtaining information has been like drawing teeth. It is clear that this was a fiasco, and that it was targeted.

If immigration officers who planned the special operation to receive flight ULE 966 over days did not seek Ministers' approval, why are those officers still in place? If Ministers did approve the operation, why have they so far not seen fit to utter a word of apology to anyone—still less to consider their own positions?

That incident damaged relations between the British Afro-Caribbean community and the authorities. It undoubtedly gravely damaged the reputation of Britain as a tourist centre. The message being sent out to many black and Asian people is that they are not welcome in the country. The message to black and Asian people living in the country was that they were not entitled to have their

relatives or friends visit them for a brief holiday. Undoubtedly, it also gravely damaged the perception of our immigration policy as firm and fair, which the Minister does not lose any opportunity to state.

I hope that the Minister will give a full and clear explanation of why so many of those passengers were refused entry to Britain, were detained and were deported. He has even refused in his answers to parliamentary questions to name the passengers concerned. The explanations that we have received have been extremely misleading and certainly do not give any clear or concise reason why those people were refused entry. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us for the first time why so many of those passengers were refused entry and why they were deported back to Jamaica on Christmas day.

11.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on his success in securing the debate. I know that he has tried repeatedly over the past several weeks to obtain an Adjournment debate and I am glad that his persistence has been rewarded. I shall seek in the next few minutes to answer the questions of which he gave me notice. There are one or two other points to which I shall turn straight away.

As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate on reflection, visas are not required from Jamaica. I am sure that he was referring to prior entry clearance. All the police at Gatwick were on standard security duties at the airport. No police were there in connection with that flight specifically. The hon. Gentleman also referred to judicial review. He will be aware that although an application for judicial review has to be lodged in Britain, it can, of course, be pursued from outside the country.

Michael Lennon arrived, as the hon. Gentleman said, on charter flight ULE 966 at Gatwick on 21 December and was refused entry. It is right to make it clear from the outset that flight ULE 966 was not one of the regular scheduled flights at Gatwick, which are normally handled without any difficulty. I made that point to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) when I wrote to him on 12 January, a matter to which the hon. Member for Bradford, West referred. I wrote in some detail about what happened on that occasion. A copy of that letter has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses, so it is probably unnecessary for me to cover that ground again.

None the less, there are a few points which I ought to make. The hon. Gentleman has asked specific questions, to which I shall try to respond. There has been speculation that the flight has been targeted, as the hon. Gentlman has mentioned time and again, because all those on board were in some way under suspicion. That was not the case. Arrangements were made to deal with the flights separately from the main immigration control, but that does not mean that some kind of special operation was mounted because those on board were somehow under mass suspicion.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Why?

Mr. Wardle: I shall seek to expand on that point. In that case, the immigration service had advance information, including information from the carrier and the charter company, which led it to believe that more passengers would require a detailed interview than would be the case with a regular scheduled flight.

The airline approached the immigration service about the flight a few days before its arrival and inquired whether there might be problems in clearing the 300 or so expected passengers. It asked whether arrangements could be made to clear the flight in Kingston. It was informed that that would not be possible. There are no standing arrangements for the immigration service to operate controls overseas. Even if such an arrangement had been thought desirable, it would not have been possible to conclude the necessary agreement with the Jamaican authorities in the short time available.

The proposal was not practicable in the circumstances. The decision was not authorised by Ministers and did not need such authorisation. The hon. Gentleman was incorrect in referring to the check of the passenger manifest on flight ULE 966 as unorthodox. Such checks are sometimes carried out and they do not require ministerial authority.

There were 326 passengers on board flight ULE 966. Information from the airline as well as from the tour operator several days before the flight's arrival revealed that tickets had been on sale at heavily discounted prices. A similar charter flight operated by another company had arrived at Gatwick on 15 December. It had been handled in the usual way without any advance preparation. About 100 passengers had required a full interview and more than 30 had been refused entry.

An additional factor is that Gatwick is usually very busy in the week leading up to Christmas. In case a similar number of passengers to that on the previous flight needed further examination, it seemed a sensible precaution to set aside a separate area in order not to delay other arriving passengers. Arrangements were therefore made for the disembarkation and reception of passengers from flight ULE 966 so that, if the need arose, a potentially large number of interviews could be conducted quickly and in an orderly way.

The arrangements included the provision of a gate lounge in which passengers could sit while awaiting an interview and the provision of additional immigration officers. Neither Mr. Lennon nor any of the other 300 or so people who were on flight ULE 966 came under suspicion just because they were arriving on that flight. That is not the way in which we operate immigration control.

People seeking entry must, of course, satisfy the immigration officer that they qualify for entry under the immigration rules. These provide that a passenger seeking entry as a visitor, including one coming to stay with relatives or friends, will be admitted if he satisfies the immigration officer that he is genuinely seeking entry for the period of the visit as stated by him and that for that period he will maintain and accommodate himself and any dependants, or will, with any dependants, be maintained and accommodated adequately by relatives or friends without working or having recourse to public funds, and can meet the cost of the return or onward journey. In all cases, entry will be refused if the immigration officer is not so satisfied.

Each person is interviewed individually and the decision whether to grant entry is taken on the individual facts and merits of the case. Entry can be refused only on the authority of a chief immigration officer or inspector. Passengers on this particular flight were dealt with under precisely those criteria and procedures. The result was that a high proportion of them were questioned in detail and 68 have been refused entry, mostly because they did not satisfy the immigration officers that they were genuine

[Mr. Wardle]

visitors. Mr. Lennon was one such passenger. A few were refused entry because they sought settlement without the necessary clearance.

Four children who arrived on flight ULE 966 were returned unaccompanied. Two were aged 11, one 12 and one 16. In each case, their family in the United Kingdom were informed of the removal directions which enabled reception arrangements to be made in Jamaica.

As reported in column *872* of *Hansard*, I explained on 3 February that detention costs were still being calculated. That is still the case. Discussions are taking place between the Home Office and the carrier about the costs of removal and the extent of the carrier's liability under schedule 2(8) to the Immigration Act 1971.

No Ministers or officials authorised any agency at Gatwick to give the media information about Jamaican citizens leaving or failing to leave the United Kingdom. Information was given by the Home Office press office in response to inquiries. With the exception of the channel ports, embarkation controls operate at all air and sea ports.

The facts of Mr. Lennon's case are that he sought entry as a visitor until 17 January 1994 in order to visit his aunt, Mrs. Palmer, who, I understand, is a constituent of the hon. Member for Bradford, West. Mr. Lennon had no funds of his own but had a ticket booked for the return leg of the charter flight on 17 January. He said that the ticket had been brought for him by his aunt whom he had not seen for many years.

Mr. Lennon described himself as a carpenter but said that he had been unable to find any steady carpentry work. For that reason, he worked as a casual farm labourer, earning the equivalent of about £25 a week. He lived with his girl friend and their two children. He said that he knew no one here apart from Mrs. Palmer, although he was aware that he had an uncle in this country whose whereabouts were unknown to him. As it happened, Mrs. Palmer was not able to go to Gatwick to meet her nephew—I understand that she was ill—but a Ms Edwards went on her behalf. She was described by Mrs. Palmer as a friend of the family who knew Mr. Lennon, whom she had met in Jamaica about year earlier while she was there on a visit.

The hon. Gentleman will no doubt recall, from his contact with my private office at the time, that Mr. Lennon's aunt had also said that she had invited him at his suggestion, whereas Mr. Lennon had said that his aunt had invited him on her own initiative.

In reaching the decision, the immigration officer assessed Mr. Lennon's application carefully in the light of all the information and, looking at all the circumstances, was not satisfied that Mr. Lennon intended to stay only for a visit for four weeks. The decision to refuse entry was taken after reference to a chief immigration officer.

The hon. Gentleman will know that the decision was reviewed again following his representations. The immigration service considered that they did not contain any new information that would justify reversing the decision already taken. There was no other reason for that decision. There was no underlying suspicion of Mr. Lennon having been involved in any criminal activity.

There has been some general speculation in the media about "criminal elements" on the flight. I can confirm, therefore, that none of the people who were refused entry were refused because of their personal undesirability on account of criminal activity.

The hon. Gentleman has referred also to Mr. Lennon having been personally searched. I understand that Her Majesty's Customs and Excise searched Mr. Lennon but did not find any illegal substance on him. That search was not at the request of the immigration service, which has powers to search for documents only.

Mr. Lennon was detained until his return to Jamaica on 25 December. Detention powers are not used lightly. A passenger who is refused entry will be detained only where an immigration officer is not satisfied that the person concerned will comply with the terms or conditions attached to any temporary admission. Where someone is detained, removal is arranged as quickly as possible to keep detention to a minimum.

The immigration service was not satisfied, in Mr. Lennon's case, that he would comply with any conditions. The uncertainty about the strength of his connection with Mrs. Palmer was a relevant factor in that. The decision was also reviewed in the light of the hon. Gentleman's request for Mr. Lennon's release, but it was felt that detention should be maintained. The hon. Gentleman will also know that I reviewed the case myself and could find no exceptional or compelling circumstances which would have justified my intervention.

I have set out in some detail the individual circumstances of Mr. Lennon's case. I should, however, like to make it clear that neither that case nor the cases of the other people who were refused entry from that flight should be taken as a signal of any change in the Government's policy. We remain committed to firm but fair immigration control. Genuine visitors are always welcome, and will continue to be welcomed. Those people who do not satisfy the immigration officer that they will leave at the end of their stay will be refused entry. That is a long-established principle.

We have estimated that about 100 visitors who might have been expected to leave on the return leg did not do so. We have, of course, made it quite plain that those people accepted as visitors from the incoming flight but who do not leave on the return leg are not necessarily here unlawfully. People can, and do, change their mind about the time that they will stay. Many will no doubt leave on other flights. It must be said, however, that, given the indications recorded on arrival that so many intended to leave on 17 January, fewer people than might have been expected to do so actually left on the return flight.

Of those people refused entry, 57 have left. Out of 10 people who are still here, seven are here unlawfully. The cases of the three others, all children, are being reviewed. One other passenger from the flight absconded before interview and is therefore also considered to be here unlawfully.

None of that is a precursor to the introduction of a visa regime for citizens of Jamaica. Naturally, we encourage people to apply for entry clearance before they set out so that their eligibility for admission can be determined in advance, but we have no plans to introduce compulsory visas for Jamaican nationals. The European Commission has tabled proposals for a common visa list under the treaty of European Union, as the hon. Gentleman knows. That is for discussion among the 12 member states. At present, it would require unanimous agreement in order to take effect. From 1996, a qualified majority vote will suffice.

Most people, including Jamaican citizens, pass through our controls quickly after only a brief interview and, as I have said, scheduled flights from Jamaica are normally cleared without any difficulty or delay. About 26,000 Jamaicans came here in 1992, but about 400 only were denied entry and returned.

We have discussed the events of December with representative bodies. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I have met the West Indian Standing Conference, as has the director (ports) of the immigration service. I have also received a delegation, led by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), representative of the community; a member of the Jamaican high commission was there, too. The director has also discussed the events with a group drawn from the Caribbean Churches. The British high commission in Kingston has had discussions with the Jamaican Government and has met representatives of the travel companies involved in the flight.

More generally, the immigration service has developed good contacts with interested groups representing the Caribbean community in this country, including the Caribbean high commissions. That has led to visits to ports to observe our immigration controls at first hand. I believe that such contacts are well worth while in improving relations and dispelling misconceptions. They also provide access to named individual managers within the immigration service with whom any problems arising in particular cases can be discussed. I am most grateful to the high commissions which regularly send representatives to address immigration officer training courses.

I therefore hope that the hon. Member for Bradford, West can feel rather more assured in the light of what I have said this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 16 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

Environment

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

1. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what improvement in quality of service has been seen in councils since the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): Independent research by the university of Birmingham has shown that authorities' CCT contracts have ensured better monitoring and better delivery of services. Costs are on average 7 per cent. less than before, and up to 20 per cent. less for some services.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend's reply. Is he aware that compulsory competitive tendering breaks up the cosy relationship between some local authorities and trade unions, particularly those local authorities that run direct services organisations? Is not that really why Labour Members are fearful of fair competition?

Mr. Baldry: If one wants evidence of that cosy relationship, one need look no further that this week's *Municipal Journal*. On one page, we discover that the GMB persuaded the Labour-controlled Lancashire county council to rethink its decision to award to outside contractors 19 contracts, which had been won fairly on competitive tender. If we want to know why that has happened, we have only to look on the opposite page, where we discover that the same union will be giving some £250,000 to help the Labour party to fight elections. That is the clearest possible example of a trade union buying influence. The Labour party is clearly in the pocket of the very union that does not want competitive tendering.

Mr. Henderson: I declare an interest, as a member of the GMB. Are not many thousands of GMB and other trade union members employed by local authorities on very low wages? Have not the cost savings made through CCT often been at the expense of the wages of those low-paid people and, on other occasions, resulted in the quality of services suffering?

Does the Minister recognise that the transfer of jobs from the public sector, where the Department of the Environment has responsibility, to contractors raises pensions questions? Will he confirm that contractors themselves have asked for clarification on that? Does he accept that, when jobs are transferred from local authorities to contractors, any system that is fair should include the fair transfer of pension arrangements and that local authorities and contractors should be obliged to honour those arrangements?

Mr. Baldry: I notice that the hon. Gentleman acknowledges being sponsored by the GMB, but does not have the good grace to acknowledge that the GMB is seeking to persuade the Labour party, with a substantial contribution of funds, to go back on competitive tendering.

As to the hon. Gentleman's point about the effectiveness of competitive tendering, all the research shows that performance has been better monitored, productivity has been improved, staff are better managed and motivated and morale is higher as a consequence of CCT. That independent research has been carried out by the institute of local government management in the university of Birmingham, and Opposition Members do not like it, just as they do not like the advice on pensions given by Dr. Elias and others. We will, of course, look carefully at those points.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that, despite what the Opposition have said, my local council, Waltham Forest, has consistently failed to make the extra effort over CCT? The council's direct services organisation was hugely in debt and failed to collect the outstanding bills, and that led to a reduced service for the public. Was not that directly as a result of a political decision by the council to drag its heels over the matter?

Mr. Baldry: All the evidence shows that competitive tendering brings substantial savings to local people and improves the quality of service. It is a sad reflection that far too many local authorities still resist introducing competitive tendering, often at the behest of the local trade unions. Local authorities must decide whose interests they serve—those of local people or those of local trade unionists.

Local Government (Fraud and Corruption)

2. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further representations he has received concerning fraud and corruption in local government.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): From time to time, there are allegations about fraud and corruption which are pursued by the proper authorities. Fraud and corruption are always to be condemned.

Mr. Heppell: Will the Minister confirm the view that has already been expressed by the Government spokesperson in another place that John Magill, the district auditor in the Westminster homes for votes scandal, acted correctly and followed procedures to the letter? Will he join me and others in condemning Westminster Tories who are using the tragic death of Dr. Michael Dutt to try to discredit the district auditor's report?

Mr. Curry: The position is extremely clear and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not know it. The auditor acted perfectly properly, but the conclusions that he has come to are preliminary conclusions, which have not been subject to any trial or adjudication by a court. Clearly,

there is a procedure that will decide whether those conclusions were well founded. At that point, people can form their judgment. It is wrong to do so before.

Mr. Bates: Is my hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey), speaking of Lambeth council, was reported in *The Times* on 23 January 1993 as saying:

"the whole place is falling to bits with corruption"?

Mr. Curry: I know that the hon. Lady is an extremely assiduous Member for her constituency. She is clearly in a much better position to make judgments than the rest of us.

Mr. Betts: Is not it time that Ministers stopped condemning Labour authorities when only vague allegations have been made about their conduct, and addressed the real problems in authorities such as Westminster? Will the Minister tell us what his Department knew about the cash incentive scheme in Westminster? Was not that scheme approved by his Department? Were not the subsidies for that scheme paid by his Department? Was not the monitoring of the scheme carried out by his Department? Did not the Department undertake a comprehensive review of the scheme, which showed precisely what was happening? Is not it time that the Government came clean and not merely criticised what Westminster council did but owned up to their responsibility in that sordid matter?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman's introduction was revealing. He asked whether it was not time that we did not look at Labour councils. I say that we should look at all councils where there are allegations of corruption, no matter what political colour they are. We have a common interest in stopping corruption and sorting it out wherever it is found, irrespective of what council it is. We should create a clear distinction between allegations and what is found to be true. When allegations have been proven, we have a common interest in seeking probity in local government, irrespective of what council is involved.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Is my hon. Friend aware that in addition to the allegations of corruption and fraud in Labour-controlled Monklands, Lambeth and Haringey, the ex-deputy leader of Labour-controlled Derbyshire county council is currently serving a prison sentence for defrauding the council by fiddling his expenses?

Mr. Curry: My understanding is that the gentleman has appealed against his sentence. He is alleged to be conducting council business from his cell in the mean time, and is receiving the allowances that go with those responsibilities. I should have thought that it might be slightly more prudent for those allowances to be held and paid if he is proved not guilty, rather than being paid during the period of his appeal.

Mr. Straw: Is the Minister aware that, on top of the systematic corruption and gerrymandering exposed in Westminster, there is a rising tide of reports of official corruption investigations in one Conservative district council after another, the latest being in South Oxfordshire, Hertsmere and Mid Bedfordshire? Is not it because the abuse of power by many sections of the Conservative party is so extensive that, in addition to what some Members of Parliament have said, the former Lord Chancellor and ostensible upholder of the rule of law, Lord Hailsham, issued a most disgraceful attack in another place on the integrity and independence of the district auditor? Is not it the case that, in the eyes of some Conservatives, the independence of the judicial process ends where Conservative sleaze and corruption begin?

Mr. Curry: What the former Lord Chancellor said is perfectly clear. He said that many people were acting as if the auditor's report were proven fact and those people mentioned in it had been condemned in a court of law. He said that that was not the case and that the reports contained the preliminary findings, which have to be verified. I see absolutely nothing wrong with that.

If the hon. Gentleman wishes to swap councils across the Dispatch Box, then anyone can play that game. We have a common interest in ensuring that we have a system of local government that people respect and that is conducted on the basis of probity. If the hon. Gentleman wishes simply to drag us into a mud-slinging contest on that subject let him go for it because I am happy to sling with everyone else, but it will not do any good to the electorate, to local government or to those who aspire to public service.

Rent-to-mortgage Scheme

3. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what uptake he expects of the rent-to-mortgage scheme.

The Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction (Sir George Young): The early response to the scheme has been encouraging, although it is as yet too early to say how many of the 1.5 million tenants who are eligible will take advantage of it.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his considered reply. Does not the success of the scheme depend on the level of interest shown in it? Had the Opposition parties been in power, what level of interest would there have been?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend rightly points out that the scheme is of interest to 1.5 million local authority tenants who would not have the choice that is now available to them had we listened to Opposition Members. I hope that all hon. Members will bring to the attention of their local authority tenants the potential of the rent-to-mortgage scheme, which will be of interest to the 1.5 million local authority tenants who are paying their rents in full.

Mr. Soley: Does the Minister remember just before the last general election accepting a mortgage-to-rent scheme that I proposed, at least in part? The then Chancellor of the Exchequer, supported by the Minister, said that the scheme would save thousands of people from being repossessed and going into bed-and-breakfast accommodation. That was therefore a similar sort of scheme. Why did the Government say before the election that they would save thousands of those families, but fail to do anything afterwards?

Sir George Young: That is a good example of Opposition Back Benchers implying that the Labour party is committed to substantial public expenditure when they know perfectly well that Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen have distanced themselves from any such commitment.

The last figures were published in January and showed a welcome reduction in the number of repossessions and most forecasters agree that the figures will continue to fall.

Mr. Waterson: Is not the golden thread running through the rent-to-mortgage scheme, the right to buy council homes and leasehold enfranchisement that Conservative Members believe in people having control over their own lives? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that proposition has never been welcomed by Opposition Members?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend makes the point in his characteristically clear way. The Conservative party is interested in choice and in giving people the opportunity to make decisions about their lives. Opposition Members want to deny people that choice.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Before the Minister gets too enthralled by the golden thread of rents to mortgages, let me point out that, as he knows, many people who have bought under the right-to-buy scheme, to which the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) will later allude when he introduces his Assistance for Local Authority Leaseholders Bill, are finding it impossible to sell their homes or pay for the capital or service charges. Can he tell them when he will relieve them of the consequences of buying under the Government's scheme, before he puts other people in a similar position?

Sir George Young: As I think that the hon. Member will agree, most of those who bought flats from their local authorities did so with the benefit of substantial discounts, also benefited from the fall in interest rates and in no way regret the decision. A minority—

Mr. Battle: Seventy thousand.

Sir George Young: It is nowhere near 70,000. A minority of those who bought are having difficulty selling their flats. My Department is having discussions with the Council of Mortgage Lenders and the local authorities. We are encouraging some local authorities to follow the example of authorities such as Wandsworth, which gives mortgage indemnities to those who want to buy flats. I urge all local authorities to consider whether they have a role to play in proposing mortgage indemnity schemes—48 are doing so—or doing what the London borough of Enfield has done and buying the flats back.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Should not that excellent scheme now be extended to housing association tenants? Will my right hon. Friend look at the ways in which that could be done, despite the early opposition in another place to home purchase by tenants of housing associations?

Sir George Young: As my hon. Friend knows, housing association tenants do not have the opportunity to take up rent to mortgage, because housing associations use private finance to supplement their resources to build new homes. We have given those tenants opportunities to get access to home ownership by extending the tenants' incentive scheme, which gives them the cash sums that they need to purchase homes in the open market. To some extent, that is a broader choice, because it does not confine them to buying the home in which they currently live.

Water (Compulsory Metering)

4. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take in respect of the practice of charging for water by compulsory metering of the domestic water supply.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Robert Atkins): The basis for charging is a matter for each water company.

Ms Eagle: Yet another answer from the Government in which they say that something is not a matter for them. We have just heard a lot about choice from Ministers, yet water metering is rarely a matter of choice; in fact it is compulsory. Does the Minister agree that when water is compulsorily metered there is a vast increase in the size of bills? What will he say to my constituents, Mr. and Mrs. McGregor, who have seen their charge of £70 a year for water transformed into a charge of £144 for the first quarter —an increase of close to 700 per cent.—which they simply cannot pay?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Lady flies in the face of the facts that confront the average user of, say, electricity or of gas, which is metered and distributed on the basis of those who can afford to pay.

Mr. Enright: But sewage charges are not metered.

Mr. Atkins: If the hon. Gentleman were to be quiet for once, he might hear something to his advantage.

The hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) must understand, as I am sure that many people do, that if we are to be concerned about difficulties with water—for example, the demands for water that we have seen during drought periods in parts of England—we must understand that it is a commodity that may have to be treated in similar ways to others. I do not pretend to offer an absolute answer. Perhaps she would like to consult her Front Bench about the environmental concepts that she pretends to put forward in what, after all, is a point that does not have much validity.

Mr. Thomason: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not unreasonable for people to pay for what they use? Therefore, is not it right that subsidy should not be given when one bears in mind that, on average, with a metering system people will pay exactly the same? That point of elementary mathematics appears to have been misunderstood, or is incapable of appreciation, by Opposition Members.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is quite right. Opposition Members are not very good at mathematics. Although we should be tolerant of their foibles, the fact remains that, as is often the case with environmental issues, they say one thing here and another outside.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Minister must accept, however, that compulsory metering hits many households, especially large families with children and those with disabilities who need frequent bathing. If the Minister is worried about the environmental effects of drought, will he tell the water companies to do something about the 25 per cent. leakage of water, which is lost from the system and never gets to households? Does not he recognise that compulsory metering takes no account of human need, that it rations by price and discourages proper hygiene? Will he now ensure

that private water companies such as Anglian Water, which has already embarked on a programme of compulsory metering, are told to desist in no uncertain terms?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. The fact remains that gas and electricity, which are metered—

Ms Eagle: They are quite different.

Mr. Atkins: They are not quite different; they are comparable and those utilities are required by average families, who pay accordingly. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) knows as well as I do that those in need and the more vulnerable members of society are able to obtain help and support from benefit offices. There is no point in the hon. Gentleman standing at the Dispatch Box to suggest that metering is not on. There are alternative methods of payment, of which metering is one.

Water Charges

5. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of South West Water to discuss the basis of water charges.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend has not yet had the opportunity to meet the chairman of South West Water. I hope to do so shortly.

Mr. Nicholls: As and when my hon. Friend meets the chairman, I hope that he will take the opportunity to tell him about the indignation and anger that have been expressed during the past four years by hon. Members who represent the west country at the unsustainable level of water charges in the west country, which have continued to rise unabated. When does my hon. Friend expect the valuable initiatives taken in Europe to try to cope with those charges to bring about some decrease?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is one of my hon. Friends who have led many delegations to see Ministers, former ones and current ones, to discuss with us the problems of his constituents. I know that he will understand that we are doing all that we possibly can to alleviate the pressures on South West Water and on my hon. Friend's constituents. What is apparent, from what my hon. Friend knows and from what he and his colleagues have said to my right hon. Friend and to me, is that Opposition Members believe that we should implement directives on quality in some areas but are not prepared to listen to the concerns so adequately and properly represented by my hon. Friend and others on behalf of their constituents about those increases in charges.

Mr. Jamieson: Is the Minister aware of the deep concern expressed in Devon and Cornwall by ordinary water users about the fact that their bills are due to double in the next four years to more than £500 a year on average? Is he also aware that people in the area are appalled by the synthetic concern expressed by people like the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) who, after all, voted in the House for higher bills?

Mr. Atkins: I do not believe that we need any lessons in synthetic protest from Opposition Members.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the Minister accept that it is now well over a year since the Prime Minister came to the west country and promised to cut bills? Since then, bills have continued to increase. When the bills for next year shortly fall through their letter boxes, people will find that they have gone up by almost a third since the Prime Minister made that promise. How long do they have to wait until their bills are a reasonable level?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman knows full well, because he has also had a meeting with the Secretary of State—incidentally, he broke the information on that to the press before it was properly made available, but, frankly, that is typical of the Liberal party—that the situation is quite clear. We have understood the problem faced by people in the south-west, which is due to the fact that that region has a larger number of beaches than other parts of the United Kingdom. Is the hon. Gentleman expecting his hon. Friends in other parts of the country to subsidise the costs that his constituents are being asked to bear? If so, I should be extremely interested to learn his hon. Friends' response to that suggestion.

Housing Stock

6. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further steps he plans to take to encourage local authorities to transfer their housing stock to housing associations.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): Twenty five authorities have so far transferred their housing, with the agreement of their tenants, and 18 more are programmed to do so between now and March next year. I shall encourage more to do so in the future.

Mr. Luff: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the real benefits that will start to flow in Wychavon, to the tenants of Wychavon council housing and to the homeless, following the decision of the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction to allow the authority's stock to be transferred to two housing associations? Does he share my concern about the propaganda from certain Labour-controlled local authorities and the Labour party branches of Maidstone and Thanet against such transfers? Does he agree that it is about time that the Opposition started to put the interests of tenants and the homeless above their petty ideology?

Mr. Gummer: When such a transfer was first made in my constituency, I had my doubts, but all I can say is that the experience of transferring local council housing in Suffolk, Coastal to Suffolk Heritage housing association has been uniformly good. In my surgeries, I find that far fewer complaints and many more congratulations are offered about the way in which local housing is run.

I hope that the Opposition will recognise that. I understand that some members of the Labour party realise that it is sensible, as it benefits the tenants and provides more homes for the homeless.

Mrs. Mahon: What can the Minister do about transferring the high-rise flats in Mixenden in my constituency, where asbestos has been found? The local authority cannot afford to pay for its removal. Would the Minister make special grants available if the property were transferred to a housing association?

Mr. Gummer: As the hon. Lady knows, a number of local authorities, many of them Labour controlled, are now joining in to decide how best to deal with such matters. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members must try to realise that I am trying to be as non-party political as usual, and I shall continue to try and be so. I do not want to embarrass any of the hon. Lady's colleagues, but they are looking into the matter. If the hon. Lady has a particular problem about asbestos in a particular block of flats, I am happy to consider it.

Local Government Commission

7. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Local Government Commission to produce its preliminary report on the future structure of local government in Devon and Cornwall.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government Commission has asked for initial proposals for Devon to be submitted to it by 8 April and for Cornwall by 29 April. The commission will then prepare draft proposals, on which it will consult local people and other interested parties. The publication date for them is a matter for the commission.

Mr. Steen: Does my hon. Friend agree that a recent High Court ruling has changed the rules in favour of two-tier authorities? Does that explain why the commission is now no longer saying that unitary authorities are the preferred option, but that it will investigate and examine the merits of unitary authorities? Is he aware that the MORI poll in Devon recently shows that there is no pressure for change in our county?

Mr. Baldry: First, the Government firmly believe that unitary authorities are often the best way to achieve effective and convenient local government. My hon. Friend is free to make his own views known to the commission, but he has to be aware that there are other views in Devon. I understand that eight out of 10 district councils in Devon are putting an agreed joint submission to the commission proposing a smaller number of unitary authorities. The political complexion of the districts involved is one Conservative, two independent, two Liberal, two with no overall control and one Labour. That shows that, in Devon, as elsewhere in the country, local people and councils of all political complexions are discussing with their neighbours the natural size of local government that is best for their area and are putting agreed proposals to the commission.

Mr. Grocott: Does not the Minister owe it to the House to be absolutely precise about the soaring cost of his plans for local government reform? Can he confirm that the cost of the commission has risen from £2 million two years ago to an estimated £8 million next year? Can he further confirm that substantial numbers of civil servants in his Department are engaged full time on that and nothing else and that many others are peripherally involved?

Finally, will the hon. Gentleman confirm that virtually every local authority in the country is having to devote substantial resources to dealing with the problems of local government reform? If he wants to pursue such a policy, does he not owe it to local authorities at least to make sure that central Government provide them with the funds for dealing with that expensive procedure?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman clearly has not appreciated that the timetable for the commission has been reduced this year. Of course, that means that the costs are higher this year, but the overall costs are exactly the same. I am also surprised by the hon. Gentleman's lukewarm approach to the issue. Clearly, he has not consulted his Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) who made it clear that Labour has been in favour of unitary authorities almost for ever. I thus find his remarks surprising and out of tune with what is being said, but perhaps it is yet another instance of the Labour party being totally split.

Mr. Hicks: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in spite of the recent court case and subsequent ministerial advice, many of us in the west country take the view that we are over-governed, that there is a strong case for single-tier local authorities, that Cornwall needs local government based on the existing district councils and that the county council should be scrapped?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes some very good points about the duplication of functions. There is bound to be confusion when essential services, such as housing and education, are delivered by different authorities in the same area. In my hon. Friend's constituency, it must be confusing to local people that if they are concerned about the cleaning of their street, they must approach their district council, but if they are concerned about the maintenance of their street, they must approach the county council. That cannot make good sense. As I have made clear, we firmly believe that unitary authorities will often be the best way to achieve effective and convenient local government.

Housing Association Houses

8. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of new housing association houses to be completed in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

12. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of new housing association houses to be completed in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation estimates that housing associations will provide around 57,600 new lettings in 1993-94, 58,300 in 1994-95 and 51,500 in 1995-96; a total of around 167,400 over the three years.

Mr. Burden: Is not the real fact that in the next financial year Government investment in housing associations will be cut by more than £300 million and in the year after by not far short of £300 million? How does the Minister explain away the fact that his Government have spent years grooming housing associations as an alternative to local authorities in providing low-cost housing only now to strangle housing associations, forcing them to cut back on building, or raise rents, or both? What does that mean for the 900 families who become homeless in my city of Birmingham every single month?

Sir George Young: What really matters is the fact that the Government have exceeded by 25,000 the number of new units they said that they would provide. We have exceeded our manifesto commitment by producing

178,000 new homes as against 153,000. In the three years 1989-90 to 1991-92 the output was 70,000; in the next three years it is likely to be 178,000. That is what really matters for the homeless.

Mr. Barron: Is not what really matters the newbuild social housing that we have for rent in this country and not the figures which the Government are putting out? Is not it true that there will be a 38 per cent. reduction in building new social housing for rent rather than the figures with which the Minister is misleading the House?

Sir George Young: What really matters for people in housing need is the number of new lettings. Those are the figures that are of relevance to people in housing need and they are the figures which consistently go up.

Mr. Hendry: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that there are 2 million more houses in this country than there were in 1979, but that too many of them are currently empty? Can he also confirm that the Government's task force on empty properties is making a concerted attack on bringing back into use those empty Government properties? Is not it time that Labour local authorities who are sitting on thousands upon thousands of empty houses made an equally determined attack on the problem?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right. We must make better use of the stock that we already have. There are some 800,000 units empty and there is a political imperative to bring them back into use. I hope shortly to receive the report of the task force, with its recommendations for making better use of Government-owned properties. Local authorities, particularly Labour-controlled local authorities in London, must make better use of their own housing stock if we are to make faster progress.

Mr. Barry Field: Is not the real answer to more housing association houses being built to give the tenants the right to buy? To paraphrase Shakespeare, what we would like to hear on this side of the House is: "Sir George for England and for housing association tenants".

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for injecting a patriotic note into our discussions.

As I explained, many housing association tenants have the opportunity to become home owners by taking advantage of the tenants incentive scheme. The way in which housing associations are now funded makes it impossible to extend to housing association tenants rights parallel to those available to local authority tenants; but, in many cases, the tenants incentive scheme is a better alternative.

Mr. Pike: The Minister was very selective about the figure that he gave my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden). He did not dare to compare the current position with that of 1979. Will he not admit that there is now a serious shortfall in housing that is built for rent, as a result of Government policy? The Government are now cutting the money available to housing associations, and they have axed local authority provision. Given that he accepted last year that capital receipts should be used to allow new building, why does not the Minister accept that they should be used for that purpose now?

Sir George Young: The figures for homeless acceptances have fallen for the past six quarters; in the past 12 months, there have been 41 per cent. fewer people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation; and the number of lettings is rising. That is the currency which matters to people on waiting lists or in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. We are making good progress, and we are determined to go on and do even better.

Mr. John Marshall: Is my right hon. Friend aware that 9 per cent. of Hackney council's housing stock is unlet? Does he not think that the council is trying to become even less efficient than Lambeth council—if that is possible?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right: there are housing difficulties in Hackney and it is incumbent on Hackney council to do all that it can to make better use of its housing stock. Filling those properties would generate a rental income which, in turn, could be ploughed back into improving the condition of the housing stock. I very much hope that that will be one of the issues on which public attention will be focused in London over the forthcoming months.

Battersea Power Station

9. **Mr Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a repair order in respect of Battersea power station.

Mr. Gummer: No. This is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage; but I understand that English Heritage inspected the building last month and noted no significant change in its condition.

Mr. Banks: Does the Secretary of State recall John Broome's proposals 10 years ago to turn Battersea power station into a sort of Disneyland, at a ceremony attended by Margaret Thatcher? Now—apart from its roof having come off—the power station is in danger of falling down. As the Minister responsible for London, and the ultimate planning authority for London, will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that he will take urgent steps to find a community use for Gilbert Scott's wonderful gem on the Thames that is compatible with its architectural importance?

Mr. Gummer: We must get the balance right. Much of the work done under Mr. Broome's ownership was of a structural nature, and it is clear that the danger to which the hon. Gentleman refers does not exist at present. I shall keep an eye on the power station, however, because—like the hon. Gentleman—I recognise its importance as an architectural feature. Although there is dispute about quite how important it is, I accept the hon. Gentleman's view.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Battersea power station is just one example of a sad category of buildings that have attracted the attention of Government Departments as gems of one kind or another, but have then been listed in a way that makes it extraordinarily difficult to adapt them, and have then been left for long periods? Many have decayed to a point at which they can no longer be rescued. Will my right hon. Friend speak to the Secretary of State for National Heritage about this distressing scandal?

Mr. Gummer: I wonder whether it is a growing scandal, although it is certainly distressing when buildings that might be put to better and newer use are not so put. We must accept that it is particularly difficult to find a new use for this building. It is, however, being regularly and properly inspected by English Heritage, and it should be recognised that large sums are necessary if it is to be put to a reasonable use. I do not think that my hon. Friend has many bright ideas about that—and few Opposition Members have either bright ideas or suggestions about where the money should come from.

Council Accommodation

10. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the proposals to change priorities for rehousing families in permanent council accommodation.

Mr. Gummer: The consultation paper on access to local authority and housing association tenancies was issued on 20 January. The consultation period ends on 18 March.

Ms Coffey: Does the Minister agree that, in the allocation of houses, it is not the system but the shortage of decent, affordable housing that is the problem? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that an inevitable consequence of the proposals in the homelessness review will be an increase in the number of children coming into care because their parents are overwhelmed by housing difficulties? Does he really want to go back to a "Cathy Come Home" situation? Will he reconsider his proposals, which only serve to punish the homeless for their housing need, and deal with the real problem, which is a shortage of decent, affordable housing in this country?

Mr. Gummer: I think that the hon. Lady is mistaken, and I shall explain why. At the moment, we have a situation in which some people, who are in very bad housing conditions but are not technically homeless, are left in those conditions, whereas others, who are in better conditions but are technically homeless, take the places that are available. What we are proposing is simply that we should seek a common means of sharing, on the basis of need, the accommodation that is available. The hon. Lady should be ashamed of herself for trying to suggest otherwise. She is using the plight of homeless and sad families for party political purposes.

Sir Anthony Durant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the current legislation on homelessness works against ordinary families with children who are in need, who often find themselves on the housing list for years despite the fact that they are local people with a right to be housed?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that when the legislation on homelessness was introduced it was intended to give people access to local authority and housing association accommodation on the basis of need. It is clear that that does not always happen, and it is sensible that we should try to ensure that in future it will. I do not understand why Opposition Members, who are supposedly interested in the provision of housing for those in priority need, find it impossible to join us in this effort and, instead, use the situation for sordid party political purposes.

Mr. Battle: On the subject of shame, is not the reality that here, the shame rests with the Conservative party? Will the Secretary of State, instead of scapegoating single mothers and, now, the homeless in general and rubbing out people's right to a secure home by offering only a short-term break of six months in a private rented bedsit, cancel this uncalled-for, unwanted, back-to-basics-tainted review of the homelessness legislation, which is crudely geared to fiddling the homelessness figures—doing to the homeless what the Government have done to the unemployed, and doing absolutely nothing to tackle the real housing and homelessness problem, which the Government are deliberately turning into a crisis?

Mr. Gummer: I do not think that it is acceptable that a family with children living in very bad housing should wait and wait and wait while people who are statutorily homeless, even though they have a better roof over their heads, jump the queue. The hon. Gentleman ought to take the opportunity of his next article in the newspaper for which he writes regularly to explain that Conservatives want to ensure that choices are made entirely on the basis of need rather than on the basis of statutory entitlement. Until the hon. Gentleman is prepared to accept the bona fides of others, as we are prepared to accept his bona fides, he will have nothing to contribute to this debate.

Energy Efficiency

11. **Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to encourage greater energy efficiency.

Mr. Atkins: My Department is taking forward a comprehensive range of measures to encourage greater energy efficiency. These are set out in the Government's response to the Select Committee's report on energy efficiency in buildings, which was published yesterday, and also in the United Kingdom's climate change programme, which was launched by the Prime Minister on 25 January.

Mr. Stephen: Is my hon. Friend aware that the doubling of resources for the home energy efficiency scheme announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the November Budget has been widely welcomed throughout the country, especially by the elderly and disabled? Will he ensure that the benefits of the scheme are made widely known throughout the country to those who may be eligible?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend; he is right to draw attention to the fact that we are increasing the budget in that area, as in many others related to energy efficiency. I will certainly take to heart his strictures about ensuring that the public are even more aware of what is needed to improve energy efficiency.

Mr. George Howarth: Is it not time that the Minister admitted that all those documents and policies are long-gone pious hopes, short on realistic objectives? The Energy Conservation Bill, which represents a practical way of doing something about the problems, passed unamended through its Committee stage this morning. Will the Minister now assure the House that on Report he will not seek to weaken the important principle in clause 2—the duty to survey properties—by providing the alternative of

a permissive principle, which would make the Bill a toothless tiger—or can we assume that that is his real objective?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman was present this morning when the Standing Committee examined the matter at some length, and he will understand, as will the promoter of the Bill, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), that there are issues that cause some concern, and which are the subject of some consideration. In due course, we shall consider what action to take in relation to them.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: May I generally welcome the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee on the Environment, and its positive tone, as well as the responses of OFFER—the Office of Electricity Regulation—and the Energy Saving Trust? But may I underline the fact that the EST clearly has problems in funding a very important programme that will be the key to fulfilling our obligations under the climate change convention? May I therefore urge my hon. Friend to redouble his efforts to bring together the EST and the regulators to ensure that a solution is found to the problem and the funds produced?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who will be interested to know that the regulators will meet officials from my Department tomorrow. I will certainly press the cause that he advocates.

Local Government Finance

13. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the standard spending assessment formula used to determine local government spending in Liverpool.

Mr. Curry: Liverpool's standard spending assessment is calculated according to the formulae set out in the local government finance report for 1994-95, which was approved by the House on 3 February.

Mr. Alton: How can the Minister justify a formula that leads to children at risk in Birmingham being allotted £5,000 per head, whereas in Liverpool the sum is only £800 per head? How can he justify a formula that leads to a city that has been afforded objective 1 status by the European Community losing about £17 million from its assessment in the current financial year? Whereas local authorities across the country are receiving an average increase of more than 3 per cent., Liverpool will have a reduction of more than 1 per cent. In the circumstances is the Minister now in a position to respond to the representations made to him by all the political parties on Liverpool city council? They are still awaiting a reply.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman would know a little more about the justification for the standard spending assessments had he been in the House when we debated them, and had he voted on that occasion. He was not here. It is not my job to compensate for his previous absence. The SSA system has been worked out objectively; it is a formula-based system, a means of dividing a fixed cake. The fact that Liverpool gets lots of benefits from other schemes is not relevant to the consideration. I told Liverpool clearly that if its representatives wished to discuss the way in which we took the SSA system forward I should be perfectly willing to do that. I have made that offer to all the councils whose representatives have come to see me. This year's settlement was agreed by the House in the hon. Gentleman's absence.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Are the findings of the 1991 census now incorporated fully into the SSA formulae?

Mr. Curry: Yes they are. In future years, the population estimates will be included until there is another census that will enable us to incorporate the actual figures. That is part of the continual updating of the system.

Car Boot Sales

14. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had on the control of car boot sales.

Mr. Baldry: We regularly receive correspondence on the subject of car boot sales from those who are concerned about the problems that badly managed events can sometimes cause and from others who regard car boots sales as a useful activity which is already adequately regulated.

Mr. Griffiths: As the Federation of Small Businesses fears that the abolition of market franchise rights will harm traditional village and town markets, what steps will the Minister take to ensure that honest market traders and consumers are protected from the minority of car boot sale cowboys?

Mr. Baldry: There is a battery of regulation and legislation already in place which can be used to control car boot sales. It may be helpful to the House if I state that the Acts are the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, the Consumer Protection Act 1987, the Theft Act 19768, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions.) Act 1976, the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Local authorities already have a wide range of powers to manage car boot sales. One wonders what further regulation the Labour party wants. Does it simply want to ban car boot sales altogether?

Mr. Lidington: Will my hon. Friend please bear it in mind that well-managed car boot sales provide a useful source of income to many charities and voluntary organisations? Will he try to avoid producing yet more well-intentioned legislation, which ends up letting the villains escape and trammelling decent people in yet more burdens of red tape?

Mr. Baldry: As I have already made clear, there are at least eight Acts of Parliament that apply to the control of car boot sales. My hon. Friend makes a good point that there are large number of organisations, including voluntary and charitable organisations, that find car boot sales a useful way to legitimately raise funds.

Mr. Vaz: What is the real reason why the Government have reversed their policy on market deregulation from their statement contained in a letter from officials to the National Association of British Market Authorities on 11 March 1991? Will the Minister confirm that a change in franchise rights will allow car-boot cheats to thrive at the expense of honest traders? It will be a crooks charter. Does

not he accept that that failure to reimburse local authorities for any change in franchise rights would, in the words of his officials,

"infringe the European convention on human rights"

as it amounts to expropriation without compensation? When will the Minister clear up that mess?

Mr. Baldry: I am somewhat boggle-minded at the idea that removing archaic rights given by the Crown many years ago to local authorities is somehow in contravention of the European convention on human rights, but I believe that anything can be said at Question Time. The point that the hon. Gentleman makes is completely bogus. The only right that market franchise rights give to a local authorities is to be able to object to a market being within six and two thirds of a mile on that day. As most car boot sales take place on a Sunday, it follows that market franchise rights have little, if any effect, in controlling car boot sales.

Local Government Finance

15. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to meet the leader of Chelmsford borough council to discuss local government finance.

Mr. Curry: I shall do my best to respond positively to an invitation.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. If he were to come to Chelmsford to meet the leader of Chelmsford borough council, Councillor Wedon, he and the other Conservative councillors would explain how they have reduced the council tax bill by £20 in the current year while maintaining services. He would also hear that that good work for the taxpayer will be undercut by the increases that Labour and Liberal-controlled Essex county council is imposing on charge payers by spending up to its standard spending assessment.

Mr. Curry: I know that the present leadership in Chelmsford has tried to pull back the council from the exorbitant levels of expenditure reached by the Liberal Democrat party and I am sad that those efforts will be undermined by the opposition parties of Essex county council. That will end the tradition of sound rule.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that the Bolsover district council will travel to Chelmsford and they will pass all those cones on the M1 to discuss the important question of the landslip, which they discussed with the Minister, on which six houses have already been demolished—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not in Chelmsford.] We are prepared to discuss it at Chelmsford, at Finchley, at Westminster—

Madam Speaker: Order. It is being discussed here, at Westminster. The hon. Gentleman's question is irrelevant.

Mr. Skinner: We will travel anywhere to get the money.

Madam Speaker: Order. We are in Westminster now.

Single-tier Local Government

16. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the estimates of potential savings as a result of the creation of single-tier local government in England.

Mr. Baldry: The capacity for savings across England will depend on the action of the councils established by Parliament following the recommendations of the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Hall: Does the Minister agree that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that shire counties' estimates of the transitional costs of the local government review are grossly exaggerated? Does he agree that they have also grossly exaggerated the pay-back period of those transitional costs and that there are real savings to be made in the local government review? Therefore, the shire counties' claim that the review will mean £100 on people's council taxes is erroneous. Does the Minister also agree that unitary authorities offer great scope for local government, particularly in Halton and Warrington borough councils which I represent?

Mr. Baldry: In local government reorganisation, we must look at the opportunities that that reorganisation presents to find ways in which services can be better delivered for the benefit of local people. I have absolutely no doubt that, up and down the country, people of all political complexions are coming together to find just that. We need to treat with suspicion some of the estimates of the costs of reorganisation presented by way of special pleading from particular groups from wherever they come. However, I hope that everyone considering the reorganisation of local government will consider ways in which long-term savings can be made as a consequence of reorganisation.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No, I have a statement. I call Mr. Robin Cook to ask his private notice question.

British Steel

3.30 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston) (*by private notice*): To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the decision of the European Commission to fine British Steel.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The European Commission announced this morning the decision to impose fines of slightly more than 100 million ecu on 16 steel companies from six Community and three Scandinavian countries.

Under the treaty of Paris—the European Coal and Steel Community treaty—the Commission has sole jurisdiction in the application of competition law to cartels and restrictive agreements so far as they concern primary steel products. I would emphasise that the Government support the full and fair application of the Community's competition rules.

My latest information is that British Steel has not yet received formal notification from the Commission. However, the fines are being levied following a Commission investigation into alleged anti-competitive activity in beams. The Commission has made a finding of price fixing, exchange of information and market sharing.

The procedures which have led to the imposition of the fine constitute a legal process. It is open to the company to appeal and I understand that it intends to do so.

The House will recall that the European steel industry had operated with production quotas administered by the Commission under the manifest crisis provisions of the ECSC treaty between 1980 and 1988.

The chairman of British Steel has told me that the company is surprised at the decision, particularly since it contends that the Commission was aware of exchanges of information that continued after the ending of the manifest crisis on 30 June 1988.

I would stress that this matter is entirely for the Commission and the company, but we shall be studying the wider implications carefully and discussing them with British Steel at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Cook: Does not the Minister appreciate that the statement which the House wanted was not one about what the Commission had decided, but one about what was the view of the British Government and what the British Government were going to do about it? Does he not understand that the survival of the British steel industry is not something else that he can add to the long list of things for which the Government will take no responsibility?

Does not the Minister realise that the reason why today's fine will cause anger and anxiety among the work force at British Steel is that it is another blow to an industry which has already lost 100,000 jobs and shed double the capacity of the rest of Europe?

Will the Minister confirm that the fine which has been imposed on British Steel is larger than that on any of the 16 companies to which he referred, and is three times larger than the next biggest fine? Why should British Steel, which has already made the biggest cuts in capacity, now be hit with the biggest fine? Will the Minister confirm that the value of the fine imposed on British Steel is larger than the profits that it declared for the first six months of 1993? What will that mean for steel plants that are already at risk and are already having difficulty making ends meet?

In the light of today's fine, will the Minister now reconsider his decision at the meeting of the Council of Ministers in December to agree to large new subsidies for German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese steel industries? Will he confirm that, at the meeting, he agreed to state subsidies of £5 billion to those industries? How can it be fair competition to fine British Steel millions and subsidise German and Italian steel by billions? Does the Minister remember saying before the meeting that no deal was better than a bad deal? Will he now admit that it was a bad deal and that today's fine makes it a worse deal for British Steel?

Will the right hon. Gentleman now tell the Commission what he failed to tell it in December, and that is that there will be no more cuts in steel capacity in Britain until the rest of Europe have matched the cuts in capacity that we have already made, and that the solution to the crisis in the steel industry in Europe is to wind down subsidies to capacity in the least efficient companies, not to fine British Steel and threaten the most efficient steel plants in Europe?

Mr. Sainsbury: I find Labour Members' great enthusiasm for all things related to Europe and their untrammelled support for the treaty of Rome somewhat at odds with the hon. Gentleman's approach to the question. He asked what the Government intend to do about it. I suppose that he might have been suggesting that we leave the European Union and seek the abrogation of the treaty of Rome and the treaty of Paris. If he is not suggesting that, I assume that he would like us and other member states to adhere to the provisions of the treaty. The hon. Gentleman displays his ignorance of the provisions of the treaty by asking what the Government can do about something which, as I made clear in my answer, is entirely a matter for the Commission and for the company concerned.

I am happy—he might be surprised—to agree with the hon. Gentleman on one thing. I am surprised that he ever says anything that I find myself able to agree with. He said that it would be most useful for British steel companies to wind down the illegal state subsidies being paid in the rest of Europe. That indeed was the purpose of the agreement of 17 December. It was unanimously agreed in the Council of Ministers because it brought about not only a substantial reduction in capacity but, more important, an agreement to end operating cost subsidies and the imposition of the strictest monitoring arrangements on that point that we have ever had in the European Community.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. Now that we have had the initial exchange, I am looking for brisk answers and even brisker questions.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend dismiss the hollow words of Opposition Members who opposed the privatisation of British Steel which has led to its productivity? Will he accept that the news will be a bitter blow to the workers and managers at British Steel at Skinningrove in my constituency? Will he also accept that, on top of the decision that they will have to face capacity cuts, the news is unwelcome? Does my right hon. Friend agree that we want Europe's most efficient steel producer, British Steel, to be allowed to operate in a free market and on a level playing field?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am very happy to agree that we want British Steel, which is probably Europe's most efficient

producer of primary steel products, to be able to operate and trade in a free and fair market. That is why we entirely support the Commission in what it is seeking to do to end illegal state subsidies. We will pursue that objective as energetically as we can, and we will monitor the Commission's performance in monitoring illegal state subsidies as closely as we can.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Does the Minister agree that it is crude timetabling for the Commission to bring forward the matter after three years of investigations? Would it be more in tune with the deal that he tried to do to take out 25 million tonnes of excess capacity and compare that with the British Steel Corporation's and the British steel industry's removal of capacity, particularly with the manifest crisis, which was done in the reference period and which mitigated against our own steel industry? When he attends the next ministerial conference, will he ensure that there are no further reductions until the deficit produced in the manifest crisis between 1980 and 1988 is met? Will he at least give the British steel industry a fair crack of the whip?

Mr. Sainsbury: Our extensive contacts with British Steel and the British steel industry show that most of all they want the elimination of the operating cost subsidies that go to state-owned companies in other parts of Europe. They also want and expect further reductions in capacity. Substantial reductions in capacity were agreed at the Industry Council on 17 December. It was also agreed that there should be strict monitoring arrangements to ensure that there was an end to operating cost subsidies.

I assure hon. Members that, in our efforts to ensure that the agreement is adhered to, we shall leave no stone unturned. The Commission is already aware of our views on the subject and I shall ensure that it will remain in no doubt about them.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Commission cannot face both ways? On 17 December, it was asked and gave approval to sanction retrospectively £5 billion of illegal subsidies in Spain, Italy and Germany. Is it not the industrial economics of the mad house to sanction such support and not to reduce the capacity of inefficient producers? If the removal of 5 million tonnes of capacity is part of the deal, will there be a guarantee that the reduction will be made among those inefficient producers in other parts of Europe?

Mr. Sainsbury: As my hon. Friend said, we want substantial reductions in capacity, particularly in the three countries that he mentioned—Germany, Italy and Spain—where the reductions in capacity that occurred in the United Kingdom have not been matched. Furthermore, we want the elimination of operating cost subsidies. The subsidies that were sanctioned by the Industry Council on 17 December were connected with restructuring and reduction in capacity. Those operating cost subsidies have distorted the market, to the disadvantage of British steel producers. We are determined to eliminate those subsidies.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): What impact will the fine have on British Steel's production and, consequently, on British manufacturing? Given that the Minister, on two previous occasions, has made hand-washing—or hand-wringing—statements on the future of the British industry, is he prepared to defend from the Dispatch Box any sector of our once great industry?

Mr. Sainsbury: I do not know what constitutes hand wringing—or hand washing—in the hon. Gentleman's eyes, but I and many commentators believe that my statement the other day was good news for British Aerospace and the British car industry. The fine is, of course, a matter for British Steel, but it has said already that it intends to appeal and it thinks that it has a good case. We should await the outcome of that appeal.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): What guarantee will my right hon. Friend give that, if the fines are confirmed and British Steel meets its fine as a private limited company, in Italy the fine will not be paid by a further subsidy from the Italian Government? After all, £28 million is a lot of money. It would keep 28 Members of the European Parliament going for a full working year.

Mr. Sainsbury: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern, but the largest fines were levied on private sector companies. A number of private companies in Germany, for example, had substantial fines imposed upon them. I cannot say whether they will appeal, and I cannot anticipate the outcome of appeals in that or any other case.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Minister confirm that the workers and shareholders of British Steel will pay the fine but that in other parts of the Community the taxpayer will pay the fine?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman may not have heard my previous reply. I said that most of the companies, especially those that received the largest fines, which are subject to appeal, are private sector companies, so their shareholders and workers will pay the fines.

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): Is it not clear that, unless there is a major reduction in capacity soon across the whole of Europe, the British steel industry and others will be in a state of manifest crisis? While we fully accept that my right hon. Friend is robustly trying to turn every stone and achieve everything, can he explain what steps are open to the British Government to protect the British steel industry against further penalties of this sort and further unfair competition if the Commission continues to fail to deliver the goods?

Mr. Sainsbury: As I said in the statement, we support the full and fair application of the Commission's competition rules. We are not in favour of cartels. We believe that they operate to the disadvantage of customers of the industry. It is against that background that we are seeking to create a fairer competitive environment for steel in Europe. That requires not only the elimination of capacity, to which my hon. Friend referred—a certain amount of elimination has already been agreed and we hope to see more—but, most of all, the elimination of operating cost subsidies to British Steel's competitors so that those competitors must compete with British Steel on a fair basis. That is what we are now moving towards as a result of the agreement of the Industry Council on 17 December. As I said, I am determined to ensure that that agreement is adhered to.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Can the Minister explain why the Commission is acting on beams and sections while maintaining that the principal problem is the excess capacity of strip products?

Mr. Sainsbury: The two issues are not directly connected because the investigation, which goes back to 1991—it has lasted for some three years—relates to agreements which the Commission contends existed with regard to those particular products. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the fact that the overcapacity, which a number of hon. Members have referred to and which is most evident in the Community at present, relates to flat products and other products rather than beams.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Is it not the case that the biggest rigger of the market is the European Commission? Over the years, the Commission, together with European Governments, has meddled and fiddled with the steel industry so that it has created a mess of unproductive overcapacity. Is the real lesson from this that, while markets may not produce perfect solutions, they produce solutions that are a great deal less imperfect than the beggar-my-neighbour industrial policy and protectionism of the type that is constantly espoused by Labour Members and, unfortunately, by the Commission?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend in his support for markets providing the best solution. Unhappily, Labour Members are still some decades away from realising that. My hon. Friend says that the Commission is the biggest rigger of the market and, indeed, the period of manifest crisis declared in the provisions of the European Coal and Steel Community—the treaty of Paris—was obviously a rigging of the market. The Community is also capable of unrigging markets. It is its efforts to bring about the elimination of unfair subsidies that we support and hope to see effective.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): When will the Minister recognise that in order to create an efficient steel industry in this country many thousands of jobs were lost, and that what is needed now, above all else, is a level playing field because other countries simply have not cut back as we have done? For example, Germany, Spain and Italy are subsidising their industries. Is it not simply bizarre therefore to talk about fining the British steel industry? I warn the Minister that it can only lead to further job losses. When will he stand up for our steel industry?

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the steel industry wishes to see not only capacity reductions but, most of all, the elimination of the subsidies about which he has just complained. That is what we agreed at the Industry Council on 17 December, and that is what I shall stand up for as strongly as I can. It is in all our interests, and especially the interests of British Steel and its customers, to see those unfair subsidies eliminated.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Does not my hon. Friend find it extraordinary that the Commission should come to this conclusion when it appears that it was aware of the exchange of information between steel companies before the inquiry was embarked upon? The Commission made no complaint about the exchange of that information, and now seeks to penalise those who have been undertaking action of which it was aware. Should it not be embarking on a little criticism of its internal arrangements?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend has particular knowledge of the industry and makes his point powerfully. It would be wrong for me to prejudge the outcome of the appeal, and I am sure that the issues to which my hon. Friend referred will be raised in that process.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Although I think that the Commission's proposal is outrageous, the Minister cannot object. He voted for the Single European Act, and for the Maastricht and other European treaties which handed over the British steel industry to the unelected and unaccountable Commission. Of course there is an alternative. This sovereign Parliament could say that the proposal is unfair and un-British, and that the Commission could get stuffed.

Mr. Sainsbury: That might almost be unparliamentary language. I must say to the hon. Gentleman what I said in answer to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). We are a member of the European Community, and we adhere to the treaty of Paris. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that we leave the EC, he is entitled to his view. [HON. MEMBERS: "We should leave it."] We know the view of Opposition Members who sit below the Gangway, because we hear them all too frequently from sedentary positions. However, it is not the view of the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Is not it the case that since privatisation—indeed, as a result of it—British Steel has become one of the most productive, competitive and efficient steel manufacturers in the world? Bearing in mind that British Steel, as I understand it, faces the largest fine, will my right hon. Friend do everything in his power to ensure that the Commission does not discriminate against British Steel to the advantage of heavily subsidised steel manufacturers on the continent?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend about the efficiency and productivity of British Steel. It is notable that, under nationalisation at the time that the Conservative Government came to power, it took more than 13 man hours to produce a tonne of steel. It now takes substantially less than five man hours, and that makes British Steel one of the most efficient steel producers in the world. I want British Steel to be able to operate and benefit from that efficiency without others having illegal subsidies. We are moving towards achieving that, and we require the Commission's action to achieve it.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Will the Minister confirm that British Steel's production costs are as much as $90 per tonne below those of its European rivals? As that is the case, is not the issue at stake in this dispute the expectation that British Steel will cut back on its production to accommodate the higher-cost subsidised steel of other European producers? Why will not the Minister say today that he will resist that in all circumstances? What power will he muster to do so?

Mr. Sainsbury: If the hon. Gentleman knows of any evidence to support his allegations, I shall be interested to see it. I have no knowledge that there is any substance to those allegations. I think that he will find it totally without foundation that there is some connection between this decision and capacity.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my hon. Friend recall what he said just now about the treaty of Paris and leaving the European Community? Does he accept that

many of us have no desire to leave the EC, but simply want it to work fairly? Is not the way to achieve that to renegotiate the arrangements of the treaty of Paris and other treaties? The disastrous mess created over the coal industry was a direct result of the failure to renegotiate those treaties so that we had a level playing field in Europe. Does not that also apply to British Steel in this issue?

Mr. Sainsbury: I think that my hon. Friend might have meant to refer to British Coal at the end of his question rather than British Steel. The treaty of Paris—the European Coal and Steel Community treaty—enables unfair, unapproved subsidies to be eliminated if strong enough action is taken. The Commission has expressed its view that it wants to take that action. We want to see those subsidies eliminated. If we succeed and the Commission succeeds in that objective, that will be the best possible thing that we can do for British Steel. It will be further evidence, which I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate, of the benefits of the Community and our membership of it.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Where is the evidence of the fight by the Minister with regard to the subsidies in Germany, Spain and Italy? Do not Ministers present a pathetic spectacle whingeing and whining their way around Europe?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman's outburst was more in keeping with the normal attitude of his hon. Friends below the Gangway and was somewhat uncharacteristic of him. He, sadly perhaps, was not able to be present at the Industry Council, but I assure him that not only on that occasion but on every other occasion when we have discussed steel, which is an important issue in the Industry Council meetings, I have done as much as I possibly could. Regrettably we sometimes had less support from our European Community colleagues than I would have hoped for.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the reality is that the Commission has put up a smokescreen to cover its ineffective action on the position of subsidy in the steel industry across Europe? We must kick and push the Commission to get on with the business because British Steel is under serious threat. It has been privatised, it is not subsidised, it is highly competitive and it could easily collapse under such pressure.

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure my hon. Friend that, although I doubt that kicking and screaming would be part of my behaviour, I shall do all that I can to ensure that the subsidies are eliminated. I know of no evidence that the fines on the 16 companies are in any way connected with the current efforts to eliminate subsidies and reduce capacity.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Does the Minister recognise that the health of the steel industry, and in particular the special steel industry, is fundamental to the whole of manufacturing industry in Britain? He must do more than continue his efforts within Europe. Why does not he consider positive ways in which the Government now could give added support to the steel industry, such as in electricity costs, research investment and environmental matters, as our European competitors do without compunction?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that the hon. Lady has noticed the recent decisions that have led to significant reductions in electricity costs for major users. Indeed, they were welcomed by those major users. I find myself somewhat puzzled by the hon. Lady's question. She seemed to ask for subsidies for the British steel industry, which is what I thought we were trying to get rid of on a Europe-wide scale.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Does not the Commission's action convince my right hon. Friend that, far from being impartial in such matters, the Commission is entirely partisan and seeks to impose political solutions to the problem?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not so convinced. As I have been requested energetically by hon. Members on both sides of the House to do, I shall support the Commission in its efforts to eliminate unfair subsidies.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The Minister misunderstands and misconceives the anger in the House today. In relation to British industry, when it comes to hand-wringing and hand-washing, he has no lessons to learn from Pontius Pilate.

With regard to the remark made by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), and associating my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) with my comments, is the Minister aware of the deep disappointment on Teesside that people have worked so hard, made so many sacrifices and faced so many cuts, yet because British Steel is successful it has had imposed a greater fine? The matter has been going on for three years. The British Government tell us that they wish to be at the heart of Europe. What representations has the Minister made on behalf of British Steel to the EC Commission in those three years?

Mr. Sainsbury: In common with most of his hon. Friends, the hon. Gentleman is anticipating the outcome of the legal process. The matter has yet to go to appeal. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) said, British Steel believes that during the appeal several substantial issues will be considered. It contends that those will support the actions for which it and a number of other companies are being fined. We should not assume that the appeal will go adversely, any more than we should assume that it will succeed. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members tend to recommend intervention in legal proceedings, but I wonder whether they would approve if those legal proceedings were taking place in the courts of Great Britain.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the Minister recognise that, while he hopes that a level playing field will be brought about, many British industries are being killed off and some may even die in despair before his hope is realised? Has he considered the implications for a related industry? The United Kingdom shipbuilding, ship repair and conversion industries have lost out and will lose out this year because of unfair support. Major contracts worth £40 million, which could come to the United Kingdom, are likely to go to other European Community countries. It is disgraceful that the Government have not taken as robust a stand as Clinton took the other day with the Japanese.

Mr. Sainsbury: I entirely agree with the hon. Member that the shipbuilding industry has some parallels with the steel industry. The Northern Ireland shipbuilding

[Mr. Sainsbury]

company, Harland and Wolff, is a company transformed and is now very efficient. Like British Steel and other steel companies in Britain, it wants to compete on what we habitually refer to as a level playing field. Only the Commission can achieve that, and that is what we want it to do. The Commission is well aware of the fact that the British Government attach the strongest importance to the elimination of those subsidies, and it will be constantly reminded of that point of view by what hon. Members on both sides of the House have said today and on every other possible occasion.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the Minister agree that the recent closure of the competitive Templeborough plant in Rotherham is ample demonstration of the abject failure of the Government and the Commission? Does he accept that the most successful engineering steel industry in Europe is now imperilled? What action will the Government take to resolve the anxiety, other than withdrawing the iron and steel employees readaptation benefit scheme, ISERBS, which was a singularly foolish thing to do?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sure that, like the hon. Gentleman, we all regret the closure of the Templeborough works. It was not directly connected with the events under discussion, but United Engineering Steels will benefit substantially—as would British Steel—from the elimination of unfair subsidies, which I have already mentioned and on which the Commission is working.

Mr. Hardy: When?

Mr. Sainsbury: They should be stopped even now.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Do not the findings substantiate the view that British Steel sacrificed Ravenscraig—the heart of the Scottish steel industry—as the entry price to a sordid price-fixing cartel in Europe? Far from the Government having nothing to do with the arrangements, is it not true that they knew about them, aided and abetted them and that that is why they did not force the sale of Ravenscraig by British Steel? Instead of defending British Steel's illegal activities, why does the Minister not apologise to the people of Lanarkshire and Scotland for allowing their plant to be used as the sacrificial lamb for British Steel's dirty deals in Europe?

Mr. Sainsbury: That unsubstantiated allegation is typical of the hon. Gentleman. Ravenscraig made flat products, but the issue concerns beam, long products.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): The Minister has badly misjudged the mood of the House this afternoon. As the European Commission's findings will affect the future viability of British Steel, does he agree that he was wrong to withdraw the ISERBS arrangement, which assisted redundant steel workers throughout Britain, but especially in Scotland? As he and the Government have done nothing but preside over our rolling over to our European opponents and agree to cuts in British steel production figures, has he considered resigning?

Mr. Sainsbury: As I told some of his hon. Friends, the hon. Gentleman is anticipating the outcome of the appeal and particularly dire consequences. I know that the fine is substantial, but it might be reduced even if the appeal is not upheld. We should not prejudge the outcome, nor should we prejudge the consequences for British Steel.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Minister speaks of the sole competence of the European Commission. Is not this pathetic non-statement an inevitable consequence of the transfer of power from this country and this Government to the institutions, which are unelected and irresponsible, in the European Community? Is not this statement the harbinger of many more to come, just as the statement that he made about Rover only a fortnight ago was foreshadowed? If the British privatised slimmed-down steel industry is as competitive and world beating as Ministers claim, why is it necessary to become mixed up with a European price cartel?

Mr. Sainsbury: The right hon. Gentleman's views on all matters European are well known in the House and, I think, disagreed with by members of his own Front Bench. I must bring his attention to a point that he might not have reflected on. There is general agreement on both sides of the House that we want to see the elimination of unfair subsidies. Only the Community can bring about that elimination.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Have not we reached a sorry state of affairs when the combination of this Tory Government and the Common Market has resulted in the steel industry being fined, after they signed a treaty based on the free movement of capital and labour? We have the cheapest steel and coal, yet the Common Market does not buy a cobble. The Government have just about closed down the shipbuilding industry. Is it not high time that Britain considered the question—it must be faced at some time—of getting out of the Common Market? It has been an unmitigated disaster from beginning to end. It will even affect the grocer, who will be buying his supermarket trolleys from Germany.

Mr. Sainsbury: We can always rely on the hon. Gentleman to speak with habitual moderation. I fear that we normally can rely on him to express sentiments with which his colleagues on the Front Bench would not agree.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Are not the Government already opting out of the treaty of Paris with their abandonment of the ISERBS scheme with special redundancy payments for steel workers? If they can abandon protection for steel workers, why can they not abandon the imposition of the Commission through the treaty of Paris? Why do not the Government realise that the Common Market Commission is not some lofty objective body but a group of Commissioners fighting for each member state's interests? Has the right hon. Gentleman instructed our Commissioners to do that? Have Ministers behaved like that? Or have they capitulated, as usual, to the diktat of the unelected Commissioners?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman's description of the operations of the Commission and of the Commissioners is, as I suspect he knows, a travesty of the truth. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the abolition of the ISERBS scheme, as he would have seen from the study, a copy of which is in the Library, was not proving to be effective or good value for money, but was entirely compatible with the treaty of Paris.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Will the Minister tell us exactly what operating subsidies were identified at the Council of Ministers meeting in December? Will he tell us the date on which they will end?

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to a written answer that I gave earlier in the year about the outcome of—

Mr. Barry Jones: This is awful.

Mr. Sainsbury: It was about the outcome of the Industry Council, which, contrary to the views of the hon. Gentleman, who seems to be getting a bit worked up about this, was not awful. It will be awful if it does not deliver.

What was agreed was a reduction of 4.6 million tonnes of capacity. That we want to see occur. What was also agreed was the elimination of operating cost subsidies, and the strictest monitoring arrangements which the Commission has ever introduced and which the Community has ever seen. We shall hear at the next Industry Council how effectively they are working. I hope to be able to report to the House that they are working effectively and are helping British Steel.

Points of Order

4.8 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to raise a point of order of which I have given you notice. Yesterday, I received a copy of a document that has been issued by an Indian-based organisation. It calls on people living in the United Kingdom to boycott the goods produced in the constituencies of a number of hon. Members. It names 13 Labour Members, two Conservative Members, one Liberal Democrat and one Labour Member of the European Parliament—

Madam Speaker: Order. May I have the hon. Gentleman's attention? I have no indication of the subject that he is seeking to raise with me. It seems that it may well concern a matter of privilege, so he should write to me about it and I will certainly consider it. I think that it would be wise if the hon. Gentleman did not try to pursue the point of order now, because I believe that it could be a matter of privilege.

Mr. Madden: I am uncertain of that matter, Madam Speaker. I wrote to you and I left a note in your office earlier today.

Madam Speaker: No. I have not had any notice from the hon. Gentleman other than to say that he wished to raise a point of order with me. I have had no notification of what the hon. Gentleman wanted to raise. If he is uncertain about the matter, all the more reason why he should write to me.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for a Minister, however inadvertently, to mislead the House during Question Time by saying that the deputy leader of Derbyshire county council is appealing against his conviction for fraud? In fact, that appeal has already failed. Was not my hon. Friend underestimating the extent to which the bunch on the Opposition Benches—

Madam Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. It was only yesterday that I was able to answer a genuine point of order, when I reminded hon. Members that they are abusing our system of points of order. They are not using the procedures correctly. Points of order should be about our Standing Orders and procedures and should not continue debate, which most points of order seem to seek to do.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A number of points of order have been raised about the answers given by executive agencies. I do not wish to resurrect the argument about executive agencies providing letters in answer to parliamentary questions that have been put down.

During the process of clarification, in March 1993 the then Home Secretary gave a list of matters relating to the prison service which were to be answered by the director general. You may recall, Madam Speaker, that those answers were to be printed in *Hansard*. The scope of that procedure, which has been agreed and accepted by the House as a matter of order and procedure, is now being widened.

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

I tabled a question about the inquiry by the prison service into the sad suicide of a constituent of mine, Anthony Robert Madden, in Armley gaol on 26 June 1993. I asked for a copy of that report to be placed in the Library.

That matter did not come within the terms of the answer given on 25 March 1993 in *Hansard*. In effect, it means that the Home Office is now widening the range of matters to be dealt with by the director general, without any reference to the House. That is always a danger. It is important to raise points of order when that happens because we should retain accountability for those executive agencies, particularly on a matter concerning a tragic suicide in a prison, when it appears as though the prison authorities were trying to cover up—with the connivance, I am afraid, of the Minister.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I have had no indication of the matter that he has raised on a point of order and therefore I do not happen to have *Hansard* of 25 March 1993 in front of me. The hon. Gentleman may like to pursue the matter further with the Home Secretary, or perhaps he could seek advice from the Table Office. He knows that I do not give advice about procedure across the Floor of the House. If he does not wish to follow my suggestions, I should be very willing to see him to consider what I can do about the matter.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I know that you rule regularly that statements by Ministers are not a matter for you, unless you are notified, and then, obviously, the House is informed. I should simply like to ask your advice, because, today, the news has contained general reports of the large police presence at the proposed M11 route in east London.

In the past, when an incident has got out of control and led to injuries or death, it is then the subject of a statement before the House. I seek your straightforward advice on the best way to try to get the issue of the M11 route raised before problems arise rather than after. The problem is that, if we wait for the next Home Office or Transport questions, the event will be over. When would be the best opportunity to raise such matters while the events are still current?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is asking for procedural advice. I have just made it clear that I do not give procedural advice. Tomorrow happens to be Thursday; perhaps he should look at the business for Thursday.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you consider re-examining the practice of giving private responses to hon. Members on issues of privilege? I shall not go into the case raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), but when you rule in private, by implication, unless hon. Members ask my hon. Friend or any other hon. Member who raises an issue of privilege, the rest of the House is denied that response. However, a public interest issue may well arise out of the action taken by that organisation in regard to the 17 Members of Parliament concerned. Will you reflect on my request and consider it?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the Speaker of the House has total authority over matters of privilege. It would be a complete departure if the entire House were to be informed of the ruling. If the hon. Gentleman and others are seeking to change that, they must use the normal channels.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that that is your position, but there is clearly a public interest issue. It is alleged that 17 hon. Members are affected by an individual organisation. Surely the wider public have a right to know, even though, as Speaker of the House, you may feel that your responsibility remains only to my hon. Friend.

Madam Speaker: I cannot make a statement on those matters, but if hon. Members who raise them were to reflect, they might find other methods by which they could bring them to the public's attention.

Assistance for Local Authority Leaseholders

4.16 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require local authorities to identify residential properties of which the authority owns the freehold and which the leaseholders find hard to sell; to require local authorities to make available mortgage guarantees to assist the sale of certain local authority leaseholds of residential property; to enable local authorities to repurchase the leases of certain leaseholds of residential properties; and for connected purposes.

The Bill is a rescue plan for some 70,000 home owners who, to all intents and purposes, are trapped in former council flats. More than half those who were induced or seduced to buy under the right to buy are or will be living in properties which simply cannot be sold. That is ironic because the majority of people who bought flats did so because they thought that it would be easier to move by selling than through council transfer lists.

One couple in my constituency bought their tower block flat for cash in 1981 and have since made it into a model home. They have been trying to sell that flat for several years. They have dropped the asking price by 50 per cent. and they have found several potential buyers, but not one of those buyers can get a mortgage—not even a 60 per cent. mortgage.

Another constituent bought a one-bedroom flat in a medium-rise block in my constituency in 1988. She subsequently married and started a family; she needs to move to a bigger home. She has found potential buyers, but not one can obtain a mortgage, not even from the bank which currently mortgages the property.

Mortgage lenders have red-lined all high-rise and most medium-rise blocks of flats. On that basis, we can confidently predict that 70,000 households will face the same problem in the future. Not only can the owners not sell, but many face higher service charges than they first expected.

The Conservative Government bear a heavy responsibility for that crisis. That is why my Bill requires them to act. The Government must not continue to shuffle off responsibility on to local authorities that have neither the full legal powers nor the resources to deal with the problem.

The Government promoted the right to buy to flat owners with quite extraordinary irresponsibility. The latest leaflet from the Department of the Environment warns potential buyers of possible high service charges and mortgage problems. But that only emphasises the Government's failure to issue those warnings when today's victims were buying their homes.

Councils such as Sheffield and Norwich which attempted to highlight the likely problems were overruled and overridden by Ministers, who threatened to step in and enforce the right to buy. Building societies such as the Halifax which predicted today's problems in writing to the Government in 1985 and again in 1987 were ignored. Government restrictions on service charge levels for the first five or 10 years of home ownership had the effect of disguising from potential buyers the likely cost of owning a council leasehold.

My Bill is intended to provide a long-overdue way out of this nightmare for the people affected by it and I have tried to base it on four clear principles. First, there must be a national scheme and a national solution. The extent of the problem varies considerably from one local authority to another. It simply would not be realistic to ask individual local authorities to meet their own local problems from their own resources.

Secondly, wherever possible, current leaseholders must be assisted to sell their homes on the private market at a fair market value. Thirdly, any public costs involved must be kept to a reasonable minimum and represent good value for money. Fourthly, no scheme should unfairly take resources away from the urgent task of improving and repairing the homes of current and future council tenants.

It is on the basis of these four principles that I have drawn up the Bill. It will bring together the existing but inadequate powers of local authorities in a national and nationally funded scheme. In the first instance, local authorities would be required to draw up a scheme to identify flats which are unlikely to attract mortgage finance. Those schemes would need to be agreed with the Secretary of State. With the approval of the Secretary of State local authorities would then be required to offer a mortgage guarantee for all or part of the capital value of the flat. However, it is important to ensure that a mortgage lender who refused a loan based just on the nature of the property would be subject to action by extending the powers of the building societies ombudsman.

If in the end the guarantee were called, the local authority would have the choice of taking the property back into its own stock to let to someone from its waiting list, or of being reimbursed by the Government for the cost of meeting the guarantee.

Such an approach would help tens of thousands of leaseholders in the coming years and, by making properties marketable once again, would allow the price of those properties to be established at a level which reflected the relatively high service charges that council leaseholds are always likely to attract. But I also recognise that there will be some flats which, because of their structural condition and future repair costs, will probably never attract buyers, so the Bill also proposes that local authorities identify those properties and be enabled by the Government to repurchase them at a price reflecting any original discount.

That again should be funded by Government. The question of cost is bound to be raised, but in this case the logic of using local authority capital receipts, which were obtained by selling those flats in the first place, for the purpose of getting people out of this nightmare is unquestionable.

I do not believe that anyone denies that the problem exists or that it will be identified on an increasingly wide scale over the coming years, and the support that I have had for the Bill from hon. Members from Thurrock, Lewisham, Hampstead and Highgate, Waltham Forest, Greenwich, Sheffield, Plymouth and other parts of the country indicates the number who are experiencing these problems at first hand in their constituency advice surgeries.

It is now time for the Government to act. The problem has been dumped on local authorities for too long. There must be a national scheme, which should be funded and underwritten nationally. The Government must be prepared to stand up to the building societies. This Bill will enable the Government to do all three things.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Denham, Mr. Clive Betts, Mr. Nick Raynsford, Mr. Mike Gapes, Mr.

[Mr. John Denham]

Clive Soley, Ms Tessa Jowell, Ms Glenda Jackson, Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, Mr Neil Gerrard, Mr. Keith Hill, Mrs. Bridget Prentice and Mr. David Jamieson.

ASSISTANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY LEASEHOLDERS

Mr. John Denham accordingly presented a Bill to require local authorities to identify residential properties of which the authority owns the freehold and which the leaseholders find hard to sell; to require local authorities to make available mortgage guarantees to assist the sale of certain local authority leaseholds of residential property; to enable local authorities to repurchase the leases of certain leaseholds of residential properties; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 April, and to be printed. [Bill 54.]

Orders of the Day

Channel Tunnel

4.25 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move,

That the draft Channel Tunnel (Security) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th February, be approved.

The purpose of the order is to provide the legal framework for measures to protect the channel tunnel and international train services from acts of terrorism. It seeks to do that in two ways: first, by creating a number of new and serious offences against the safety of the tunnel and trains, and secondly by providing the Secretary of State with powers to direct the concessionaires—Eurotunnel—and operators of channel tunnel trains to take measures to protect the tunnel, trains and related facilities against acts of violence. In both respects, the order applies to the channel tunnel a security framework very similar to that which applies to the civil aviation and maritime transport sectors.

Although the tunnel was built with private money and will be run as a commercial enterprise, the British and French Governments have an important role in ensuring that its security is satisfactorily provided and organised. Article 5 of the 1986 channel tunnel treaty called for a "special arrangement between the two Governments on security matters".

That arrangement has been made. The terms require each Government to ensure that the security of the fixed link, including the terminal areas, other sites and essential services, is satisfactorily provided and organised, and that the responsibilities are properly defined and exercised.

Thus, while the two Governments seek to co-ordinate policy, tunnel security is a matter for each Government separately. On the French side, it is normal for transport security to be undertaken by state agencies. In France—in the case of the tunnel, railway stations and freight terminals to be served by channel tunnel trains—most security functions will be undertaken by the police de l'air et frontières and the douanes, or customs, although the operators will provide much of the security infrastructure and equipment.

In the United Kingdom, the responsibility for security of all modes of transport rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. However, it is established United Kingdom practice to place a duty on the transport operator to put the necessary security procedures and facilities in place. In the field of civil aviation, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gives directions, under the Aviation Security Act 1982 and the Aviation and Maritime Security Act 1990, to airlines and airport operators, requiring them to carry out specified security measures. The same applies in the case of ports, ferries and shipping lines, under the 1990 Act.

The intention of the Channel Tunnel (Security) Order is to place Eurotunnel, British Rail and, in due course, British Rail's private-sector successors on the same legal footing. Each of those transport sectors is quite different from the others, and security arrangements must be tailored to suit operating circumstances and the nature of the threat; but the legal framework can and should be very similar.

Eurotunnel, British Rail and the French railway network —SNCF—have submitted their detailed security proposals to the two Governments, in accordance with article 5 of the 1986 treaty and clause 23 of the associated concession agreement. This order will provide the means of implementing and enforcing those arrangements in the United Kingdom under section 11 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987. In the course of drafting the order, Eurotunnel and British Rail were consulted about its terms and about the directions that the Secretary of State expects to make.

I should like to make one further point before referring briefly to the order itself. A police presence at the Folkestone terminal will be provided by the Kent constabulary, but it will be concerned primarily with law and order and not with the provision of protective security, which is the responsibility of Eurotunnel. In the event of a serious security incident, the Kent police would, of course, respond. The British Transport police, supported by the local police force, will fulfil the same role at the Waterloo international station and at Ashford international station when it opens, as well as at other stations and freight terminals throughout the country serviced by channel tunnel trains.

It may be helpful if I focus on the main provisions of the order and say a little about how they will operate in practice. The substance of the measure is contained in parts II and III.

Part II creates a number of new offences against the safety of the channel tunnel and channel tunnel trains. These are serious offences, including hijacking, seizing control of the tunnel system, destroying or damaging channel tunnel trains or the tunnel system, and other acts likely to endanger safety, including the making of threats. All of the offences created in part II provide that a person found guilty will be liable, on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for life—in each case, the same as the corresponding offence under the Aviation and Maritime Security Act 1990. Under article 9, proceedings for an offence under part II can be brought only by or with the consent of the Attorney-General.

The primary purpose of part III is to provide for the protection of channel tunnel trains and related facilities, the tunnel system, persons and property from acts of violence. It does this principally by giving the Secretary of State powers to direct Eurotunnel, train operators and others to put in place appropriate physical security measures and to carry out sensible security procedures.

Articles 14 and 15 are of particular importance. They enable the Secretary of State to require searches of traffic to be carried out before it may enter the tunnel system or board a channel tunnel train. This includes searches of passengers and their property, goods, the trains and the tunnel system itself. Outside the tunnel system, it includes also searches of premises used in connection with channel tunnel trains, such as Waterloo international terminal, including people and property on those premises.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): Will searches of trains coming to the United Kingdom be carried out by French authorities or by British authorities operating on French soil?

Mr. Freeman: The responsibility for searching any train, whether passenger or freight, travelling through France and entering the channel tunnel will rest with the French authorities. In the case of traffic travelling through the United Kingdom to the channel tunnel, all passengers and freight will be liable to search at the channel tunnel site. Anyone with freight or a car catching the Euro shuttle will be liable to be searched at Cheriton by security officers. All railway passengers will be liable to be searched at Waterloo international or at other appropriate points of embarkation. All British Rail freight will be liable to be searched at the point of origin—the point at which the container is packed—or at the consignor's premises if the consignor is an approved channel tunnel freight forwarder. I think that that should answer my hon. Friend's question. If not, however, I shall be happy to give way again.

Sir David Mitchell: What I am anxious to know is whether British customs or other officials will search cars and other vehicles before they enter the system on their way to the United Kingdom. I am thinking of customs, security and animal-health checks.

Mr. Freeman: There are three separate issues in that. The order deals with security—the threat from terrorism; it specifically does not cover customs, immigration or animal health. Those are separate issues. The order deals with security searches, and the responsibility for them will rest with the French rather than the British authorities for trains entering the tunnel from Sangatte.

I shall write to my hon. Friend to give him fuller details about customs and immigration procedures and animal health, but the general principle that applies is that the French and British authorities will carry out the same functions in their respective countries as they would carry out for airline or ferry passengers moving between Britain and France. Although the question that my hon. Friend asked is not relevant to the order, if he tables a question to me I shall give him a clear answer. It will be for the convenience of the House if my answer appears in the *Official Report.*

Finally, it may help the House if I speak briefly about the preparations for opening the tunnel. That is the context in which the order is set. The plan is that Eurotunnel will open the tunnel on 6 May, when Her Majesty the Queen and President Mitterrand will officiate at ceremonies. Eurotunnel's freight and passenger services are matters for the company; it will provide a private sector service and it will announce when the freight and passenger shuttles will run.

Scheduled rail passenger services run by British Rail, SNCF and the Belgian state railway will commence this summer. Delivery of the train sets is progressing well, and testing is under way. Services from Waterloo, the only station where passengers will be able to join a train, will take about three hours to reach Paris, and the Government believe that that will offer a competitive service in terms of both convenience and pricing compared with the alternative modes of transport.

I can confirm that Railfreight Distribution is ready to commence services as soon as the tunnel is open for business. It is ready to go now. The intention is that by the end of the year about 11 freight trains a day will run in each direction, and in due course that number could increase to the capacity of the tunnel, which is 35 freight trains a day in both directions. Class 92 locos, which have been ordered by British Rail, should be available by the end of the year.

[Mr. Freeman]

I plan to lay imminently the regulations concerning the concession that 44-tonne lorries with containers or swap bodies should be allowed in this country if they are moving to or from rail terminals——

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): As the Minister has gone into the wider question of opening the facilities, and as freight facilities through the tunnel will be available in the relatively near future, has any firm decision been made on the freight terminal arrangements for west and south Yorkshire?

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has now signed agreements in connection with the Wakefield freight terminal in west Yorkshire. Its construction will depend largely on public funding, partly from the local authority concerned—as the hon. Gentleman will know, it has taken action by selling one asset and retaining the cash in the expectation of making a contribution. Other funding rests with central Government to comment upon and support, and that proposal is with me now.

When the hon. Gentleman mentions south Yorkshire I assume that he is referring to the terminal at Doncaster, which may or may not require more modest public sector funding to support it. My understanding is that it was initiated and made progress on the assumption that essentially it would be financed without European or British Government funding. British Rail has committed itself to Wakefield and not to Doncaster. That may change, as has been speculated on a number of occasions, but it has not changed so far. We shall certainly keep the situation under review.

I answered a question yesterday, which may help the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. It was tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) and it concerned the intensification of use and noise on existing freight lines. I made the point that we accept that the Land Compensation Act 1973 has relevance to trains—especially freight trains—which work existing British Rail lines, where new work has been undertaken. It is a matter of legal interpretation and I simply draw the attention of the House to that answer.

I confirm that it is the intention that day and night services beyond London, principally up the east and west coast main lines, but including services to the west country and Wales, will enter service by the end of next year.

If there are points raised in the debate, I shall be happy to seek to answer them. The Government believe that the channel tunnel creates a marvellous opportunity for business men and for passengers in Britain who seek to go abroad for business or leisure. That it has been built and is ready for business is a great achievement. It will greatly benefit the rail system for passengers and freight and the order helps safeguard the tunnel and the traffic which will use it. We wish the channel tunnel well.

4.40 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Let me start by making it plain that I strongly support the channel tunnel and I hope that it will be a success. I speak for most on the Opposition Benches, possibly not all, but I am sure that the same applies to those on the Conservative Benches. We want to see that the tunnel is a success, that it brings maximum benefits to Britain and that those benefits are not confined to the south-east.

Clearly, if the tunnel is to be a success, it must be secure and safe. It is difficult to separate security from safety, although we recognise that the order is mainly concerned with security and security from terrorists. I suppose that the channel tunnel is the prestige engineering project of the remaining part of the century—perhaps not so much for France, but certainly for Britain—and it commands a great deal of public attention. As it attracts such attention, it is likely to attract terrorists and slightly potty attention-seekers who may threaten it.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): You mean politicians.

Mr. Dobson: Only politicians on the Government Benches. However, in view of their general ineffectiveness, they could not blow up a tunnel.

We need a secure channel tunnel system and therefore we need a legal framework for it. The order provides that legal framework and I thank the Minister for his introductory remarks and for supplying briefing material. The general idea is that the approach is comparable to the security measures that apply to air and sea safety. However, the situations are not strictly comparable, an issue to which the hon. Member for Basingstoke may have been referring. While it is equally possible to blow up an aircraft, a ship and a train in a tunnel, it is impossible to blow up the air or the sea.

The order may prove to be adequate as far as it goes. It is an effort to bring the law into line with current developments and to cope with current threats. The present body of the law is not satisfactory.

It is commonplace in all systems of security that they are as strong as their weakest link. Besides the legal provisions, we need physical security measures such as adequate perimeter fencing. More importantly, we must ensure that the security system is in the hands of staff who are properly trained and adequate for the task. Without that, the system will be almost bound to fail because those who will seek to subvert it will look for the weakest point and eventually find it. We must consider, and continue to consider, the parts that may be the least secure and the arrangements that may lead to bother.

We must consider the relationship between the Kent police and the French authorities, which will be responsible, as I understand it, for the tunnel and the terminals. We must ensure that the liaison between themn is satisfactory to us and to them so that they both feel secure about the respective arrangements.

The British Transport police will be responsible for the security of the rest of the line, for the Waterloo terminal and, as I understand it, any other terminal in London—eventually, presumably, St. Pancras—and also for the freight terminals around the country. Is the Minister satisfied that the wide experience and expertise of the British Transport police, which they have acquired over the years, are being made available to the Kent police, that the Kent police are making proper use of it and that they will maintain adequate relations?

In an age in which terrorism is rife, many judgments must be made on how to respond to threats or warnings. They require assessment by some human being somewhere in the chain of command. Hundreds of warnings are

received about threats to the security of the railway and underground system in London. Stations are closed in response to those warnings on only a few occasions, because an individual somewhere near the top of the chain of command assesses all the information available and feels sufficiently secure to decide that it is safe not to close one or more stations in the system. If that person does not feel satisfied and secure, he closes the station.

For such a person in the chain of command to be satisfied with anything to do with the channel tunnel, he will have to be satisfied that at all stages and in all places in Britain and France, the proper procedures have been followed and the buildings and rolling stock have been properly protected and inspected. Most importantly, that person must be satisfied that the staff were properly vetted before they were appointed, are properly accredited and properly trained and have been properly supervised. If that is not the case and he does not feel secure, on receiving some warning, that person may have to take it more seriously and order the closing of the tunnel to ensure that people are safe. He must feel confident that the system is working properly.

Problems may arise. At the moment, the people in the British Transport police who make such decisions have confidence in the system because they are accustomed to working with British Rail, London Underground Ltd. and their own staff. With regard to the tunnel, they will have to feel secure that the arrangements made by the Kent police and the French police are satisfactory.

The Minister has not touched on something that is quite possible under the order—the contracting out of some of the security duties to private sector security firms. A feeling of security and safety is crucial to the success of the tunnel. If the Minister and Eurotunnel want to contract out security duties to people like Group 4, they can write off any thought of profits because no one will use the tunnel if such people are involved. The Minister and Eurotunnel must stick with the British Transport police—the BTP—and others of our police forces. They must not try to save money by contracting out the basic duties of the state and the organs of the state. That is why we believe that no one other than the BTP should be involved in such matters all over the system in Britain. It seems that the responsibility of the British Transport police will range from the tunnel up to, and including, the Waterloo terminal.

What about the arrangements for freight and the security of freight terminals? As my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) pointed out, it is far from clear whether some of the terminals will ever exist. The terminal in Wakefield that the Minister confidently proclaimed was going ahead is but a theory at the moment. We do not know what security arrangements are being made there.

The House must be satisfied that there will be proper security arrangements wherever freight is assembled. If that is not the case, the well-informed terrorist will be able to load something on to the freight train, time it properly and explode it in the tunnel. As I said at the outset, the strength of any security system depends on the strength of its weakest link. If terrorists can gain access because of shoddy and slipshod approaches to security in parts of the country well away from the tunnel, they will exploit those arrangements.

Does the Minister intend that the Secretary of State should exercise his power to require restricted zone status on all or part of the freight terminals around the country? Given that, as a result of the Government's obsession with the private sector, some freight terminals may be privately owned, will the Minister guarantee that the BTP will have the right of entry and search in respect of all those terminals and that there will be no question of a challenge to their authority in that respect? Will the Minister guarantee that there will be secure perimeters? Will he guarantee that staff will be properly vetted and that no dodgy outfits will supply security guards for those premises? People inside and outside the House, and everyone who wants to use the channel tunnel, must be interested in getting reassuring and honest answers to those questions.

We realise that there are problems about public disclosure of certain security measures and arrangements. However, security is related to safety. When it comes to safety, there is an obligation to disclose, to the public and to those who are interested, what safety arrangements exist. I do not believe that that duty of disclosure has been met by Eurotunnel, by the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority or by the Government. There has been far too much secrecy and much of that secrecy has been bad for the tunnel's reputation. It has not protected the reputation of the tunnel. I have always believed in the old but good saying, "Tell the truth and shame the devil."

There is also concern, among people who are bothered about such things, about the independence of the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority. The authority will have authorised the safety system and it might then supervise it. It will not be keen to point out shortcomings in the system that it has helped bring into being.

Information on safety tests has been kept secret. It was extremely foolish of Eurotunnel not to allow television cameras in during the quite proper and deliberate overloading of the electricity circuits when one of the insulators collapsed. The television cameras should have been there to show that a great deal of damage was not caused. I cannot understand why the television cameras were kept out.

If what Eurotunnel was saying was true, it would have been better to say that what happened was a minor incident and almost an automatic part of the testing. Instead, Eurotunnel created an aura of secrecy and all sorts of harum-scarum stories have been told and that is to the disadvantage of the company and to all of us who believe that the tunnel should be working safely as soon as possible.

As the Minister knows, there has been disquiet all along about the decision that drivers and passengers should travel with their vehicles on the shuttles. There is also still disquiet about the open-sided wagons which are intended to carry lorries. They are not thought to be very safe. I have received expressions of concern from the Fire Brigades Union—the FBU—about aspects of fire safety in the tunnel.

People may say that the FBU has a vested interest, and it does. Members of the FBU will have to enter the tunnel and fight an inferno if one occurs. Everyone else will be running away, but FBU members will be entering the tunnel to try to put things right. The Government should have taken more notice of the Fire Brigades Union than of some alleged safety experts, sitting comfortably in their offices, who will be sitting comfortably there if there is a catastrophe.

At the moment, fire fighting arrangements are to be provided by the Kent fire brigade. As I understand it, it

[Mr. Dobson]

would be possible for Eurotunnel to provide its own private fire fighting arrangements under the law as it stands. I do not think that that is sound. It would damage the reputation of the tunnel and the Minister should guarantee that the Government will not permit Eurotunnel to use any fire services other than the Kent fire service on this side of the channel and its opposite number in France.

We must also consider the arrangements for the control of goods carried through the tunnel. What will happen to hazardous substances? As all hon. Members will be aware, there is no hazchem code in Europe. As that code has been very effective here, what efforts have the Government been taking to extend it to Europe? I hope that the Government are not back-tracking on the code or regarding it as a burden on business. It is a good idea, it adds to safety and it helps business.

I accept that I have referred to safety matters, but they affect security. If the system is intrinsically less safe than it might be, what might have been a relatively minor incident could turn into a catastrophe as a result of some inherently unsafe aspect of the operation of the tunnel.

We do not have enough information to judge the order entirely, partly because safety studies have been kept secret. As I understand it, Eurotunnel has still to present the full safety case to the safety authority. I understand that it has yet to carry out the full dummy runs with live passengers. The safety case cannot be approved by the safety authority until those dummy runs have been carried out to the safety authority's satisfaction.

I am told that similar runs have not yet been carried out in respect of the shuttle. It is getting rather late. If those tests are not carried out in the next few months, it will be very difficult for the authority to stand up and say that it is not satisfied when that might defer for a month or so the opening of the tunnel. Sufficient progress in that regard has not been made.

Recent delays in the commercial use of the tunnel are as yet largely unexplained by Eurotunnel. Whenever something happens and a swift, honest and straightforward explanation is not proffered, that damages the tunnel's reputation. The best way to calm people's fears is to tell the truth and get it out as quickly as possible.

I believe, and have always believed, that the channel tunnel should be a great boon to this country, giving us access to the benefits of the European railway network. That would be of advantage to those who want to travel to Europe and to those who want to shift their freight there. If the tunnel is going to work, it is necessary absolutely to convince potential users that it is secure and safe.

I welcome the order, but I am not entirely convinced that it is fully satisfactory. The Minister must, in all honesty, answer several questions to the House and to the people who desperately want to travel through the tunnel and send their goods through it.

4.59 pm

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) understandably made the point that it is very hard for the Opposition and, indeed, others to judge the adequacy of security and safety arrangements for the tunnel. I underline the hon. Gentleman's comment; we all have to accept what is being offered to us. The British public and others who will use the tunnel must place their faith in the safety arrangements. The order has hon. Members' agreement and support. The Chamber is very quiet—it is almost empty. My right hon. Friend the Minister will have little satisfaction in knowing that if the Government have got it wrong and if anything should go wrong, the Chamber will be very full indeed. A tremendous amount is at stake and there is great public interest in making sure that the Government have got it right.

The hon. Gentleman said that he supports the concept of the channel tunnel and that he wishes it success. I am not a supporter of the channel tunnel, but I wish it success. Many years ago, before our first application to join the European Community, somebody said to me:

"What is this ditch that us from France divides? 'Tis but a moat."

I wish that a major geological fault had been found in the channel which would have prevented us from even dreaming about the tunnel linking the continent with the United Kingdom. However, the tunnel is built. One of my fundamental objections to it was and remains that the main users will be heavy lorries and many motor cars which will use it as a rolling motorway. That will inflict considerable environmental damage on the county of Kent. The major source of tunnel revenue will be traffic using our roads and that short stretch of tunnel as a rolling motorway.

It is obviously vital to have got safety and security right. I am aware that a tremendous amount of work has been done by the Department of Transport and by authorities in Kent in ensuring that ambulance, fire and police arrangements are adequate. I have the utmost faith that they have got them as right as they possibly can. I have no wish to intrude upon the continuing negotiations to get the arrangements right. Although my constituents and all the people of Kent want to make sure that services are well provided, they want reassurance that the costs of providing such services will be borne fully by the channel tunnel authorities. I would welcome such reassurance from my right hon. Friend on that point.

Another point that is just as important as cost is the capacity of the services to deal with an emergency in the tunnel without overstraining available resources for my constituents and other people in the county. Therefore, I ask my right hon. Friend to comment on that point in particular.

Let us consider, for example, ambulance services. I have no doubt that training will be adequate to cope with emergencies in or at the end of the tunnel, but it would not be acceptable if, in an emergency, many ambulances from the county were suddenly taken away from their normal duties and other emergencies could not be covered. Will my right hon. Friend give a specific assurance to me and to the people of Kent that they will not be deprived of emergency ambulance, police and fire cover in the event of anything going seriously wrong in the tunnel? I am sure that my right hon. Friend will understand the importance of that matter in terms of cost and capacity and that he will reassure us accordingly.

I now raise another small point on which I doubt whether we will be able to have a full and satisfactory answer now. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras made a very important point about bomb scares. One hopes that the security arrangements will prevent real security problems, but the biggest problems will be threats. If the authorities are to take a threat seriously, they will have to close the tunnel and the ensuing congestion at either end

and the chaos would be great. As the hon. Gentleman said, there will be the problem of potty individuals issuing threat after threat. It will require considerable judgment on the part of people in control to decide when such individuals are potty and when they are serious.

My right hon. Friend mentioned penalties for threats and said that life imprisonment could be the maximum sentence. The travelling public need to know a little more about just how the channel tunnel authorities will try to prevent frequent disruption of traffic in the face of such threats. I suspect that the answer is to emphasise the nature of penalties and the steps that will be taken to trace the idiots who make such threats. We must be serious about imposing very tough penalties, because the consequences for the travelling public will be great. Reassurance on that point would be most helpful.

My right hon. Friend mentioned that people and cars would be liable to search and that freight could be searched at certain points. Will being liable to search mean that people will be regularly searched? Will there be an automatic search process as is applied when one travels on an aircraft or, indeed, when one enters the Palace of Westminster? Will there be automatic scanning? One hopes that people will not be delayed and subjected to rigorous searches, but it is obvious that there must be some security checks.

This matter is hardly relevant to the order, but I now refer to my right hon. Friend's parliamentary answer on the intensification of noise on existing routes which will be used for freight transport. I certainly welcome progress in helping people on such routes, but, unfortunately, the problem always lies in the small print. Even my right hon. Friend's answer on that point today referred to where new works had taken place. Thank heavens my constituency will not be affected in that way—I hope. Existing routes in my constituency could be affected, but they are not designated as freight routes. I feel strongly that we must not be too legalistic or small-minded. If we are going to make the tunnel work, we have to be fairly generous with compensation arrangements and noise insulation for routes that are affected by intensification of use, but which have not necessarily been created by extensive new works in the legal sense.

My right hon. Friend mentioned 44-tonne vehicles and the order to allow them to travel on roads to the freight terminals. I am very suspicious of that. I voted against an increase in lorry weights and I will do so again. I can understand the argument for 44-tonne vehicles going only to terminals, but I should like to know how tough we will be on restricting routes to freight terminals. I find it difficult to understand, under our system of road transport, how tough we can be in preventing vehicles from using certain routes. Are we satisfied that they will not cross inadequate bridges or that money will be made available to strengthen bridges? I am a great believer in freight routes. Are we to have freight routes and heavy lorry routes and will rules be applied to the 44-tonne vehicles? I fear that that could be the thin end of the wedge and that we might see an order increasing lorry weights more generally.

Of course one welcomes the order. One hopes that the channel tunnel will be a transport success. It is vital that we get the security and safety arrangements right. One hopes that this order contains arrangements that will prove entirely satisfactory.

5.9 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the order. I have an interest to declare as a member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers and, for many years, I was the co-chairman of the all-party channel tunnel group.

I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate). Although I agreed with some of what he said, I thought that he was somewhat unrealistic. I understand his good constituency argument that the Government must ensure that, in the event of an accident in the tunnel, the emergency services of Kent should continue to function as if nothing had occurred. Heaven forbid that it should happen, but if a Boeing 747 crashed in Kent at the same time as he had an accident in his car on the M20, there might be some delay before the ambulance arrived to pluck him from the wreckage. What he asked for was unrealistic, although I am sure that it will read well in his local paper.

I agreed with what the hon. Gentleman said about 44-tonne lorries. Like him, I have always voted against heavy goods vehicles during my parliamentary career, such as it is. I have usually been on the losing side in those votes. I would also like to know how the Minister proposes to enforce the Government restriction that 44-tonne vehicles should be used only to and from rail terminals. Like the hon. Member for Faversham, I support lorry routes. If a lorry route went through the middle of his constituency, the hon. Gentleman might change his mind. The enforcement of restrictions on heavy goods vehicles is a difficult problem. We are entitled to some assurances from the Minister about how the restrictions will be enforced.

The hon. Member for Faversham mentioned putting freight on existing rail lines. I should have thought that at least some hon. Members would vaguely support such a policy. The horrific scenario is painted that putting freight on rail will cause enormous noise problems for people living beside railway lines. It has always fascinated me that people who buy houses alongside railway lines promptly write to their Member of Parliament to complain about the noise that trains make. I would be delighted to send the hon. Gentleman a working timetable of British Rail's freight division, as it was called in the 1960s. He will discover that considerably more freight ran on the lines of Kent than today. It consisted mostly of loose-coupled vehicles, which used to clank and rattle along at 25 mph and caused considerably more noise than the roller-bearing airbrake rolling stock that is used today.

Sir Roger Moate: I trust that the hon. Gentleman will accept that he is being somewhat flippant. He is older than many of my constituents, but even he must recognise that the early 1960s were more than 30 years ago and that things have become quieter. The serious argument, however, is that much of that freight traffic will be travelling at night—freight trains are noisier than many modern passenger trains—causing considerable disturbance, particularly for people who are not used to trains travelling at that time. It is a new disturbance. All that we are asking for is some help through insulation grants.

Mr. Snape: Those grants involve a few thousands of pounds of public money. It is the sort of expenditure that the hon. Gentleman and his party regularly vote against when it is directed at other hon. Members' constituencies.

[Mr. Snape]

We should wait and see—I do not accept that trains passing through Kent at night will disturb those who live alongside railway lines. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Gentleman has just accused me of flippancy, but now he is having a little giggle. Two major motorways run alongside my constituency, which also contains Bescot marshalling yard. That yard was tipped to be one of the channel tunnel freight terminals, but unfortunately that has not proved to be the case.

In the 20 years that I have represented my constituency, I cannot remember a single complaint about that yard, although wagons regularly shunt up and down it. I receive many complaints about motorway noise because of its all-pervasive nature. Before some of the people for whom the hon. Gentleman speaks rush to judgment about the additional noise of modern freight trains, they should wait to see what happens when those trains are introduced.

It is strange for a prominent member of the Conservative party such as the hon. Gentleman to propose spending public money on a hazard that has not yet occurred. If Labour Members ever called for such expenditure, the cry of the Conservative party would be, "Where is the money coming from?" It seems that plenty of public money is available when hypothetical problems are forecast.

If we go down the road of placing additional costs on rail freight, if I can use that ill-timed simile, there is a danger of increasing costs to such an extent that we shall never achieve the much-vaunted transfer of freight from road to rail. If we make things too expensive, carriers and hauliers will use other methods. I do not know the hon. Gentleman's views on additional road traffic, although he advanced the relevant and valid argument that, if the channel tunnel were used as a shuttle service for cars and heavy goods vehicles, considerably more traffic would be created in his part of the world. But he should bear in mind my argument when he talks about loading additional costs on Britain's much under-utilised railway system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) talked at considerable length about safety. I understand the fears that he expressed, but some of them were exaggerated. Having spent some of my life on the Committees that discussed the two hybrid Bills on the channel tunnel project, and on the Select Committee that considered the project on the last, successful occasion, I can say that a considerable amount of our time was devoted to safety. During the passage of those Bills, we sought and received assurances that the intergovernmental safety committee, to which my hon. Friend referred, would consist of not only railway experts, but representatives of the fire brigade and the police. Those services will be directly involved in safety matters once the great project is completed. We should keep matters in perspective.

The project does not approach the limits of human technology; it does not involve sending people in capsules around the moon. People will be making a train journey that has been made possible by the completion of a great project. The people who say, "You'll never get me down there", are the same people who put their trust in someone else when they climb in a silver tube and fly through the air at 35,000 ft at 400 mph. Given the consequences of anything going wrong, I know which vehicle I would prefer to be in. The safety level of railways nationwide and worldwide is recognised in the order.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras referred to hazardous goods. I understand that the hybrid Bill Committee that gave the go-ahead for the project some years ago received an assurance that goods classed as dangerous would not be allowed through the channel tunnel. If my hon. Friend stands at St. Stephen's entrance, he will see fleets of petrol tankers and other vehicles—which, I hasten to add, are not driven by hon. Members—which carry hazardous materials within yards of the building. We accept those vehicles, despite the fact that there is no signalling system to prevent one from running into another. We should not worry too much about such matters in the context of the orders because petrol tankers and other vehicles that carry hazardous goods will not pass through the tunnel.

Mr. Dobson: I recall my hon. Friend describing in graphic detail the long hours that he spent in Committee discussing the channel tunnel Bill. There is some doubt as to whether the undertakings given about hazardous substances will be complied with. Those undertakings were given to my hon. Friend and his colleagues in Committee because they thought that hazardous substances should not go through the tunnel. Some doubt has now been raised about whether they should be permitted to do so.

Mr. Snape: The assurances to which my hon. Friend refers were given before they were sought. At the outset, we were told that hazardous goods—we attempted to define some of them—would not pass through the tunnel. At the risk of offending my hon. Friend, I must say that I would be fairly relaxed if hazardous goods passed through the tunnel. As a former railway signal man, I would prefer to take my chances on a train passing through the channel tunnel followed by a fleet of tankers because the train would be protected by the signalling system, rather than looking in the mirror of my car while travelling on the M40 and seeing a petrol tanker flying up behind me. The Minister should tell us whether the assurances that we received are still valid today. If so, we may be concerning ourselves unnecessarily.

In debating this order, we must reflect on the fact that we are not talking about a channel tunnel or Eurotunnel, as it is sometimes known. We are talking about three tunnels: a tunnel for trains travelling in one direction, a tunnel for trains travelling in the other direction and a service tunnel. I accept my hon. Friend's point that, in the event of a bomb outrage in the tunnel, considerable damage could be done. However, I understand that to pierce the walls of the tunnel would take something equivalent to the sort of bomb that was dropped on Nagasaki or Hiroshima. We do not envisage terrorist organisations possessing such weapons, or at least getting them into the tunnel.

I hope that the Minister will reassure us that the penalties on people making malicious calls will be severe and will be invoked in the event of their being found guilty of perpetrating such calls. Before I left the railways 20 years ago, it became the fashion to telephone main line railway stations with bomb threats. Initially, because it was a new fashion, the station was invariably closed. However, the British Transport police acquired the expertise to separate the nutcases from the likely genuine calls. I

endorse what my hon. Friend said. I hope that that expertise will be used in this project. Undoubtedly, the sort of sad characters who perpetrate such outrages will be attracted to do so by such a great civil engineering project. We have a much better means of tracing such calls because of the new electronic exchanges. There is nothing like a salutary punishment for the perpetrators who are caught to dissuade other people from behaving in that way.

Those who have been involved at any length with the project will be aware of the question of rabies. I am not sure whether that matter is covered by the terms of the order. A great number of people in this country appear to believe that the continent is full of rabid dogs and foxes. Whether or not it is covered by the order, I hope that the Minister can assure us that that is not the case. I hope that proper precautions will be taken to prevent the spread of rabies to the United Kingdom.

I understand that about 330 frontier control staff are being provided for the complete system, including the Folkestone and Calais terminals. That is a considerable reduction from the 800 or 900 staff originally envisaged. How does that number compare with the number of staff responsible for those matters who are employed by the competition, especially the ferries? I hope that I can take with me Tory Members who espouse a belief in free enterprise and competition. It would be unfair if this great project was hampered by having to meet the costs of an excessive number of security and customs staff, compared with those employed by other modes of transport.

My hon. Friend rightly reminded us of the lack of freight terminal facilities in Yorkshire, let alone the security to protect them. We are in a similar position in the west midlands, although the Minister will probably tell me that the existing Landaur street terminal in Birmingham is sufficient in the short term. Living fairly close to that terminal, I have to tell him that I will not believe him. I give him that warning in advance.

The Hams Hall project has been brought forward. I hope that the Minister can reassure us that the project will be completed and up and running—if that is the right term —sooner rather than later because people in the west midlands also wish to benefit from this project.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): My hon. Friend will be aware that, although the Hams Hall freight terminal project has been approved, that approval depends on the completion of the new Birmingham north relief road. That will create a considerable delay and ensure that what my hon. Friend fears most will happen—there will not be adequate freight rail terminal facilities in the west midlands for a number of years, well after the tunnel is up and running.

Mr. Snape: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says. I know that the Minister will do his best to respond later. My hon. Friend has emphasised a problem that concerns us greatly. Many of us could not understand why Bescot siding was not chosen as the channel tunnel terminal. Having had only about 120 years to measure it, British Rail has now discovered that it is too small for its purpose. The quicker these matters are resolved and adequate security under the terms of the order is installed, the better it will be for the economy of the west midlands and for the successful running of this great project.

I conclude by saying that I welcome the order and the project. To all those who have expressed fear about travelling through the tunnel, I can say making five return journeys in a fairly short time along the west coast main line passing through Kilsby tunnel just south of Rugby —as my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) and I have done—is the equivalent of travelling through the channel tunnel. I have been making the journey for 20 years and my hon. Friend has been doing it for a year or two, and we are relatively unscathed. Although we have aged considerably while we have been here, like the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate), I do not think we can blame that on passing through a tunnel. The project will be an enormous success and I welcome it.

5.27 pm

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): Obviously, the focus of this debate is security, which is an important matter, but I shall touch on the more mundane matter of noise which is a concern to my constituents, as it is to many of my hon. Friends. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) took to task my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) for being so concerned about noise. The hon. Gentleman was asking what people expected if they bought a house next to a railway line.

Are not we all in favour of getting more freight off the roads and on to the railways? Indeed, we are. There is a price to pay for that. It is not a simple matter of people buying a house by a railway line and knowing what they are in for. If the hon. Gentleman came to my constituency and saw the way in which British Rail has taken down trees, shrubs and so on—the protective barrier between the existing railway line and the back of houses, especially when the railway line is on a viaduct and the noise tumbles down to the back gardens in my constituency—he would realise that it is a different matter from simply buying a house next to a railway line and taking what one gets.

It is not a matter of people anticipating a future noise problem, unaware of exactly how bad it will be. The hon. Gentleman may not know this, but British Rail has already undertaken trial runs of freight trains and international passenger trains through south-east London and Kent. My constituents are already aware of the sort of noise that they will have to put up with at night—sometimes it will be fivefold or tenfold—when the channel tunnel freight trains start in earnest. Therefore, it is not an unanticpated and unknown problem—people are beginning to be aware of it.

I should be grateful if the Minister could tell me and my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham the present thinking on the intensification of use of existing lines, as opposed to entirely new railway lines. We know that draft noise regulations affecting this matter are being considered at present, and consultation is taking place.

May I also raise a point that my right hon. Friend may have touched on in a written answer to a question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley)? I think that the answer was given yesterday or the day before, but it has not yet been printed in *Hansard*. My right hon. Friend asked about the interpretation of compensation claims under the Land Compensation Act 1973.

My right hon. Friend the Minister may be aware that my constituency, and no doubt others nearby, has recently been flooded with letters from people claiming to be compensation consultants who are saying that people who have houses alongside the line that is to be used for freight

[Mr. John Horam]

and passenger services for the channel tunnel have a good case for getting compensation under the Act. A letter that my constituents have received——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman has had a free run about noise. This debate is about security.

Mr. Horam: The Minister raised the question of noise in his opening remarks, and suggested that he would be prepared to say something about it.

I conclude by saying that the compensation experts say:

"The Act also specifies that the Railway Authority must pay all surveyors and legal fees."

In other words, there is no cost to anyone who takes up the offer made by those people to pursue a claim for compensation against British Rail. I am surprised by that. My right hon. Friend answered an Adjournment debate initiated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling and said that he would look into the legal basis for the view taken by the compensation experts. I should be grateful if he could refer to that in his winding-up speech.

5.33 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Some years ago, I was embarrassed on the subject of Eurotunnel in Northern Ireland. A constituent met me and said that he was glad to see that I owned 10 per cent. of Eurotunnel. "Pardon?" I said. He told me that he had read that information in a diary piece in a London newspaper when he had visited London.

I investigated the matter, and discovered that I had incorrectly declared my handful of shares in the company in the Register of Members' Interests. Apparently, an hon. Member is only supposed to register shareholdings if he has 10 per cent. of a company. I have since calculated I own about 1 ft out of the 32 miles of the tunnel. I declare my interest on that basis.

I apologise to the Minister for not being here for his opening speech, but I was delayed and have just flown in from Belfast. It would be foolish for anyone to think that the tunnel will not be a major target for terrorism, and it must be treated in that context.

Will there be the same rigid security controls at the tunnel as there are, for example, at airports for passengers and freight? A person cannot put baggage on an aeroplane unless he gets on the plane. Will a person be able to put baggage on the train going through the Eurotunnel without being on the train as a passenger?

Drivers of freight lorries will not be with their lorries, but in separate compounds. What distance will the drivers be from the lorries? If the distance is considerable, the risk is that an evil minded person could place a bomb in his vehicle and then be quite a distance away from it in a compound of the train.

Eurotunnel was built by a large number of Irish workers from the Republic. I do not want to be seen to be Irish-bashing this afternoon, but it is important that we recognise not only the great contribution made by Irish construction workers, but the fact that, while they were in the south of England, they created their own community. Those workers had their own community activities, their own chaplaincy and, of course, their own Irish pubs. It is not generally known that, at those pubs, there were considerable collections taken for IRA funds during the construction of the tunnel. That did happen, and has been reported.

I mention that because it is not just Eurotunnel which is operating the system, and many subcontracts have been allocated. I have read of two that have gone to southern Irish firms. The catering has been subcontracted to an excellent catering firm from Dublin called Bewley's Anyone who was at the Welsh match last Saturday week may have thoroughly enjoyed a cup of coffee in Bewley's in Grafton street. None the less, it is a southern Irish firm. I think that a subsidiary called Campbell's will be doing the catering for Eurotunnel.

I understand that another southern Irish firm may be about to be allocated the contract for duty-free shopping.

Mr. Wilson: It has been.

Mr. Taylor: That has taken place. Will there be proper screening and vetting, not just of the staff employed by Eurotunnel, but of all the staff employed by subcontractors in catering, shop sales and other matters connected to the operation of the tunnel?

The Eurotunnel is a magnificent project, and the civil engineering and construction industry deserves congratulations. I hope that the tunnel brings benefits not just to the south of England, but to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Sir Alastair Morton, the chairman of Eurotunnel —I say this as a shareholder—deserves congratulations on his determination to see the project through to a successful conclusion.

5.27 pm

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): I start by saying to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) that I ceased to be the hon. Member for Basingstoke 10 years ago. He is that much out of date.

I raised earlier the matters of customs and animal health, as well as security. My right hon. Friend the Minister rightly said that the order was concerned only with security, and that he would write to me on the other matters.

There ought to be close co-operation between those who carry out searches of vehicles to ensure that there are no rabid animals—or non-rabid animals, such as family pets —being smuggled in cars, and those who carry out animal health checks. Those concerned with customs should work in close co-operation with those who are involved in security. There are different skills involved, but a sense of alertness and awareness is needed, and all those functions ought to be closely linked.

I do not know whether the checks will carried out in the same building or in the open air. Those involved should be linked by radio telephone, and I regard it as being of considerable importance that they should each have some understanding of the others' work. That is not to decry the expertise that is particularly required in security. I hope that my right hon. Friend will take that on board.

I agree with the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East about those who fear travelling in the tunnel, and who talk about claustrophobia. I have asked people who express that view whether they had ever travelled from Sloane square to King's Cross, as that is just about equivalent to the length of time they would be travelling through the Eurotunnel. They do that daily, without a murmur of worry

or concern, but they appear to believe that they will suffer from claustrophobia if they spend the same amount of time in the channel tunnel.

I should also like to congratulate, through my right hon. Friend, all those who worked so hard behind the scenes to ensure that safety and security have the absolute priority. I wish my right hon. Friend, and the tunnel, great success.

5.38 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I rise to make a quick point about the costs of the service, which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) and by my hon. Friend the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape).

It is clear that hon. Members on both sides of the House take security seriously and that we are anxious to have a first-class security service for the tunnel. Obviously, the quality of the service depends on the money and personnel that we are willing to put into it to carry out the tasks. I want to ask some questions about the distribution of the costs of the service.

It is clear that the service will have to be co-ordinated and that there will have to be some unity between the security on each side of the channel and between the United Kingdom security services provided in the tunnel, at the freight and passenger terminals around the country and on the line. The costs of security in the tunnel will be borne by Eurotunnel, but were the terminals or stations come into private ownership, the costs will undoubtedly be borne by the owners of those sites. I am worried about the costs that will apply to the line as a whole. I assume that those costs will be absorbed by Railtrack. I assume that Railtrack, through the franchising director, will have the job of sorting out where those costs fall.

I ask the Minister to ensure that the costs that apply to the line are not spread generally around the costs of Railtrack. He will know that we have had a considerable shock in the past few hours in the revelation of the costs that Railtrack will seek to impose, in my case in West Yorkshire. The Minister said that, on privatisation, there would be an increase of some 50 per cent. in the costs. As I understand it, the charges have now been multiplied by a factor of four. I hope to raise that matter with the Minister separately.

It is important that the costs of safety, which ought to be high because the channel tunnel must be a quality service, are borne by that service and not by users of the rail system as a whole.

5.41 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I endorse the final point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell). The seriousness of yesterday's announcement of Railtrack charges has not yet begun to soak in, but I assure the Minister that it will be well advertised long before the charges take effect.

I should say to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) that one of the most attractive advertisements for the channel tunnel that I have heard so far is that Bewley's will provide the catering. That will ensure a good cup of coffee and soda bread when one arrives at the terminal at either end. It is a remarkable achievement that Aer Rianta, the Irish state duty-free firm has snatched the duty-free rights from under the nose of other companies on both sides of the channel tunnel. It just shows what a state-owned enterprise can do when it is given the freedom to operate commercially outside its own territory. What a slap in the face to Conservative Members that every time they go into the channel tunnel they will pass through the Irish Government's duty-free shops. That is what I call good public enterprise, and it is a pity that the Government despise it in the way that they do.

We are here, as I am sure that you will remind me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to discuss security in the tunnel. We are here almost on a technicality. It is pointed out at the end of the order that the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments accepted the advice of the legal adviser that the existing orders had to be revised to take account of the new circumstances of the channel tunnel. For example, paragraph 4 creates a new offence of hijacking a channel tunnel train. That opens up all sorts of mental images—a sort of "Take me to Cuba". If one did that with an accent, it would probably be racist.

On the surface, the order is a technicality, but, as the debate has shown, there are many serious worries to be taken into account. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and others have done, it is proper to place the legitimate worries on record. I am sure that they will be read and considered, and that the necessary steps will be taken. There is no question of doubting the good faith of any of the parties involved. It is in everyone's interest to get it right.

It is important to stress that, in raising our worries, the priority for Opposition Members and, I am sure, for Conservative Members is that there should be no impediment to the success of the tunnel project. We want it to succeed. We want to encourage people to use it. We want it to be established. We also want to get rid of initial understandable but irrational fears about the safety of using the tunnel. It is immensely in everyone's interests that the necessary precautions are put in place to prevent anything from happening that would undermine public confidence in the tunnel.

It is human nature that people have fears. We are dealing with the concept of going into an enclosed space —with something hitherto unknown to many people. It is interesting that a high proportion of people say that they would not use the tunnel. Of course, as with everything that is new, they will use it. Many of them will use it and, having used it once, will use it often. That will be the case only if the tunnel can operate in a safe and incident-free manner. It is immensely in everyone's interest, not least the operator's interest, that that should be achieved. It is in that spirit that we hold the debate tonight. Let us recognise the problems, if they exist. Let us make sure that proper precautions are taken. Let us get it absolutely right.

In the context that I have set out, it is important to note that the channel tunnel is probably the first tunnel of its scale which has been built in the age of the terrorist. It has been built at a time when everyone is aware of the problems that could arise. The necessary safeguards have been built in. I hope that the necessary human dimensions to back them up will also be built in.

In the short time available, I emphasise one point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and other Opposition Members. Let us give British Transport police their proper role in the operation. They are a force of immense experience. They are a public body. They are the right people to do the job and to advise others who do the job. Let there be no suggestion at any point of diluting their responsibility. Let us give them a job to do.

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

They will work well with Eurotunnel and the other police forces. They have been used for a long time to defend our railway system against terrorism and other security threats. They have an important role to play.

I wish the channel tunnel project well. It is a fantastic opportunity for Britain. I want it to be a great national project. We must get security right if those hopes are to be fulfilled.

5.47 pm

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked 23 questions and I have six minutes in which to respond. Obviously, I cannot answer all the questions, but I shall write to all hon. Members.

Mr. Wilson: Eight minutes.

Mr. Freeman: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's mathematics is any good—rather like his politics. I shall deal with the two points that he made in a bipartisan spirit. The first was on the role of the British Transport police. There is no question of the British Transport police having anything other than their present status as a separate national public sector police force responsible for looking after law and order on Britain's railways. That will extend to the channel tunnel services.

The hon. Gentleman was right to mention that matter, but it can assure him that the expertise and services of the British Transport police will be at the disposal of the operators of the channel tunnel services. There is no question of compromising security and their advice will be available to the operators of the freight terminals, which will be restricted zones, and the passenger services.

I look forward to debating Railtrack charges with the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North. There is no question of those charges affecting fares, services or investment in any way.

Mr. Wilson: Rubbish.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman has obviously not read the answer to the parliamentary question. We will return to that matter, and I shall prove to the House, and to everyone's satisfaction, that he is wrong.

Mr. Wilson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Freeman: No; I have only five minutes left. Perhaps I can answer the hon. Gentleman's question about West Yorkshire. I can assure him that, as far as the passenger transport executive is concerned, the additional costs of running domestic rail services will be directly and fully recompensed by a special grant and thereafter by increases to the revenue support grant payments.

The Government accept that it will take some time to make European passenger services and rail freight distribution profitable. In the meantime, they will be properly supported—directly by British Rail and indirectly by the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) asked who will finance security. Security costs will be borne by the operator and will not fall upon the citizens of Kent. Will emergency cover for the people of Kent be taken away? No more so than through the operation of the port of Dover. We do not intend to place unnecessary burdens on the ambulance, fire and police services to the detriment of the citizens of Kent. Who will be liable to a search? I am sure that my hon. Friend will not invite me to go into detail for security reasons, but everyone will be liable to search and searching will be appropriate to the threat. Clearly we must balance security with ease of travel.

On the enforcement of the regulations on 44-tonne lorries travelling to the tunnel, such lorries will not be allowed on the roads of Kent to or through the tunnel. That concession relates to rail terminals; the channel tunnel terminal does not count as such. Rail freight terminals were designed to collect traffic bound for the channel tunnel. Officials from the Department of Transport will enforce the regulations when they check vehicle weights, as they do regularly. A consignment note, showing that the lorry is bound for a freight terminal, will be the appropriate evidence. Lorries with six axles will not cause any more wear and tear on the bridges and roads than is caused at present.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) asked about threats. I assure him that penalties are available under article 8 of the order, and that threats will be pursued vigorously. He also asked about rabies. Schedule 3 of the Channel Tunnel International Arrangements Order 1993 sets out the duties of the concessionaires

"to construct and maintain installations, to prevent animals straying into the tunnels",

and imposes requirements on them to ensure, for example, that the tunnels are kept clear of anything likely to attract animals. There will be regular checks to ensure that the requirements are met. My mailbag on the subject is probably a little larger than the hon. Gentleman's and I assure him that we take the matter seriously.

I shall write to the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East on the subject of staffing compared to the ferries—I think that he mentioned 330 staff. I shall look into the figures.

On the successor to Landor street, I hope that Hams hall can make progress; it has planning permission, subject to one major constraint. The speed of progress is obviously up to the promoters, but clearly Landor street capacity is limited and it will not be able to provide the west midlands with the service that will be required in due course.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) asked about the regulations for new lines and for the intensification of use. *[Interruption.]* Is the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North having difficulty hearing the answers? In my answer to the parliamentary question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), I said that those people affected by intensification of use have the right, under the Land Compensation Act 1973, in appropriate circumstances to claim compensation. If my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington refers to that answer, I hope that he will find it helpful.

I can tell the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) that security at the tunnel will be comparable to that of airlines and at airports, commensurate with the threat. He did not have the opportunity to hear what I said at the beginning of my remarks, but if he studies the record I hope that he will be satisfied. Yes, Eurotunnel catering and shop staff will be screened.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) asked about close co-operation between the security services, customs and

immigration. That is extremely important and we take my hon. Friend's point. Safe passage is absolutely vital. Under the Channel Tunnel International Arrangements Order 1993 arrangements have been made for juxtaposed frontier customs controls. United Kingdom customs officers may inspect traffic boarding the shuttle trains at the Eurotunnel terminal at Coquelles. I hope that that information is helpful.

I commend the order to the House and will respond to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) with answers to the detailed questions with which he opened the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Channel Tunnel (Security) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th February, be approved.

Pensions and Benefits

5.54 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move,

That the draft Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 10th February be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I understand that it will be convenient for the House to discuss at the same time the following motions:

That the draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 10th February, be approved.

That the draft Statutory Sick Pay (Small Employers' Relief) Amendment Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 10th February be approved.

That the draft Social Security (Contributions) (Re-rating and National Insurance Fund Payments) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 10th February, be approved.

That the draft Statutory Sick Pay (Rate of Payment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 10th February, be approved.

Mr. Lilley: As a result of the orders, social security will cost more than £83 billion in 1994-95. It will rise to £88 billion in the next year and £92 billion the year after. That huge increase demonstrates both the need to reform our system, to make it affordable in the long term, and our commitment to maintaining a decent level of social security.

We have met our commitment to uprate benefits, fulfilled out pledge to provide extra help for those most affected by the imposition of value added tax on fuel and are improving the benefits system for mothers who want to return to work.

As I announced to this House in December, to provide merely for a full uprating of all benefits next year will cost £2 billion, but I have gone beyond that. Despite a very difficult public spending round, I have also provided a very generous package of extra help—over and above the normal uprating—towards VAT on fuel. That will help more than 15 million people in the coming year.

The package of extra help with VAT on fuel will cost an extra £400 million this year alone. Over three years, the cost will be £2·5 billion. In practice, it means that people on income support will have an increase of 3·9 per cent. from April. A further 2 million people above income support levels, who receive housing benefit and family credit, will receive similar increases.

However, I also wanted to help those who have worked, saved and earned modest pensions, who often get no extra help. So single pensioners will get an extra 50p a week and couples will get an extra 70p this year. That is on top of the £1 and £1·60 rises in the full basic pension in line with the retail prices index.

Next year the extra amount for VAT will be worth £1 for a single pensioner and £1·40 for couples and, in the third year, it will be as much as £1·40 for single people and £2 for couples.

The increases for VAT will also apply to people on widows' benefits, invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance and the disability premium. Those increases are permanent. In seven weeks' time people will begin to receive the extra money with their benefit—as we promised—before the higher fuel bills arrive. In addition, I am increasing cold weather payments from £6 to £7 in November, and by a further 50p from November 1995.

[Mr. Lilley]

To help those people with higher than average heating costs, we are making a further £35 million available through the home energy efficiency scheme. From April 1994, all pensioners and disabled people not on income-related benefits will be eligible for grants from the scheme to insulate their homes and make them more energy efficient. More than 200,000 extra households will be eligible for such grants next year.

By any standards, that is a very substantial package of help. It is far higher than almost anyone expected. We have certainly done rather better than the 50p that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) told *The People* newspaper he thought was enough.

Spending on benefits continues to grow in real terms. Since 1979 it has grown at an underlying rate of 3 per cent. a year—excluding expenditure on the unemployed. Underlying growth is expected to exceed 3 per cent. a year in real terms until the end of the century. Thereafter there will be even more pressure as we enter the next century and the number of pensioners begins to rise. On behalf of every working person every working day, we are spending £15 just to finance the social security system. It is vital to the future of social security that we keep within the limit of what we can afford. My priority is to make savings that do not have a direct effect on benefit entitlements. That means bearing down on operational costs, which will be kept within last year's limit, even with an increased work load. It means carrying forward the battle against fraud.

Benefit money should go only to those whom Parliament intended to help, not to those who abuse the system. Social security fraud hurts: it means less money for the people who need it. Last year, we set up a new strategic board to look at fraud. The hon. Member for Garscadden welcomed its announcement in December. The board is chaired by my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security. He reports excellent progress. We have redesigned the order book to prevent forgery; introduced secure delivery methods to prevent theft; and are rewarding vigilant Post Office Counters employees who stop false encashment. Last year, the Benefits Agency's investigators saved more than half a billion pounds. I fully expect them to do better this year.

I am also stopping a number of abuses. For example, I will discourage local authorities from paying housing benefit on unnecessarily expensive properties. I have introduced legislation to prevent employers from avoiding national insurance liability by paying their employees in commodities such as gold bullion. We are tightening up on the availability of safety net benefits—a practice which I believe is favoured by Labour party supporters—for various foreign nationals who are looking for work in this country.

United Kingdom citizens would not be entitled to the equivalent of income support and housing benefit if they were looking for work in other countries of the European economic area. In most of those countries, some form of residence test is applied. I propose to bring our rules more in line with theirs by introducing a residence test requirement here, too. It cannot be right to leave our social security system open to benefit tourism.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): On the expected savings, will the Secretary of State quantify his attack on benefit tourism? What exactly will the proceeds be? Will he say a word or two about the citizens of the Irish Republic and how they will fit into this framework?

Mr. Lilley: We do not have records of how many foreign people who would be affected by the rules are currently claiming benefit other than the Home Office record that some 5,000 are claiming income support. That may well be incomplete. We have no records of those claiming housing benefit. We cannot put a figure on it. Clearly it is a growing problem. By stopping it now, the potential savings are equal to the size of the growth that would have occurred had we not taken this action. I am glad that it was welcomed by the hon. Gentleman when it was announced.

As to the impact on citizens of the Irish Republic, we will not of course discriminate through the measure between any citizens of the European Community, but, typically, they are more likely to have habitual residence both in this country and their own country and therefore pass the test. It is mistaken to assume that Irish people typically come to this country to claim benefit. By and large, they come here to work.

Mr. Dewar: I was not suggesting that.

Mr. Lilley: I was not saying that the hon. Gentleman was making that suggestion, but if anyone were to make that assumption—as some people do—they would probably be wrong.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): He was thinking it.

Mr. Lilley: Perhaps I was reading the hon. Gentleman's mind.

A further problem is those who enter this country on the express condition that they will not be a burden on the public purse, yet subsequently find ways of claiming benefit. I have already stopped the payment of income support to people who are supposed to be self-supporting or who are here illegally. The same will apply to housing benefit and council tax benefit from April 1994. Proposals are with the Social Security Advisory Committee for consultation. Those changes will enable us to concentrate our resources on those who have paid their contributions and taxes and intend to pay their own way in future by finding work.

In July last year, I published an analysis of the growth of social security. It indicated that one of the main sources of growth in claimants and expenditure up to the end of the century would be invalidity and related benefits. That is why I am making a fundamental reform of those benefits. Our reforms to statutory sick pay will return responsibility for levels of sick absence to employers. I am improving the structure of statutory sick pay and giving extra support for small employers. At the same time, I am reducing employers' national insurance contributions. That will more than compensate for the increased costs on statutory sick pay.

Overall, as a result of the orders today, employers' net costs will be reduced by more than £100 million a year. Those employers who accept the challenge to improve their sick absence records will benefit even more.

The number on invalidity benefit has more than doubled over 10 years, and trebled over 15. Yet every other source of information indicates that the health of the nation has been improving. If left unchecked, expenditure on invalidity benefit looks likely to increase by a further 50

per cent. in real terms by the end of the century. The new incapacity benefit will focus help on those medically incapable of work—the people for whom it was always intended—through a new, more objective test of incapacity for work. I am also making a number of structural changes to the benefit so that those incapable of work will continue to receive a basic level of income, as of right, regardless of means.

The net effect of these changes will be not to reduce help to the sick and disabled, but only to curb the growth of expenditure. In future, we would expect to spend as much in real terms as those who, in the absence of changes, would have received invalidity benefit as we do now. In addition, people on incapacity benefit will be able to undertake up to 16 hours' voluntary work a week without it affecting their benefit. People receiving disability working allowance will qualify automatically for free prescriptions and dental treatment.

I am increasing the level of support for Motability, which provides help with mobility for more than 170,000 disabled people. I am increasing by £1 million the grant to the mobility equipment fund, which adapts vehicles for severely disabled people.

This is a fundamental set of reforms to benefits for sick and disabled people. Altogether, my package represents a very substantial improvement in the structure of benefits for short and long-term sickness and disability. Employers will be encouraged to take direct responsibility for improving the health, motivation and monitoring of their employees. Benefits will be concentrated on those genuinely unable to work. The spiralling costs of benefits will be contained to the gain of all taxpayers and the ultimate good of the welfare state.

The next stage in my sector-by-sector reform is arrangements for the unemployed. At present we have two benefits with conflicting sets of rules, separate delivery systems and different levels of entitlement. That is contradictory, confusing and unnecessarily complex. We propose to replace them by a single new job seeker's allowance with a contributory and a means-tested element. At the same time, we will place a greater emphasis on helping people back to work.

Under the new proposals, we are strengthening the links between job search and benefit. At the start of their claim, unemployed people will be required to enter into an agreement on how they will set about seeking work. That agreement will not just be a form of words, but a commitment to a course of action that is relevant and beneficial to the individual and his or her circumstances. It will provide the claimant with a positive plan for getting back into work.

We are looking at ways of giving extra help to those who make the effort to find a job. We recognise that going back to work can involve extra costs, for example, for clothing and transport, which may be hard to meet after a long period out of work. The Employment Service, therefore, is piloting a job finder's grant of up to £200 for people who have not had a job for two years.

We are making further changes that will benefit unemployed people who want to help themselves and who find work. At present, unemployed people whose partners work for 16 hours or more a week are excluded from income support. That is a by-product of a beneficial change to the family credit rules, but it can work as a disincentive to families on income support. We will therefore be restoring the limit for partners of people on job seeker's allowance to 24 hours.

I am also pleased to be able to offer further, very substantial practical help to people with family responsibilities who want to work. Giving up benefit in favour of a low-paid job can be an unattractive proposition, especially if it involves child care costs. Therefore, I propose from October 1994 to enable families with a child under the age of 11 to offset up to £40 a week of child care costs against their earnings before those earnings are taken into account against benefit. Families on family credit will therefore be up to £28 a week better off. That will help up to 150,000 families, and we expect 50,000 people to take up work as a direct result of that measure.

Another major change announced in the social security statement was the equalisation of the state pension age. We will probably see scarcely any growth in the number of pensioners over the next decade or two. Thereafter, however, there will be nearly a 50 per cent. increase in subsequent decades. Given that the basic state pension amounts to more than a third of the social security budget, the potential impact of those extra pensioners on Department of Social Security spending is enormous. That is one inescapable reason for equalising at the age of 65 and for phasing in the new arrangements between 2010 and 2020.

To have equalised the state pension age at 60 would cost some £12 billion a year more than our proposals. Yet that appears to be what the Labour party is recklessly committed to spend. On 26 January I wrote to the hon. Member for Garscadden and reminded him that last year's Labour party conference passed a motion calling for the equalisation of state pensions at 60. The Labour manifesto likewise pledged to allow men and women to draw full pension at 60. Yet the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said on 26 January that Labour has

"no commitment to equalisation of the pension age at a certain age".

I have received no answer or clarification from the hon. Member for Garscadden. I will happily give way to him if he would like to tell the House whether the Labour party is committed to £12 billion a year extra spending. Or are Labour party promises made outside the House not worth the paper they are written on, as the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East cynically assures us? We must assume from the silence of the hon. Member for Garscadden that the Opposition's words outside the House are simply not to be believed, trusted or taken into account.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): May I point out to my right hon. Friend that some countries have felt constrained to equalise the state retirement age at 67? We are still better off than a number of countries because of the prudent way in which we plan our social security and retirement systems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am having some difficulty in seeing how this part of the Secretary of State's speech about state pension age and its correlation comes within the terms of the orders. Perhaps I am unable to fathom that quickly.

Mr. Lilley: I take your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are all inextricably entwined in the social security statement, but I felt that you would not like me to unravel them at this stage.

[Mr. Lilley]

With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to elaborate on a specific and non-partisan point, which will be of interest to the House and the country. At the same time as equalising the pension age, we want to ensure that women have more equal pension entitlement. One factor which makes it difficult for many women to earn full entitlement is that they are not earning while bringing up children or caring for relatives.

We already compensate for that by the home responsibilities protection system, which makes allowance for years out of the labour market by enabling women to build up full entitlement to the basic pension in as few as 20 working years. We plan to extend that to SERPS. That will be immensely valuable to women, and to a few men who are in a similar position. It will enhance women's pensions rights by some £2 billion a year by 2020.

Over the past year, I have endeavoured to stimulate an informed public debate, as I have by the orders. I have been as open as any Minister could be in thinking out loud about our long-term approach to social security reform. I have spelled out long-term approach to social security reform. I have spelled out our principles; I have discussed our methodology; I have published our analyses of past spending and projected future growth in spending and dependence; I have collated overseas experience; I have issued our plans for the first sectoral reforms and indicated our likely legislation a year or so ahead.

All this has indeed stimulated a welcome, lively and constructive public debate. Academics, think tanks, newspapers and commentators have joined in—everyone except, alas, Her Majesty's loyal Opposition. They have been conspicuous by their silence.

The Commission for Social Justice—whose formation I welcomed—has not yet made any concrete contribution. Fearing it might eventually do so, the Leader of the Opposition has now gone to the length, as we are informed by the newspapers, of setting up a separate policy body to take direct control of social security policy and presumably to shut the commission up.

Since policy has been shunted into those bodies, the poor hon. Member for Garscadden—though theoretically his party's spokesman on social security—has been completely silenced. His role is like nothing so much as a mime artist on the radio: the Marcel Marceau of the social security debate. We urge him, on this occasion, when he has plenty of time and an eager House waiting to hear his words—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear"]—to let us know his thinking and what his policies would be. We want to know what his party would spend and how it would reform benefits and contribute to the great national debate on the reform of the social security system so that we may have a better welfare state in the next century.

I believe that the orders will be widely welcomed. Our reforms have the backing of most thinking people and we are on track to build a better welfare system for the future. I commend the orders to the House.

6.16 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I must confess to the Secretary of State that there is a certain predictability about such debates. I had the advantage, or should I say I took the precaution, of re-reading what he said last year. The right hon. Gentleman's speech therefore contained few surprises.

I accept that I have time to speak at great length, if I were so minded, but I am not sure that the audience is one that I find attractive. It looks a little like the "Muppet Show" at the moment, possibly because the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), among others, is present. I am glad to respond to some of the points that the right hon. Gentleman made.

This is a ritual debate in the sense that it is an annual outing. The right hon. Gentleman has gone through the niceties of etiquette and it is usual for him to restate what he has already told us in the uprating statement. Some parts of the right hon. Gentleman's speech were almost word perfect, if my memory serves me correctly.

It is also an occasion on which the right hon. Gentleman appears before us in the role of the eminently reasonable man. He likes to parade the uprating benefit, particularly when it is in line with prices, like a trophy. We are invited, collectively to say, "The lad has done good." I must tell the right hon. Gentleman that I do not believe that the entire House will be willing to do that today and it is certainly not something which the country would be willing to do.

I accept that expenditure on social security is formidable and that it is growing. I am not sure that that demonstrates any commitment by the right hon. Gentleman to retain what he was pleased to call a "decent level" of benefit. It certainly underlines the price that we have been paying for recession and high unemployment. One of my colleagues has told me that that can be calculated at about £20 per week per household. That is simply the cost of financing and paying for the long dole queues.

Although I suspect that the rate of unemployment will continue to fluctuate, one of the really depressing factors to emerge from the figures published today is that the number of long-term unemployed has gone up greatly in recent times. It looks as though that problem will not be easy to solve.

Mr. Jenkin: Taking into account all those factors, particularly what we now call cyclical social security, are we spending enough?

Mr. Dewar: We are spending a great deal in the wrong way. I am quite sure that the hon. Gentleman, whom I welcome as a scarred veteran of Glasgow politics of recent years, by his use of the word "cyclical" is conceding that it is a product of the recession. Some of us would argue, however, that it is the result of the mismanagement of the economy. None of us likes bills to go up for that reason.

If we were in a position to do it, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman at least would want the general standard of protection in society to improve. It has not been possible, not because of demographic factors—those are some years away, as the Minister pointed out—but because Britain has failed to achieve a reasonable economic performance in the past decade. That must rest on the hon. Gentleman's conscience as an active Conservative and a supporter of the Government, as it should on the conscience of the Secretary of State.

Today, we have the essential minimum. The Minister has uprated benefits according to the RPI, where

appropriate, or the Rossi index. He has added in a certain amount partially to compensate for the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel.

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): Does my hon. Friend agree that, despite the Secretary of State's announcement, the increases will not compensate old-age pensioners and one-parent families, who will suffer as a result of the increased scope of VAT?

Mr. Dewar: There is no argument about that. The Secretary of State seems determined to make me famous and perhaps I should be flattered, but, as so often happens, the fame is ill earned. As he knows, there is no way that the construction he seeks to put on what I said can properly be put on it. I make that point in passing, but I agree entirely with my hon. Friend.

On this non-partisan occasion, I am minded to be charitable, but the best I can do is say that it is a partial and inadequate rebate for what most people consider an offensive and regressive form of taxation. It will leave many important groups in society at a considerable disadvantage.

I was in Aberdeen at the weekend; it is a good place to contemplate severe weather. I was attending a public meeting there and it was drawn to my attention forcefully and in a sensible way that the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel will strike at certain groups who can ill bear an additional burden—we think immediately of the infirm and pensioners living in poverty, but we often forget people on low incomes with young families who find it particularly difficult to cope.

There is another problem of which at least one Conservative Member is aware. The imposition of VAT on domestic fuel represents an erosion of zero rating in a way that makes the whole VAT system much more regressive.

I shall not pursue the argument at great length, but it is worth reminding the Minister that at the time of the big hike in VAT, when Ministers were throwing money at the problems of the poll tax, we were told that we did not need to worry, and that VAT was not regressive as vital areas of expenditure for low-income families were zero-rated. It is unfortunate that the Minister offered no adequate compensation in the uprating statements; it means that the problem will get worse.

Mr. Lilley: Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that it his own party's commitment, both unilaterally and by its signing of the European socialist manifesto, to transfer greater powers from the House to the European Community in the setting of our taxes? If we applied that to VAT, there is absolutely no doubt that the Community and Commission would seek to remove entirely the zero rating. For him to regret the potential demise of zero rating —something we have no intention of permitting—is pretty extraordinary when his party would hand over powers that would ensure its end.

Mr. Dewar: One of the pleasant things about debating with the Secretary of State is that he never loses his ability to astonish me. The zero-rated areas, where they existed, were retained until 1996 by agreement with the British Government and the European Union. There would then have been further discussion. No one seriously believes that it would not have been possible to retain them. However, if we unilaterally withdraw them, of course there will be no prospect whatsoever of retaining them.

I know—and I pay tribute to it—no one in British politics more genuinely and passionately opposed to everything that European Union stands for than the Secretary of State for Social Security. I have heard him out loose in the country giving speeches to student audiences, and although I thought his views were perverse and extraodinary, I never doubted that they came from the heart.

I find it astonishing that a member of a Cabinet that has just agreed to remove an area of zero rating in the knowledge that we can never return to it, should accuse me of being a traitor. It shows an effrontery which is endearing but totally implausible. I hope that he will not return to that.

I return to the orders. Income support, housing benefit and family credit increase by 3·9 per cent., including the VAT compensation. In his uprating statement on 1 December last year, the Minister told us that the increase was higher than most people in work will receive. I understand that that is probably correct mathematically, but we all know that, even with the uprating, those on income support will find it extremely hard to make ends meet.

I think that I am correct in saying that after April, a husband and wife with two children under 11 will get £113·05. I accept that there are passported benefits, of which housing benefit is the most significant, and that there are a number of other aids and additions, but a family of four living on that figure will have very little room for comfort. It does not represent a cause for pride after many years of stewardship by the Conservative party.

The statistics on poverty tell a shameful story. The Minister will have studied the recent reports from the Institute of Fiscal Studies which showed that the richest 10 per cent. were £30 a week better off today than they would have been were the 1985 tax regime still in place, while the poorest 10 per cent. were £3 worse off.

The Minister would probably say that taking the extremes of the argument sometimes produces a distorted picture. That is a danger. There is always that possibility in trying to extrapolate an argument from a small group, but the bottom 40 per cent.—a very large slice of the population—is significantly worse off than they would have been under the 1985 tax regime.

Against that background, I protest against any proposition that the present benefit rates are generous or allow people to sit back and think that they have no cares in the world and they can continue to jog along, not as the historical Earl of Durham did on £40,000 a year, but on £113·05.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Institute of Fiscal Studies report says nothing about the living standards of any group of the population; it is about the impact of tax changes? If those tax changes were compensated for by increases in benefits, as happened with the community charge, there would be no fall in living standards, even if the IFS figures showed an increase in tax payments.

Mr. Dewar: I understand the point that the hon. Member is making, and, as always, it is a sophisticated and perfectly fair one, but I think that he would also agree with my general proposition that the gap between those who have and those who have not has been exaggerated and broadened by Conservative tax policy. I am sure that he

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would worry about—and I do him the credit of thinking that he would worry about it. Also, on the kind of rates that I have quoted, it is very difficult for people living on income support, particularly in a time of general recession when it is often impossible, with the best will in the world, to find work. It is not an easy situation.

I am just protesting gently about the somewhat righteous air with which the benefit figures are paraded and we are asked to be grateful for what we have been given.

The Minister also dealt, very properly, with pensions and their uprating. I must confess that I am not as happy —he would not expect me to be—with the situation as he is. He well knows—it has been much debated and advertised—that the basic state pension has been falling as a percentage of average earnings for a considerable time: 15 per cent. at the moment and likely to drop to 7 or 8 per cent. in 20 or 30 years' time.

The Minister tried to tempt me in the debate and perhaps I can now tempt him a little into the interesting exchanges between his colleagues. The Chancellor, he may remember, in the press briefing reported in *The Times* of 2 December and very widely noted, made it clear that he thought that it would not be right to allow the state pension to be vestigial. He had said in the Budget speech that it was the cornerstone of the welfare state. so we have the Chancellor assuring us that it would not become vestigial, and three or four days later we have the Chief Secretary to the Treasury looking forward to the day when it would be nugatory.

I am tempted to ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to act as honest broker between his two colleagues, but it is probably a vain hope because I think I know where he lines up on this occasion—with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. He told us in the corresponding speech last year:

"We are committed to linking the basic pension to prices." —[*Official Report*, 10 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 1042.]

The way in which he said it and the spirit in which it was said made it clear that, whether it became nugatory or not, he would not move from that position.

That means—this is something about which we should all worry—that if we are to deal with pensioner poverty we must rely more and more on the pensioner premiums within the income support system, and that will be a growing feature of Conservative policy in the years ahead, together with all the problems that go with a heavily means-tested system, which I think are unacceptable to the public as a whole.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly at liberty to criticise that policy if he wishes, but is he offering an alternative? Is he implying that there is more money in the pot somewhere with which to increase the basic state pension over and above inflation every year, in order to prevent what would otherwise happen to it?

Mr. Dewar: I said something in an earlier exchange, and I do not want to tire the House by going over the same ground again; but I do not believe that the money that we have is being spent in the best possible way, because of the economic circumstances and the ever-increasing claims from the number of people who are dependent.

The hon. Member will know that when the Conservative Government came to power there were 4·4 million people dependent on supplementary benefit. Now, with the equivalent, which is income support, we are looking at close to 10 million people. I think that 9·9 million was the last figure that I saw. It has a dramatic effect on the economics and finances of the welfare state.

After all, we have the Minister incurring considerable unpopularity in order to drive out of the benefit queue comparatively small numbers of people with his various adjustments and trimmings. Those are literally handfuls of people compared with the kind of growth to which I have referred. So there is a strong case for saying it is not a simple equation.

May I also say to the hon. Member—we may have occasion to debate this at another time—that, in any event, it is not simply a matter of the basic pension. The basic pension ought to reflect increasing national prosperity, but it is clear that, for a long time, we must still wrestle with problems of pensioners in poverty. A number of schemes that the hon. Member will know about are under consideration and have been publicly discussed; they involve ways in which we can deal with pensioner poverty and with basic pensioners' incomes which are probably preferable—certainly in theory, and I hope workable in practice—to relying increasingly on a deepening tranche of income support premiums. In any case, there is a continuing debate in which I am sure the hon. Member and the Secretary of State will want to take part.

It is in a sense ungrateful of me to say that this is no more than was promised, that the uprating has been just what we would expect and is all very routine. The Minister is entitled to ask whether he has not done well, because he has kept the promise. When we remember what was said, for example, about no more VAT increases and about tax cuts year on year, I suppose that the Minister might try to claim that he had performed rather better than the Government as a whole, since manifesto promises have gone up in flames left, right and centre.

I find it just a little odd that the right hon. Gentleman should accuse me of abandoning pledges and promises, given the record of his own Government. He accused me of it last year as well. I suspect that he will accuse me of it next year and, when he is on the Opposition Benches, he will accuse me of it then. It is a form of words which is now in his head and in which he is well practised.

I thought it interesting that in last year's debate, the accusation was levied not at me but at my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition. What did the Secretary of State say about him? He accused him, at the previous election, of trying to increase national insurance contributions, a particularly hideous crime, I should have thought, and practically unthinkable. He added that not only was my right hon. and learned Friend trying to increase national insurance contributions, but, what was worse, he was trying to cut the benefits given to those who paid the contributions, another particularly unpleasant phenomenon and one about which he was quite severe.

I do not know—I do know; let us not be coy about it. I remember distinctly, in the week before we rose for the Christmas recess, the Government bulldozing through a Bill to increase national insurance contributions by 1 per cent., which would produce considerably more revenue, as the Secretary of State will know, than a penny on the standard rate of income tax. We have also had the job seeker's allowance announced and the incapacity benefit Bill launched on its way.

It seems to me that if the thoughts of the Labour party were thus roundly condemned, it must be nothing to the personal unhappiness of the Secretary of State in having to implement exactly the same policies as a Minister.

I should like to say a word or two, because the Secretary of State did, about the incapacity benefit that is being introduced. I pay tribute to my colleagues on the Standing Committee considering the Bill, who, I understand, are sitting very unreasonable hours and well into the evenings on a measure where there has been no sign of obstruction or anything other than constructive discussion. I sympathise with them and regret the way in which the Government are conducting their business.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): Scandalous.

Mr. Dewar: I think I heard the Under-Secretary saying, "Scandalous." I agree with him entirely; it is. We will agree that the word "scandalous" is applicable to the circumstances that I have described.

Incapacity benefit is a way of excluding people from benefit. The Minister knows very well our doubts about the mechanical test, about the confusion between disability and the capacity to work. I am sorry that the outcome will be a considerable number of people added to the unemployment register. That is something which the Minister's own Back Benchers may want to worry about in the near future.

The Secretary of State gave us an interesting estimate on Second Reading. He reckoned that, in the first year of incapacity benefit, 95,000 people would be added to the unemployment register as a result of the measure and that, in the second year, 190,000 would be added.

The Department of Social Security is working hard to manufacture unemployment. No doubt it will be suggested that it was "Lilley's lump" that did it, but I suspect that the Government will experience some problems. As I have said, long-term unemployment is on the increase, and I fear that those in the category that we are discussing will be added to the list after 12 or 24 months—those being the subdivisions of the category. I hope that I am wrong, but I do not think I am.

While the Government talk about how well they have done in regard to upratings, let me remind the House that some of those who survive the new test and receive the new incapacity benefit will be £30, £40 or even £50 a week worse off as a result of the hidden cuts in the formula. I need not cite extreme examples; it is easy to identify such cases. Those hidden cuts will make life much more difficult for people in a very vulnerable category.

I am not remotely referring to lead-swingers, scroungers or people who have settled for a comfortable life with the aid of a doctor who is not quite as stringent as he should be. I am talking about people who have survived the hoops and hurdles of the new test, and are genuinely eligible for help. They will find that much of that help has gone. The job seeker's allowance will not be introduced until April 1996, which could be described as the medium term; but, as a result of the cutting of the period conferring automatic eligibility from 12 to six months, some 100,000 people will lose their entitlement to unemployment benefit. The income support dependency figures will rise, which I consider very unfortunate.

May I ask the Minister some specific questions? The guaranteed minimum pension is being uprated again, but I have heard—I do not know whether it is true—that the Government are thinking of abandoning it. I do not suggest that they are contemplating total abolition, with no replacement provision; but I am told that the Department has discussed with industry the possibility of a substitute. That, of course, applies only to occupational pensions. I am always open to arguments, but I should be interested to know whether any changes are in the offing.

There is no equivalent of the guaranteed minimum pension in the private pensions sector. I know that regulation is Treasury-oriented, rather than social security-oriented; but investigations conducted by the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation, and by KPMG Peat Marwick on its behalf—and work done earlier by the Consumers Association, whose views are neatly summed up in the title of its press release "The Billion Pound Rip-off"—suggest that the Minister's pride in announcing that, since 1988, some 5 million people have moved into the private pensions sector is another reason for examining the lack of regulation.

We should also consider the number of people on very low incomes—perhaps below £9,000 a year—who have invested in private pension plans, despite the general advice of the industry that such action is unwise in view of the charges and commissions involved. It would not be fair to plunge into a debate on that; I am simply flagging my genuine concern about what is happening. It is difficult to achieve a satisfactory regulatory framework when pension plans are sold by people whose livelihood depends largely on commission.

I hope that the Minister will also say a word about statutory sick pay. That will interest at least one hon. Member who is present: I understand that Lord Jenkin has featured prominently in debates in the other place, one of whose Members described him to me as a Tory grandee. I do not know whether Lord Jenkin himself would accept that description; I always associated him with the "brush your teeth in the dark" days of 1973-74, and I am not sure whether such conduct, or such advice, is becoming a grandee.

Anyway, Lord Jenkin led the charge in the House of Lords. I am anxious to know exactly what is happening; I know that an amendment was brought to this House, and was dealt with ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley), but I am not sure what the next stages will involve. I think that it is generally agreed that the vast majority of sickness-related absences in small businesses are limited to four weeks, which makes the 100 per cent. rebate granted after four weeks considerably less generous than it appears.

I was genuinely surprised when Lord Astor—answering Lord Redesdale—said in the other place that a reduction to two weeks would increase the cost to the Treasury from £25 million to £30 million. The comparative modesty of the figures may illustrate how few employees will be covered, even with the increase in the national insurance contribution limit to £20,000.

I should like to hear a progress report from the Minister, along with some indication of where we go from here. I hope that he will seriously consider the two-week measure; I know that the Federation of Small Businesses, and Bill Anderson and his colleagues in Scotland, are very keen for some progress to be made.

If the Secretary of State hardens his heart and says no, what will happen to the report that will be substituted for an order or regulation? Presumably, it can be debated; but

[Mr. Dewar]

under what auspices? Will the Government make time for both Houses to discuss a report that says no—despite the efforts that both Houses have made? If such a report is published and there is no opportunity for scrutiny, debate or consideration, it will be seen largely as a swiz.

Sadly, many of the problems that featured in the corresponding debate last year are still with us. My hon. Friend the Member for Withington recently drew attention to the lack of progress on the independent living fund of 1993, and the fact that only £500,000 of an allocated £4 million budget had been taken up. The Minister of State says, "Ah, but that is worth £5 million or £6 million in a full year." If I remember rightly, the old scheme went up to £19 million or £20 million. It is a very disappointing result; people in social work tell me that there are immense practical difficulties, and that the scheme is just not working well. The Minister may well want to consider that aspect a little more closely than it has—apparently—been considered in the past.

The other day, my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) was given an interesting answer about the social fund and its administrative expenses. I accept that discretionary schemes are always expensive, but it is nevertheless startling to learn that those administrative expenses amount to 45 per cent. of the sum disbursed. That makes the case for a simplification of the scheme; we find the cash limiting particularly distorting.

One thing has changed. In last year's debate, we heard a great deal about the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The Minister made considerable mention of the social security review that he had instituted, and I have the impression that he was a dominant figure. I realise that the Chief Secretary is now rather devalued: he made the mistake of making too many speeches. Worse still, quite a lot of them were read, and some very odd things emerged.

I read with great interest the speech that the Chief Secretary made to the rather quaintly named Conservative Way Forward Group. I recommend the speech to the Secretary of State; indeed, the right hon. Gentleman probably knows it well. I do not know that the Chief Secretary's "back to basics" ideas will have been of much help to that group, but they were interesting.

I had not realised—I do not know whether you had, Madam Deputy Speaker—that the decline of this country could be dated precisely to the time when we allowed Marx and Engels in to live and work freely here. I was interested to discover that some universities wallow in self-satisfaction. Apparently, they are good places from which to pour scorn on the world outside. We were told that through those universities had passed nearly all the people who enjoy influence today and that, as a result, a fine tradition of national tolerance had been corrupted into a new tendency to nihilism. I think that that must be a reference to Oxford and Cambridge. My understanding is that the Secretary of State went to Cambridge, as did the Chief Secretary. I hope that they were not in any way corrupted by nihilism. In any case, according to the Chief Secretary's interesting speech, a university education is the source of national decline.

When we were dealing with last year's uprating, we were told that there was a grand design. At least that was the implication of every comment. Now the Secretary of State—and I understand why—is anxious to say that he does not believe in the "big bang" approach. *[Interruption.]* I mean that, in terms of social security reform, he does not believe in the "big bang" approach.

Lest the right hon. Gentleman think that I am being risqué, let me make it clear that this is a term that he himself has used. *[Interruption.]* I misunderstood. I thought that the right hon. Gentleman was protesting about my language, but apparently he said this last year. In any case, the "big bang" approach is now unfashionable, and it seems to me that we are proceeding by way of opportunity cuts. We are taking little areas of the social security system. Hence the incapacity benefit and the job seeker's allowance.

As these policies begin to unfold, it is clear that the Government are doing a great deal of damage. It is important that I should get this right lest I be accused of guilt by association. The ingenuity of the Secretary of State is becoming a byword—certainly in my circle—so I am anxious to get these matters straight.

I should like to finish on an obvious but important note. The Government have accused me of being somewhat silent. This is a charge that is not comonly made against me, but I am always prepared to stand new types of abuse. The Secretary of State has put forward his version of Labour party policy. We shall have opportunities to debate the future of the pension system and the retirement age. We have made clear our belief that the important features are choice and flexibility, and in that regard we have the support of many people in the industry. I assure the Secretary of State that we have not made the commitments to which he referred rather briefly and, I thought, somewhat jokingly.

If we are to talk about consistency in these matters, I have to congratulate the Secretary of State on one very important inconsistency. For a long time he talked about opting out of the basic state pension. Conservative Back Benchers who are in the Chamber will remember it. Working parties were set up, and there were specific references to at least the possibility of opting out. As I have done once before, I now record my thanks to the Secretary of State for having ruled that out as a possibility. The clarification was helpful.

The right hon. Gentleman will remember "The Walden Interview" of 5 December, in which, despite a spirited plea from Brian Walden that he should not disappoint his fans —a small and select group—he made it very clear, as a pledge for himself for ever, that there would be no opting out of the basic pension. Many of us regarded that as important and helpful.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will make other things clear.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is right, but I hope that he will make it clear that I was primarily ruling out means testing of the pension. Would he care to comment on the views expressed at the weekend—stated on television on Saturday evening and repeated on "The Frost Programme" at breakfast time on Sunday—by his right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the former Leader of the Opposition? Was the right hon. Gentleman authorised in any way to float this idea? Is it in line with the original request of the current Leader of the Opposition that the Commission for Social Justice should consider the means testing of all conceivable benefits? Or is the former Leader of the Opposition just a maverick to be ignored?

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. Gentleman has offered me a splendid series of options. The first point that I must make is that my right hon. Friend is entitled to float any idea he wants to float. I hope that the Secretary of State is not suggesting the introduction into the Labour party of the thought police concept that, presumably by implication, exists in the Conservative party.

The former leader of my party is a very welcome entrant to the debate about the future of the pension system. I did not see the television programme to which the Secretary of State has referred, and I do not think that a transcript has been printed. Thus, I am not aware of the detail of my right hon. Friend's comments. No doubt the Secretary of State has a transcript. I can think of no industry—especially in social security—that has experienced more growth than the business of producing transcripts. Indeed, I have several here, so the right hon. Gentleman and I could play snap.

It would be unfair of me to comment on something of whose details I am unaware, but I welcome any contribution to this debate.

Mr. Lilley: Will the hon. Gentleman rule it out?

Mr. Dewar: I cannot rule out something that I have not seen in detail. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We cannot have sedentary interventions from anyone—not even from a Secretary of State.

Mr. Dewar: In view of what I have just said, it would be ludicrous to rule anything out. I hear the Secretary of State say, "Very helpful."

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman has just welcomed the fact that I ruled out means testing, but he refuses to rule it out. To say the least, it is an odd position for the Labour party's spokesman.

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. Gentleman is playing intellectual games of a particularly peelly-wally sort, and I am not impressed.

My understanding of the proposal is that it made use of the tax system and certainly was not as dependent on any form of means testing as is the system employed by the right hon. Gentleman, who has condemned 1·6 million people to very heavy means testing by leaving them to make ends meet through income support. The Secretary of State's suggestion that his hands are clean does not bear examination.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will continue to clarify his position. We now know that he has abandoned any hope of a system that would provide for opting out of the basic pension scheme. I cannot invite him to intervene, but he might like to tell us at some point whether he agrees with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said that everyone was in favour of family values, but that the day-to-day practicalities of politics had to deal with society as it was. Society had changed a lot and would continue to change,

"but I do not think we should use things like the welfare state as an instrument for trying to move these changes in any particular direction."

Perhaps the Secretary of State agrees with that. I hope that, if he gets a chance, he will confirm his position. We should have an interesting background for future debates were we to know where he stands.

There will undoubtedly be many more debates on this subject. There is a great deal of argument to come. I am not satisfied that the Secretary of State can take pride or satisfaction from the collection of instruments that we are considering today.

Of course, the Secretary of State always has a little list when a Conservative party conference is looming. That is the trouble. He then usually produces something that is far from his finest hour. But the tragedy is that he has another list with a more serious intent—a list of trimming, cutting and undermining measures such as have been enacted in recent legislation. I suspect that even some Conservative Back Benchers have had to push and shove through measures about which they probably had considerable doubts.

I accept that that has not been a big bang approach, but the incremental approach is no more acceptable if the end product is wrong. When the Minister says, as he did last year, that he has a coherent and sensible reform programme, few will agree. Many of the vulnerable people who have been, or will become, the casualties of his efforts will testify to that.

7 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Before I start what I intended to say, I must tell the House that I too saw the broadcast on Saturday evening in which the former leader of the Labour party was shown some of the options by representatives of the Institute for Fiscal Studies. The conclusions drawn and the implications of the programme, in terms of what the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said about means-testing pensions, were most interesting. I shall be keen to see what more he does with the idea, and whether he takes it forward.

The Secretary of State knows—in fact, he keeps reminding me—that, at our party conference in Torquay, I lost an argument about means-testing pensions. However, in retrospect I am happy to confess that it was right that I lost. *[Laughter.]* How is that for baring one's soul and conscience? As we look at the future costs of pension increases——

Mr. Lilley: It is embarrassing.

Mr. Kirkwood: It is not embarrassing at all. We have free debates and make decisions at our party conference and we are honest enough to confess the circumstances in which we subsequently find ourseleves. I am now fairly persuaded that future increases in pension provision will have to be targeted to be meaningful.

That does not go as far as the former leader of the Labour party went when he was being led astray by the IFS representatives, who draw simplistic straight lines down boards with fibre-tipped pens. Alas, if only the solutions to social security problems were that simple. A tempting prospectus was laid before the right hon. Member for Islwyn, and he acepted it a bit too glibly for my liking.

The Liberal Democrats as a party are prepared to consider potential increases in the future provision of pensions being targeted. That is not to say that we would interfere with the existing universal state pension but, as has already been said, that is only 15 per cent. of national average earnings. If over a long period it were allowed to take its course in terms of its share of national wealth and earnings, and we considered carefully how to target increases, targeting could enable us to get help to the people over retirement age who are in desperate need of help, as some of them are.

[Mr. Kirkwood]

The Government are right to have considered the average position of people over retirement age, and they can take some credit for that. We supported the moves by the Government some years ago to encourage the provision of private pensions. It was the right thing to do. The sum spent on it—£6 billion or £7 billion—went a little over the top; they got the judgment wrong on the incentives. But although that was a substantial sum, the mistake was a detail in comparison with the policy decision to encourage private provision, which was right. That decision will pay handsome dividends in future when we examine the need for the state to supplement the provision made for people who are over retirement age.

Having agreed with the Government and welcomed the increases available to people on what is now the average income for pensioners—I am happy to acknowledge the fact that that has increased—I still do not think that the Government are doing enough to look after the people who are left to exist on the state pension alone. If that is true now, it will be even truer after April, when the increase in VAT comes into play.

We can argue about whether the package of measures intended to compensate people was enough. I do not think that it was, and I am now beginning to find both in my case work and in the letters that I receive that people are anticipating the prospect of the VAT increase with real apprehension and genuine fears about how they will make ends meet next winter. Whatever else the Minister says when he replies, I hope that he will spend a moment or two saying what he has in mind in terms of careful monitoring. Obviously it is too late to change the uprating orders, and the increases are welcome so far as they go, but they do not go anything like far enough.

I am especially worried about the 2·7 million children identified by some pressure groups as being in families on income support who will be left short and may go cold next winter. The compensation package may well be enough for households in average circumstances; I do not deny that. However, the IFS work on the distribution of the tax advantages over the past few years, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), is right, and the statistics show that the distribution of wealth over that period has benefited the better-off sections of society. Households living on below average incomes are in for some hard times.

The Government have not paid enough attention to people living on state pensions who suffer from disabilities of one kind or another, or to families on or around the poverty line—big families, with consequent additional costs, on low incomes. There is no extra help for people who are unemployed, for people just above benefit levels, or for people who do not claim their full benefit entitlements. So there are still some worrying areas. Those may not be complete groups in society, but large numbers of people are in those special circumstances, and I do not think that the uprating caters for them. A 3·9 per cent. increase across the board is welcome so far as it goes, but it does not deal with the difficulties that many of those groups will face.

The Minister should take account, too, of the wider implications of the IFS tax distribution study. It reveals facts that the Department of Social Security should take to heart in the arguments at the broader national level concerning the share of national wealth that it is right to devote to social security spending, because those arguments are pinned back into the proposals in the uprating order.

There is loose casual talk, much of it from the Minister's colleagues, about a crisis in welfare spending and the need to take precipitate emergency action to deal with it. If the expenditure devoted to that important area is measured as a share of national wealth, I do not believe that it is right to say that there is a crisis. There is no need for precipitate action, although there is an urgent need to keep the situation under close and careful review. Talk of crisis and great disasters immediately impending is not right, and we must keep that fact in mind. By and large, the percentage of national wealth devoted to social security has not increased dramatically. Nor need it be increased if sensible policies are adopted on a continuous basis.

I am pleased that the Secretary of State is paying attention to the need to constrain fraud. However, he must be careful that he is not heavy-handed in the way in which he enforces measures. There are savings to be made. I met his colleague in another place and I was impressed by some of the work that is being done to try to save money so that we can be more generous in some of the uprating orders in future.

The Secretary of State must also be careful when he sets targets. Of course there may be as much as £500 million to be saved, but he must not go at that figure too hard and too fast, as has the Child Support Agency. He could have saved himself a lot of heartache in the CSA contest if he had tapered that agency's targets for recovery in a less steep way. To try to recover £530 million in the first year of operation was far too ambitious, and he is paying the price. People such as myself are beginning to question the principle of the legislation because the practice is being so rigidly enforced.

The Government deserve some recognition of the steps that they have taken in the overall uprating increase and of some of the longer-term policy changes, but there are three small areas that I would like the Department to consider. First, in the totality of Government policy, the question of carers and how they are catered for in the social security system as it exists at present is inadequate. The orders do not recognise some of the demands placed on people looking after people with disabilities.

I acknowledge that the budget for benefits to people with disabilities has increased substantially in the recent past—not because the benefits are becoming more generous, but because more people are encouraged to claim eligibility and are being accepted. The provision for carers needs to be considered and, with a little ingenuity and creativity, a lot more could be done to help them.

The second issue is not directly related to the orders, but is more a direct responsibility of the Department of Education. The withdrawal of income support for students during long vacations is having an adverse effect on the income available to students. In his previous incarnation, the Leader of the House, who is in his place, and I argued over whether it was right to pay for students through the income support system, and he persuaded me that it was not. However, that is not to say that the system which replaced the withdrawal of housing benefit and income support in the long vacations is anything like adequate.

In considering some of the uprating orders before us, the Department of Social Security has a duty to consult the Department for Education and to be absolutely satisfied

that the Department for Education is providing properly through the scheme which replaced the original social security assistance to students. There is emerging evidence, not only through my case work, but in information from national organisations and pressure groups including the National Union of Students, that some students are not completing academic courses because they cannot make ends meet. If the problem is as extensive as I believe, the Department should have urgent talks with the Department for Education to try to resolve the matter.

Thirdly, I turn to the issue of statutory sick pay. It is not terribly convenient to discuss all the orders mixter-maxter. We always used to have a clear uprating debate, which I much preferred. Dotting about through all the orders makes it more difficult for the House to give proper attention to their detail and importance. I perfectly understand that, currently, the business of the House is not always under the control of the Leader of the House and that he has to deal with the nonsense that the Opposition land on him. That is a subject for another debate which will happen sooner rather than later.

The hon. Member for Garscadden raised an important point about the draft Statutory Sick Pay (Small Employers' Relief) Order by adverting to the answer given in the other place to a question asked by Lord Jenkin. The Government revealed that it would cost only £10 million—not an insignificant sum of money—to reduce the four-week period of SSP to a two-week period for small businesses with effect from April 1994.

If I were a Minister, I would be careful considering that. Taken as a package, industry may benefit, as the Government point out with statistics and arithmetic, which I accept, but tiny businesses with two, five or 10 employees, which may face flu epidemics or the like, will not be able to cope easily with the regulations as they stand. There is a good argument for spending that £10 million. It could address the entire issue once and for all and, as the hon. Member for Garscadden said, we should consider it carefully.

An argument which raged 18 months to two years ago has raised its head again recently in a way in which worries me greatly. It concerns preserved rights of income support for people in residential homes. It is a technical area which affects a relatively small number of people, but I have come across a couple of cases—not only of constituents but of people in other parts of the country—in which people with preserved rights are finding it difficult to make sense of being unable to top up the income support that they receive. Not only are those people unable to top up their own income support, because of lack of money, but the health boards and local authorities in Scotland, England and Wales are not in a statutory position to help.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): That matter was discussed in the past year.

Mr. Kirkwood: Indeed: the question was raised in the past year and I accept that some changes were made. However, the changes made were to cope with circumstances such as evictions and emergencies. I make a plea that the Government consider the question again and give at least an element of discretion to health authorities or local authorities—I do not care which—to enable them, in certain compelling circumstances, in which people are no longer able to stay in the home of their choice despite arguing for a variety of reasons that that home is especially appropriate, to allow residents to stay.

It seems extremely cruel to require people to move from that home for the sake of £6 or £7 top-up per week. It would not cost an enormous sum of money and if health authorities or local authorities were given that power, they would not go mad and be profligate.

The legislation as it stands, even though it has been amended recently, is not sophisticated and sensitive enough to cope in a common-sense fashion with circumstances that affect old people who have lived with preserved rights for many years in places such as the Leonard Cheshire homes. Such homes provide an invaluable service and back-up support. At the moment, income support cannot help them, but the Department should talk to the Department of Health and to local government to try to achieve a more sensitive system which could cope in such circumstances.

It would be helpful if the Minister would consider that point. It would not cost a lot of money to solve the problem and it would not affect thousands of people. The Minister could open the door and enable discretion to be used to provide immense relief to people who are currently caught in a statutory trap. That trap was created inadvertently; Parliament did not have it in mind to prevent the opportunity for topping up in certain circumstances when people are facing eviction.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will consider the consequences of the imposition of VAT on low-income households and families. Although the Minister was right to say that his package may well cater, on average, for the needs of the majority of people, large sections of the community—a figure of 2·7 million children has been referred to—will suffer greatly as a result of exposure to cold and hardship next year unless the Government urgently reconsider the scheme and introduce improvements in the very near future.

7.20 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am pleased that we are having a debate on the orders, but I am disappointed that there are not more hon. Members here to participate in it. There is clearly much controversy about the issue, and the future of the welfare state is at stake. That future is bound up inextricably with the orders and with the onward march to the Valhalla of the Adam Smith Institute to which the Secretary of State for Social Security is trying to lead us.

The Minister is a long-term conspiracy theorist and, to be fair to him, he sets out his theories in public. He is publicly trying to dismantle and destroy the welfare state. He is publicly trying to privatise as much of the welfare state as he can, and he is publicly trying to create a very divided Britain. He is being very successful at that.

One need walk for only 10 minutes from this building to find large numbers of young people sleeping on the streets of our capital city. If one walked the same distance in another direction, one would find many people paying £100 a night for hotel rooms because they can afford to do that. One would also be able to see people eating meals in restaurants and paying bills that amount to more than the weekly income support giro cheque. The Minister is presiding over the division of the country. At least he has been open about that.

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

The Minister has been very clever to shift the terms of the debate by claiming that this country can no longer afford universal welfare benefits, universal pensions and the welfare state. People like the Minister have cleverly pursued that point in the broadsheet press, and to some extent on radio and television, to the exclusion of all considerations of poverty. The voices of the homeless and the poor and the voices of those expected to subsist on a state pension are largely unheard. Instead, experts on huge salaries tell the poor how they should live and say that the poor are an increasing burden on our society.

Year after year, as the Tory party conference approaches, the Minister, like his predecessors, searches around for a new scapegoat on whom to blame all the nation's problems. I recall when 16 to 17-year-old feckless youths were the target of that year and were accused of not seeking work. As a result, many of them now receive no benefit. Many end up on the streets, and many of those are then driven into drugs and prostitution. Ministers should think about such things before they set off in particular directions.

The Minister attacked single parents at the Tory party conference last year. He has consistently attacked single parents, claiming that they are a drain on our society and that their children under-achieve. The Minister might try to deny it now, but he has consistently attacked the whole principle of single parents. He knows that that is the case, although when he appeared before the Select Committee he was remarkably coy on that subject.

The Minister has approached benefit fraud as though someone, somewhere, actually approves of it. None of us approves of benefit fraud, but the Minister assumes that large numbers of people do. He should remember that London local authorities, the majority of which are Labour, are doing their best to stamp out conspiracies to defraud the public purse in respect of housing benefit. However, the Minister should consider the amount of housing benefit money that is paid into the pockets of private landlords and the owners of bed-and-breakfast hotels through the system of rent deregulation.

The real fraud, as revealed in one of the orders, relates to the change in the unemployment benefit system. To reduce from one year to six months the time when unemployment benefit can be paid is a fraud on a massive scale. After all, it is a contributory benefit. It is something for which people have paid all their working lives. However, we are being told that this is some kind of advance.

Who on earth is the Minister of State to decide that that change should be made? As the Minister's predecessor did before the war—those people had the same kind of blinkered mentality about the divisions of society and the rich and the poor—the Government are blaming the unemployed for being unemployed and making them the scapegoat for the recession that the Government created and advanced.

The orders do not provide us with the opportunity to reduce or eliminate poverty. Instead, they are a further step on the road of division. We should think very carefully about this. If we want to live in a Britain in 10, 20 or 30 years' time with a permanently unemployed work force of 3 million to 4 million, permanent divisions between rich and poor and a very small number of extremely rich people, we are heading in the right direction.

The Minister has created hysteria about the cost of the welfare state. Fortunately, there are those who do not accept that hysteria. I refer the Minister to the excellent work of the Rowntree Trust carried out by John Hills at the London school of economics in which he sets out a range of options about the costs of the welfare state. However, he also sets out the consequences of not maintaining the welfare state.

In a very good summary of John Hills's research, Will Hutton states:

"it is vital to wrest the argument from those who insist that such is the financial stringency the only issue is to make each welfare pound most effective; rather the debate should be about how we choose to live as a society. The welfare system is just one of a series of building blocks, all of which interconnect to construct our common home."

That surely should be the approach, but it is not. Instead, as the pension uprating order confirms, pensioners are being defrauded by the break of the link with earnings which was removed in 1980. In 1975, Labour passed legislation stating that the pensions should be uprated annually by the higher of either earnings or prices. That principle was broken in 1980 and substituted with prices. As a result, each pensioner is about £18 a week worse off.

The Government glibly talk about the number of pensioners receiving occupational pension schemes and the number of pensioners who have investment income. They quote various average figures to show that no pensioners are worse off. However, they deliberately hide the serious plight of a considerable number of pensioners who have to live solely on the basic state old age pension. Those people may possibly receive housing benefit to assist with the rent, but they lead a pretty miserable existence. The Government should pay some regard to them. Perhaps they do not because the majority are old, women and do not have access to occupational pension schemes.

We are told that, because of demographic trends, it is important to equalise retirement ages upwards to 65. That is absolutely extraordinary. The country is considerably wealthier now than it was in 1910, when pensions first came fully on stream, and wealthier than it was in 1948 when the universal welfare state was virtually completed. However, we apparently now cannot afford to allow people to retire at the lower age.

I do not mind if people want to work beyond the age of 60. I have no problem with that. However, people should have the opportunity and the right to retire at 60. It is a monumental fraud on women workers to tell them that they will now have to work until they are 65 when they have been told all along that the retirement age was 60.

In that respect, the Minister prayed in aid the fact that similar moves were taking place in other European countries. The fact that a bunch of right-wing monetarists around Europe are peddling the same nonsensical theories, which have driven Europe to its present level of poverty with 15 million people out of work, is hardly a reason for rejoicing. It should be a reason for shame for the Government. Instead, we should be looking to share the wealth so that people can retire at an earlier age if they so wish. I should like to see a proposal to equalise the retirement age downward for both men and women so that couples will have an opportunity to enjoy retirement together.

Claims about costs are extraordinary. In population projections, there will indeed be a peak in the number of people of retirement age at about 2030—in other words, in about 36 years—but, after that time, the number starts to decrease, as the Secretary of State will be aware. Instead, the Government choose to end all their predictions at that point and claim that there will be an enormous increase in the cost of the state retirement pension unless something is done about it now. That is why the link was broken and that is why the Government tried to destroy the state earnings-related pension scheme as an option.

The push towards private pension schemes, individual schemes and personal portable schemes is extremely dubious—dubious because of the methods in selling many of them, dubious because of the security of some personal schemes that are on offer and dubious because of the legal position of many pension schemes at present. I am a member of the Select Committee that is still examining the administration of pension funds. Some of the things that we hear make one's hair stand on end. The Maxwell pension fraud was just one example. Although this matter is slightly irrelevant, I hope that the Minister will give an inkling of when the Government will propose legislation on the control of pension funds.

There is now 22 per cent. unemployment in my constituency, and a large number of people are unable to claim unemployment benefit and therefore are not included in the real statistics—the real figure is much higher. Such people do not lead particularly exciting lives; indeed, they lead very miserable lives. Annual rent increases, even those in local authority rents, particularly for people on low earnings, are much higher than the rate of inflation, although those paying them receive housing benefit if they are unemployed or on income support. Their children are not growing up in a particularly exciting environment, because they face more cuts and increased charges for school meals, trips and so on. Our children are growing up in an increasingly divided society. I hope that the Secretary of State will at least begin to address those issues.

The Secretary of State talked glibly of the job seekers' allowance; he said that if only there were a different allowance that would encourage people to seek work. He seems to fail to understand that people do not like being unemployed. It is not a very exciting life, it is not a holiday camp, it is a time of great depression. Many of the long-term unemployed become extremely depressed. The longer they are unemployed, the harder it is to find work.

The Secretary of State attacks people in receipt of invalidity benefit as though a monumental fraud is going on. People receive invalidity benefit because they have been invalided, often as the result of accidents at work. Instead, we are moving to an incredibly expensive system of examination of the detailed cases of people on invalidity benefit. Likewise, the Government have removed the single payment system. In 1986, the Prime Minister piloted through the House the legislation that established the social fund. Recently, in an answer to me, the Minister admitted that the social fund is the most expensive of all benefits to administer. It is probably the least effective for that.

I do not welcome the measures, because they do not go far enough. Clearly, there are some increases for some people, and there are some improvements as a result of enormous pressure by some very effective pressure groups, but I do not believe that the Government or the Minister have any vision of eliminating poverty or of the maintenance of a universal welfare state. The Minister's vision is of an onward march towards privatisation and divisions in society. He should look at the record. A fifth of Europe's poor live in this country. Poverty and divisions are increasing. I hope that we return to the subject of the future of the welfare state and consider it not in the mealy-mouthed way that the Minister does but in the spirit of trying to eliminate poverty and provide real security.

7.33 pm

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): On Monday night, when I rose to speak on the local authority housing support grant, some of my colleagues questioned whether I was qualified to do so, as I represent the constituency of Strathkelvin and Bearsden, which is generally reckoned to be fairly middle-class and well-heeled. It is described as a leafy suburb. Many people might wonder at my interest in the uprating of social security benefits. It is true that my constituency is reasonably well-off. If the boundary commissioners have their way, there will be virtually no public sector housing in my constituency after the next general election.

I am particularly interested in the issues. In my constituency, a significant number of people rely on various benefits which, for many of them, are an important lifeline. I am also reminded now and again by constituents in the wealthier part of Bearsden just how adequate many benefits are. Often, people who have lived life in a fairly comfortable manner and are fairly comfortably off, for reasons not necessarily of their own making, suddenly find themselves on hard times and falling back on benefits. It is only then that they realise just how inadequate those benefits are. I am faced by irate constituents who ask, "How on earth am I supposed to live on this? How on earth is one expected to get by on these benefits?" Such questions would be asked by all of us in that position.

For that reason, I wish to examine four aspects of the measures, but none more so than the one which hits many of my constituents—income support benefits for nursing and residential care. As we know, nursing and residential care are booming. Certainly in my part of the country, nursing homes and residential homes mushroom every day. One can be certain that, if a school closes, it will open the following week as a residential care home.

Let us consider the costa geriatrica—the Ayrshire coast. Glaswegians no longer go "doon the water" for their holidays. Who does? Granny goes doon the water, into the geriatric home on the Ayrshire coast. Such homes have blossomed even in post-industrial areas—they are everywhere, and they are becoming an increasingly important part of our social structure.

The measures are particularly important because the NHS withdraws from the nursing care of the elderly when it should not do so. Many individuals who should be looked after within the NHS and within long-term care are being sent to nursing homes. There have been recent cases of individuals with head injuries, brain diseases or other diseases being removed from long-term care and being placed in nursing homes. Money must be found for them, partly from benefit and, depending on the circumstances and the relevant home, partly from the resources of those individuals or their relatives.

The matter is becoming increasingly important and it is throwing greater burdens on families who thought that it would not be a matter for them or for their relatives later in life. It will become increasingly obvious to many people,

[Mr. Sam Galbraith]

as their relatives grow older, that such care has been privatised without anything being done about it. I have constituents whose elderly relatives are decanted and placed in residential homes, and they find that they have to pay additional amounts. Although there are numerous residential and nursing homes for which income support is adequate through the social services, there are more in which the individual must make an additional contribution.

I have two important questions for the Minister. I do not want to say the usual, "We do not have enough; give us more," and so on. We will take that as read and spare ourselves the boredom of going through it again, but there are two matters that we should consider.

I was recently approached by a constituent whose relative had to go into a nursing home. He brought with him a file about 2 to 3 in thick, containing the paperwork —mostly relating to the financial implications—involved in having his relative put in the residential home. He was highly intelligent and articulate, but he had spent several months on the matter and had had to complete a large amount of paperwork. He and I wondered how the many others managed to cope. I plead with the Minister to consider making the provision of residential nursing care simpler.

My constituent said that the finances demanded of him did not cause a problem. One of the first acts of the nursing home was to put the finances in order, but the medical side was allowed to slip. He faced difficult problems, including 2 or 3 in of paperwork from the Department of Social Security, the social services and the Department of Health. Everyone batted the paperwork around the residential home. Will the Minister consider how such matters can be dealt with more easily? Residential nursing provision is often sought at a time of great difficulty for families, who may have suffered recent bereavement and may have many other matters with which to deal. In addition, they face the catastrophic problem of dealing with multiple forms and individuals.

The regulation of residential nursing homes is a matter for the Department of Health, but the subject should also concern the Department of Social Security, which provides large amounts of money. I should have thought that the Minister would want to ensure that the money was used properly and effectively.

I am sure that the Minister would agree that the regulations are inadequate; many of them are out of date. They involve matters relating to fire escapes, the number of car parking spaces, the temperature of the tap water, what the carpets are like and whether the windows should be open. They do not deal adequately with the care of residents or contain powers to close homes. There are no means to deal with inadequate legislation. Often, a board or authority wishes to take action against a home but cannot do so because it is not within its powers.

I accept that such matters are not the responsibility of the Minister's Department, but he should be concerned about them and he should have discussions with the relevant Departments. I want the Minister to consider regulations to cover those problems. I do not want to repeat the argument that there is not enough money available—we shall take that as read. It is an important matter and we need the regulations. My constituents, who live in the leafy suburbs of Strathkelvin and Bearsden, constantly come to see me about such problems.

Some of my constituents also complain that they cannot live on the benefit provided. I live in a constituency with little public sector housing. If the boundary commissioner has his way, it will have no public sector housing, but will remain a Labour seat. I realise that that would be unusual in other parts of the country, but it is not in Scotland. On Monday, we discussed the relationship between the reduction in deficit funding and housing support grant, and the greater emphasis being placed on rents and housing benefit. I make a plea for more funds to prevent pockets of deprivation, even in my constituency.

I also make a plea for the retention of child benefit. People who receive it throughout my constituency, including its better-off parts, appreciate its value—not only in financial terms, but for its recognition of the family and the integral part that it plays in our society. For many people, child benefit forms an important part of the budget and helps them to avoid poverty. It also recognises the importance of the family to children and the cost of having a family. The Government should recognise that and should constantly uprate child benefit. I realise that the issue is always at the forefront of Conservative ideology.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): The hon. Gentleman said that he would like a general increase in benefits, particularly for housing. The hon. Gentleman has made some excellent points, with which I have some sympathy. But does not he realise that, since 1979, social security spending has increased in real terms by 75 per cent? If he wants to increase that budget, by how much would he incrase it and how would he fund it?

Mr. Galbraith: I said that I would not repeat the usual litany of saying that there were not enough funds and please could we have more. I hoped that Conservative Members would not go through the usual litany of asking how we would pay for it. I shall not fall into that trap. It was worth the hon. Member giving it a try, but he will understand why I choose to ignore him. *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) wish to intervene?

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Galbraith: Very well—I shall ignore the hon. Gentleman.

The subject of workmen's compensation and industrial diseases benefits is a wide one. I understand that they are not the responsibility of the Minister, but I should like him to consider the general principles of those benefits and diagnosis in relation to such matters.

I was involved in a long-running case and correspondence concerning asbestosis and mesothelioma., compensation for which was the responsibility of the Department of Employment, as the Minister will be aware. The Department was generous in dealing with compensation and making back payments, but the issue centred around whether compensation should be paid from the time of diagnosis or after the board. The issue involves the Department of Health, the Department of Social Security and the Department of Employment. We should consider the matter further. Officials at the Department of

Employment tell me that they are considering and monitoring the subject, which generally means that they are not doing much.

That is not a specifically political issue, so there need not be any disagreement between the parties. Many of the decisions on when compensation should be paid and when the diagnosis was made were based on criteria that were established many years ago. With improvements in technology, we can alter the criteria for diagnosis and we should be considering that.

Mr. Corbyn: I have a constituent whose mother worked as a cleaner in a Glasgow bus garage and died as a result of asbestosis. Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the problems for people suffering from industrial diseases and illnesses brought about by working conditions, such as asbestosis, is that the settlement of fault often takes so long that the person who has suffered dies before he or she can receive any benefit? The case of the lady who worked at the Glasgow bus garage was a particularly serious example of that.

Mr. Galbraith: Compensation made while people are still alive is double the amount of compensation made after death. Although the diagnosis may have been made by biopsy, if the individual dies before the board can confirm the diagnosis and make the award, the compensation is halved. It is the difference between £23,000 and £11,500. That is grossly unfair.

The basis for the system is that, in the past, diagnosis was difficult. It was probably based on a physician listening to the chest and saying, "Say 99. Breath in and out. Let me look at your fingers for clubbing." If people were lucky, they may have had a chest X-ray. However, that is no longer the case for many people. Objective criteria can now be used in many cases.

I would like the Minister to address the four issues that I have raised, especially the one relating to residential care. We should make it easier for individuals to deal with residential and nursing care and stop the need for everyone to have a 3 inch file. These issues transcend all sections of society. As I said, my constituency is mostly middle class and after the next election it is likely to be totally owner-occupied. However, these are major issues within it. The issues are not isolated in one pocket or confined to one group in society. They relate to everyone in our society. I hope that the Minister will look favourably at the issues.

7.50 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): It is a pleasure to speak briefly in this important debate on pensions and other matters. The subject of pensions occupies us greatly because, with the funds available, they represent a large slice of our national wealth. It is fair to say that we will be on an extremely dangerous path if we follow the line presented by the Government and accept their mythology.

The greatest improvement to our pension policy took place in 1975 with the introduction of the state earnings-related pension scheme, which was supported by all parties. When the Conservative Government came to power, they changed that policy and announced that they would get rid of SERPS altogether. They did not do that, but in the mid-1980s they degraded the value of SERPS to a large extent—and that is continuing. After that, an inquiry into pensions was held. I believe that the Government made their great error in the way in which they proceeded from there, because they then announced that they would give the country a choice by making personal pensions available and they bribed people to take them.

There are many examples of what was said in the House at the time. There was some disgraceful advertising. Rather than go for the sleazy operators, I took two of the principal banks—Barclays and Midland—to the Advertising Standards Authority for the advertising that they carried out in 1989. It was wickedly deceptive and, indeed, my case was proved. The banks advertised by saying, "You can have a gift of £5,000—don't be a SERP"—as if a SERP was a nasty, oily, unpleasant animal. They said that people should not be fools and should take the £5,000 gift —that was the word they used—from the Government.

The gift consisted of people's contributions to the state scheme and the contributions made by employers, plus a little tax allowance, plus the alleged gift, which one would more accurately call a bribe, which was paid out of the national insurance fund. Many of the people who took that line—at least 2·5 million of them—now bitterly regret their choice. What happened was that the greedy sales people from the banks and the building societies—many of whom were employed for only a short period—largely oversold the policies, especially to people over a certain age. The policies were of no value to many people in their forties and fifties—indeed, they endangered their financial futures.

That is one of the major scandals that will be revealed in the future. We already know about those who were persuaded to leave fine occupational schemes and go into personal pensions. Once again, they were oversold because the sales people involved received huge commissions on the sales. After a short period, many of them found that the £5,000 had gone altogether. At least £2,000 would have gone in commission and the rest in administrative expenses, and people were left with hardly any funds at all.

The other point about personal pension schemes which has never been explained is that they are not pension schemes as people traditionally understand them; they are savings schemes. The amount that is paid at the end does not depend on what the person is likely to be earning at the end of his life—it depends on what is happening on the stock exchange. That would be good if the circumstances were similar to those in the 1980s, but it would be dreadful if they were similar to those in the 1970s.

We must ask the Government to reassess their support for personal pensions and their whole pension policy because they did not provide people with a choice. They threw millions of people to the wolves.

Another issue that will be raised in the debate on uprating concerns us all.

Mr. Corbyn: Before my hon. Friend leaves the question of personal pension schemes, is he aware that such schemes are heavily subsidised by the loss of income from the national insurance fund? We do not have a free market choice—we have a subsidy for private enterprise to set up personal pension schemes, many of which have proved to be less valuable than SERPS. Many people would have been well advised to remain in SERPS and not accepted the bribes to which my hon. Friend rightly referred.

Mr. Flynn *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, I suggest that he returns to the measures before the House. I do not mind passing references to other matters, but he must now return to the major themes of the measures.

Mr. Flynn: I am grateful for that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The other measures affect the uprating of various benefits. This has been an uncertain story over the years. When we want to know whether benefits can be uprated, we look at the health of the national insurance scheme. Certain benefits have not been uprated over the years. The child dependency allowance, which represented 11 per cent. of the average wage in 1979, now represents 6 per cent. That allowance is paid to the sick, the disabled, war widows and their children. It is surprising to realise how many child dependency allowances are paid, and the reason is the health of the national insurance scheme.

Something like £8 billion has been looted from the national insurance scheme to pay the bribes on personal pensions. That money has gone directly into the pension industry, which is fundamentally wasteful because of the number of people operating in the industry and the amount of money that goes in commission and administration charges. The national insurance scheme is, above all else, efficient because at the most only 5 per cent. of the money is taken out in administration charges. The amount can be as much as 50 per cent., as happened under Beveridge. That is the reason why we have the national insurance scheme, which was introduced by Lloyd George and improved by Beveridge.

Perhaps the Minister could tell us whether the new incapacity benefit will be uprated on a statutory basis every year and whether that will be part of the Government's policy. The reason given for the new incapacity benefit —it has been trumpeted aloud—is that many people who receive benefit are malingerers or scroungers who take money from the public purse when they are not entitled to it. It does happen. There are many cases of that and no one defends them. We should start with people who take money from the public purse on a large scale and who ask for some equality of treatment.

One family in the country has five houses paid for by housing benefit out of the public purse, and the family already owns two houses. The daughter-in-law of the head of the household has announced that she is not going to do any more work. As far as I know, she is still to be paid out of the public purse, but she has not been subjected to the actively seeking employment test.

Mr. Corbyn: Why not?

Mr. Flynn: I would like an explanation for that and perhaps the Minister can tell us tonight. The members of that family receive huge amounts of money out of the public purse, but they are not treated as scroungers or as people who are living off the state. If the Minister wishes to write to that family, he will find that the address is Buckingham palace, London.

A result of the one order that we are debating is that the basic pension will be uprated. The Labour party increased the real value of the basic pension by 20 per cent. That Labour Government are often accused of many things, but we did allow the basic pension to increase by a reasonable rate over the years. We could not maintain the full promise, as Government Members constantly remind us, but we honoured our pledge to increase the pension by a substantial amount.

This Government have constantly pared away the basic pension with their salami cuts. I do not think that any debate on social security goes by without a Government Member repeating the familiar mantra that the Labour party could not pay the Christmas bonus for two years. That is something to which they return every time they are desperate.

Dr. Spink: I will not repeat the mantra, but will the hon. Gentleman comment on the fact that the average pensioner is now 42 per cent. better off in real terms than in 1979, when we took over the levers of power from the socialist Government? Does not that show the Government's commitment to pensioners and will the hon. Gentleman support the current uprating?

Mr. Flynn: The statement proves the gullibility of the hon. Gentleman, who used the word "average" in his question. One must remember that, for instance, the Queen Mother is a pensioner.

The hon. Gentleman must understand and study the figures carefully and he should also read the writings of thinking people in the Government—there are such people. It is a controversial and dangerous thing to say, but there are Conservative Members who write with knowledge on the subject. They never take part in debates such as this, nor do they sit on Committees. During the past 24 hours, I have copied three pages of a book written by a Government Member for Members of the Committee dealing with incapacity legislation.

Yes, the average income of pensioners has gone up because the rich pensioners have become immensely richer and the poor pensioners have become relatively much poorer. There has been a redistribution of poverty among pensioners.

Dr. Spink: Is it not a fact that, during the last decade or so, poor pensioners have improved their wealth? A greater number of pensioners now have refrigerators, central heating, cars, telephones, videos and television sets. Have not pensioners been increasing their wealth in real terms and their material value during the last decade?

Mr. Flynn: The hon. Gentleman must learn that, under the Conservative Government, those who survive on the basic pension plus a little income support have had their income increased, not along with earnings—the way in which the prosperity of the general population is measured —but in line with prices. In that respect, they have fallen behind every year.

I will give a small example which may not strain the hon. Gentleman too much. The Christmas bonus is a nice, simple example, with easy figures to remember. What should the £10 Christmas bonus be worth now? I have already made the point that, for two years, the Labour Government did not pay the bonus. We failed, and we regret it greatly. The Government have cheated on that bonus on every one of the past 15 years. If the bonus had been increased in line with earnings, it would be £32— three times the value it was when the Labour Government were in power.

The Government have spread what is accepted as the truth by the gullible souls among Conservative Members. There are times when we must have deep sympathy for

Government Members. There is a story that soon there will be a line-up of single Government Members with the Chief Whip pointing a shotgun at them. They will all be taken down to the Crypt to have arranged marriages with suitable women to avoid scandal. That seems to be going a little far, and it is a harsh price to pay for acting as accomplices to the Government's various crimes during the past few years. However, it is their choice, and there must be a time when all the scandals will come to an end.

So shall I come to end. The whole movement in social security benefits during the past 15 years has been one of deception by the Government. There has been a continuous period of cuts and the Government have tried to exaggerate a demographic change which will happen in the next century, but to nothing like the extent that they suggest.

My final point is that there was once a Committee which said that this country could not sustain the benefits system, or continue to pay pensions as it has done. It said that it was crucial that the age of retirement be increased to 63 for women and 68 for men. That was the Phillips committee, which reported in 1954. Its view then was that we could not afford the benefit system. It was as wrong as the view put forward by the Government now that we cannot afford a benefit system in the future. We can, and the will is there. A small amount of growth will allow us to pay for the benefit system, not dismantle it and hand the population over to the greed and waste of the insurance companies.

7.57 pm

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): In preparing for tonight's speech, I, like my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) re-read last year's debate. It was interesting that many of the issues of concern that have been raised tonight—as opposed to the general uprating principle with which the Government have complied—have flowed through the past 12 months until today. We are still waiting for the Government to respond effectively to the concerns and the gaps in policy which clearly still remain.

In my winding-up speech last year, I said that the debate had been wide-ranging and thoughtful. Tonight, we have had relatively few speakers but quality has made up for lack of quantity. I welcome the speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). I welcome, as always, the thought-provoking speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). I cannot promise that all his views will necessarily become party policy, but they will certainly be included in our continuing review and debate during the coming months.

I welcome the speech of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who raised some crucial points that were on record from last year's debate. The points are by no means diminished by that, and they need reinforcing year on year. I particularly welcome his comments about people in residential homes within the preserved rights category. That was raised in the debate last year, and I recommend to the hon. Gentleman the excellent report by the Local Government Information Unit on that group.

That problem clearly has not gone away. Thousands of cases were brought to our attention. The hon. Gentleman says that only a few have been brought to him recently, but I assure him that, throughout Britain, a worried and large group of people want to ensure that their homes will remain their homes and that income support will be paid because their savings have rapidly diminished over the years.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire also mentioned carers and students. I link with that point the income of 16 and 17-year-olds, who are a forgotten group. Although the Government claim that all 16 and 17-year-olds are guaranteed some sort of training and, therefore, some income, by the Government's own admission, that is not the case. Significant numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds have no income and the Government have made no provision for them to have any income.

Although I welcomed the speech made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, I was disappointed with his disingenuous attack on the Labour party for its tactics in the House. It is never my intention to fight like with like and I would never wish to remind the hon. Gentleman that the Liberal Democrats have failed to put any Member on the Standing Committee that is considering the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill to fight that legislation with the Labour party. I would not take that course because I do not believe in disingenuous attacks, but the hon. Gentleman should be more careful about the way in which he approaches such matters with regard to the Labour party.

It has been an interesting and wide-ranging debate. It was relevant that the Secretary of State began by trumpeting and triumphantly stating the claims that he has made about the compensation package for VAT on fuel. The context of the whole debate is clearly the Government's economic problems—the £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement. The Government had to impose VAT on fuel. It has to be remembered that the compensation package was introduced only because there was a massive public outcry against the imposition of VAT on fuel. It was not something which the Government intended to introduce as a natural consequence of their policy.

The compensation package bears a little closer scrutiny, as the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said. It is deeply flawed. The hon. Gentleman rightly mentioned the 2·7 million children who rely on income support. That group will be particularly sold short in this respect. As we know, the compensation package contains two main elements—advance compensation for the average rise in fuel costs reflected in the retail prices index and some recognition of the extra cost faced by pensioners and people with a disability.

For a number of reasons, the package falls far short of adequately protecting people who live in or close to poverty. It is not a waste of the time of the House to identify the losers in the compensation arrangements. For example, the package provides no recognition of the particularly high costs of fuel for people living on low incomes or in poverty.

A study by the Child Poverty Action Group based on calculations from the family expenditure survey in 1992 showed that the poorest 20 per cent. of people spent 11 per cent. of their weekly budget on fuel. That is £10·23 on average a week. In comparison, the top 20 per cent. of earners spent only 3 per cent. of their weekly budget, or £16·28, on fuel. The average expenditure on fuel is 5 per cent. of the weekly budget or £13·02 a week. The regressive nature of VAT on fuel is clearly identified by the disproportionate burden of fuel costs on people on low incomes.

[Mr. Keith Bradley]

The deeply flawed compensation package does not recognise that families with children have extra heating costs which result from both the heating needs of children and the fact that families with children are likely to spend more time at home. Most important, the compensation package provides no help for people on unemployment benefit. It provides no help to people on low incomes but just above the benefit level. They are on very low incomes, but they receive no compensation under the schemes.

No help whatever is provided for people who fall through the social security net and do not claim their entitlement to social security benefit. It can be argued that they should claim their entitlement, but the complexity of the scheme and people's changing circumstances mean that many people who are entitled to means-tested benefits do not claim. So, yet again, people lose out under the compensation package.

Let us examine what the comparison package means for families with children on income support. It amounts to merely 40p for a couple with one child under 11 per week and only 5p for each extra child. It amounts to only 30p a week for a lone parent with a child under 11 and only 5p for each extra child. Although the Secretary of State is prepared triumphantly to announce the package, those figures show that considerable groups of people will be particularly disadvantaged and will suffer as a consequence of the imposition of VAT on fuel and the compensation arrangements.

It is also worth examining the way in which the compensation package will affect disabled people. It is worth noting—the Secretary of State raised the point again today—that, in his review of the social security budget, one of the groups that the Secretary of State particularly targeted for savings was people with disabilities, in the widest context. He heralded that intention in his Mais lecture and it has been translated into policy initiatives that the Government have taken.

Sticking for the moment to VAT on fuel, it is worth noting that fuel is the most common item of expenditure for disabled people. They use it for heating, for hot water for daily baths and laundry. They use electricity for such items as recharging electric wheelchairs and powering stair lifts put into their homes to help them.

Figures for the average weekly increases in the fuel bills of people with disabilities have been produced by the Disability Alliance. I thank it for its help. The figures show that the extra charges amount to £1·30, rising to £2·80 when the full rate of VAT is payable. That is more than twice as much as the compensatory increases in some benefits. So disabled people, who need to use fuel extensively, will be particularly disadvantaged by the compensation package.

Dr. Spink: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that spending on disability benefits has trebled since 1979? How much more would he spend?

Mr. Bradley: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's assiduous consideration of the debate. If he will allow me to come to the wider point about disability benefits when I deal briefly with incapacity benefit, he will recognise our view on the way in which the Government are cutting the money available for people with disabilities. If he will bear with me, I shall happily give way to him later on that point.

Compensation through the benefits system for the imposition of VAT on fuel will fail many disabled people. Some benefits for disabled people have not been increased. There is no compensatory increase in the disability living allowance. Although many people who receive DLA will receive some compensation through other benefits, those who do not receive other benefits will lose out altogether.

That group includes disabled adults with often small amounts of income from other sources such as occupational pensions. It also includes parents of disabled children who receive disability living allowance but no other benefit. One has to question why that particular group of people has been missed out of the compensation package.

There is no compensatory increase in the standard rate of statutory sick pay. Some benefits have been increased by less than the promised 50p for a single person and 70p for a couple. For example, a single carer receiving invalid care allowance will receive only 20p—35p for a couple—yet invalid care allowance amounts to only 60 per cent. of contributory benefits. Furthermore, there is no evidence that carers' fuel bills are less than those of households receiving other benefits.

The Government seem to have chosen to ignore that group when introducing the VAT compensation scheme and I urge the Under-Secretary of State to reconsider them and find out whether they can be helped, because they will suffer especially from the imposition of VAT on fuel.

While we are talking about disabled people, it is interesting to note that, because of the imposition of VAT on fuel and the compensation package, three benefits—severe disablement allowance, invalid care allowance and severe disability premium—which were paid at the same rate, will now receive different treatment and be paid at different rates. For example, severe disablement allowance has been uprated by VAT compensation of 50p, so the new rate will be £34·80 per week; invalid care allowance has been uprated by VAT compensation of 20p to £34·50 per week; but there is no compensatory increase for severe disability premium, so the new amount is £34·30.

There will therefore be three different rates of payment for benefits that were paid at the same rate. It would also be sensible if the Under-Secretary of State studied the compensation package to ensure that such weekly payments are treated in exactly the same way.

The Government's attempt to reduce social security benefits in the first round of the review of the social security budget has focused on the cost of people on invalidity benefit. The hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) was right to say that the cost of invalidity benefit has increased considerably.

I shall not restate the arguments about the Government's previous decisions—notably before the 1987 election, when every Department was asked to find any mechanism possible to take people off the unemployment register. The social security team therefore pushed as many people as possible on to invalidity benefit, which reduced unemployment significantly so that the Government could go into that election saying that unemployment was falling. The then chairman of the Conservative party identified that factor as the crucial indicator to the public of the Tory Administration's competence. The Government set in train the consequences that they must deal with now.

I am not denying that some people are in receipt of invalidity benefit who should not be. We have never

questioned that fact. We question strongly, however, whether the new medical test is the right mechanism to assess more sensitively those who are genuinely unable to work. During the coming weeks, we shall argue our case strongly in the Standing Committee of the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill. We strongly disagree with the Government about those disabled people who get through the hoop of the medical test, convince the Government that they are incapable of work but then hit the double whammy —the amount of money available to them is reduced.

If the Government are saying that invalidity benefit payments were reasonable, but that too many people were claiming, how can they say—after reducing the number of people eligible—that the benefit is costing too much money?

Two groups of people in identical circumstances and with identical disabilities can pass the incapacity test, but receive different benefits. As I said, I shall be happy to give way to the hon. Member for Castle Point if he can justify the fact that, under the present invalidity benefit scheme, one receives the full rate of payment after six months, but under the new scheme one will not do so until after 12 months; that under the old scheme, one received additions for adult and child dependants, but under the new scheme, those are severely curtailed; and that under the old scheme, one was entitled to additional pension, but under the new scheme, there is no additional pension. I shall give way to him if he can justify the fact that, although the numbers eligible have been reduced by the new medical test, the amount of money that they receive is also being reduced.

I think that we can understand hon. Members' failure to understand the Government's legislation. They are reducing the number of people eligible for benefit and reducing the amount paid to one of the most vulnerable groups of people. For many months and years—probably for life—such people will have to rely on the new incapacity benefit, but they will receive less money than they were previously entitled to on invalidity benefit. That represents a straight political choice and the Government are using disabled people as a scapegoat for their economic mismanagement and public sector problems.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden said so effectively, the consequence of that policy will be to reverse the trend that was set in motion before the 1987 election and to push people claiming disability benefit—the new incapacity benefit—back on to unemployment benefit. They have reversed the trend that was used to manipulate the electorate before that election. By the Government's own admission, during the next two years 200,000 of those people will claim unemployment benefit, at a tremendous cost to the social security budget.

Those people will probably fail the medical test by a small margin, but, because of changes to statutory sick pay —the burden is being placed on businesses, which will recruit more carefully—they are less likely to gain employment and more likely to become long-term unemployed. That trend is increasing, as we have seen from the unemployment figures, and Government policies will add to the increase.

I have spent a long time on the subject of disability, but disabled people are often a forgotten group in society and this sort of debate allows us to range widely over their needs. The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People said, quite honestly and openly—I commend him for it—that the number of people receiving disability working allowance had been a disappointment.

From April 1995, people receiving disability working allowance will be eligible for help with their health charges. On 1 December, the Secretary of State said that people on that allowance "will automatically qualify" for such help. However, I understand that those people will have to undergo a savings test and only those with capital of less than £8,000 will qualify for help with the charges. Please could the Under-Secretary of State clarify whether all of them will qualify automatically—as the Secretary of State said—or whether the savings test will be applied and only those who pass it will qualify? Such clarification would be very welcome.

The independent living fund was another significant area of debate last year. One year has gone by and it is clear that many organisations for the disabled and people with disabilities are outraged at the failure of the new fund to meet effectively their real needs. Very few people have received a grant under the scheme and although the Minister with responsibility for the disabled said that the roll-over costs significantly outstrip the new fund's budget, all that proves is how inadequate the fund is.

When the extension fund and the new independent living fund were debated in the House, we highlighted the problem of administration and the fact that money comes from social services up to a cut-off point, at which it is topped up from the fund. That is causing administrative chaos. I urge the Government to look at that again, and particularly at the independent living fund so that it can make direct cash payments to disabled people, in conjunction with care packages drawn up by social services offices, to ensure that real care is provided, and the money can be used effectively, sensitively and imaginatively by recipients of the fund.

The situation is becoming intolerable. In many ways, the fund has no relevance to the way in which the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 is being implemented. We urge the Government to think again about the way that they have excluded people over 65, but particularly terminally ill people, from receiving money from the fund.

Under the old system, 34 per cent. of the case load of the independent living fund were people over 65. They have benefited greatly from its provisions. It is outrageous to exclude them and terminally ill people. That is quite unacceptable. I hope that the Government will reconsider the workings, operation and funding of the independent living fund.

It is always relevant to debate the social fund at this time of year, because it is absolutely clear and has been stated year on year since it has been in operation that people are treated differently depending on what day of the year they go through the revolving door to seek help from the fund. If one goes through it on 1 April, one stands some chance of receiving a grant or loan.

At this time of year, the situation is chaotic, and the people—in identical circumstances to those who went through at the beginning of the financial year—are told that there is no opportunity to receive help from the fund. I back up those statements with information that I received from various offices around the country. In Greater Manchester, for example, a note went out from the social fund officers saying:

"Please find enclosed a copy of your revised guidance on priorities for Social Fund Loans. You will note that, generally speaking, we are only in a position to consider paymetn for high priority items which avoid a risk to health. This situation is likely

[Mr. Bradley]

to continue to the end of this financial year unless more funds are forthcoming. Otherwise we would be heading for a large overspend."

Revising the guideline is common in the operation of the social fund. As the year goes on, the money for care grants or loans is prioritised and continually limited. In Greater Manchester at the moment, one has not only to be in a high priority—many categories of people are—but face a risk to one's health. It is almost impossible to get a crucial element, the replacement of the old supplementary payments, which were for essential items such as clothing and household goods to enable people to set up in new home and maintain a certain standard. That is no longer on the agenda. One must have a risk to health, but nothing else.

I have similar statements from other parts of the country. A note was sent to me from the Benefits Agency in Sheffield East. It says:

"Following legal advice",

it had to review the situation on the social fund,

"but the criteria for which budgeting loans were to be awarded was as a result restricted to situations where there would be severe hardship or serious risk to the health and safety".

Again, that limits the priority category to a particular group.

I received a memo from the East Nottinghamshire office of the agency—it could have come from anywhere in the country. It stated quite clearly that only high-priority cases would be considered, and at a later stage those high-priority cases were limited to certain groups within the high-priority category. The Government recognised that there were high priorities, but then limited them as the year went by. That guidance on how social fund officers should operate the scheme is up to date.

The Government have said loudly and clearly that they do not have the budget to meet the needs of people who may be in identical circumstances to those who previously received help from the social fund. I urge the Government to look at the funding through the social fund. They triumphantly announced that people would receive help to top up their meagre benefits through income support. It must be stressed that they are loans and that people must repay them.

People are being given only a limited opportunity—an opportunity they may resist—to take out a loan, which is then taken out of their benefits to repay. Even that system is falling apart at the seams as we enter the last quarter of the financial year.

One or two other points are worth raising. We welcome any attempt by the Government to look at child care costs and the way that child care can be an essential element in trying to enable mothers, particularly, to get back into the workplace. The announcment in the Budget of the disregard in family credit for that purpose is obviously to be welcomed.

I press the Under-Secretary on exactly how much help will be given. On the cost of child care, the £40 disregard and the £28 net element is clearly not enough on a day-to-day basis. They may afford the opportunity for post-school help and perhaps offer some help on a day a week. But if one looks at the real child care costs, anywhere in the country, it is much more realistic to talk about £80, £90 or £100 a week to look after children. Although we welcome the step in the right direction, I urge the Government to look at the reality of their proposals to see whether more can be given.

Lowest-income families already receive maximum family credit. As the arrangements on child care are based on a disregard, if one is already on maximum family credit one clearly cannot receive any more. There is no help with child care costs for the lowest-income families receiving family credit. It seems rather perverse that one does not help those in greatest need.

As the scale increases, only a proportion of the £28 will be available. Will the Under-Secretary of State tell us how many people will receive no help? How many people who receive £28 will receive only £10? How many will receive £20? how many will receive the full £28? That will be an interesting spread within family credit. I hope that he is able to gain that information before he replies. If not, I hope that he will write to me with that information as soon as possible.

We have had a good deal of discussion on statutory sick pay. We have dealt with the amendment from the other place. My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden asked how it will be dealt with when the Government have completed their consultation process. We raised that when we considered Lords amendments, but we continually seek reassurance on that point because the Government tend to operate by regulation and instrument rather than by primary legislation. We do not want the order to slip through without proper scrutiny and debate.

Dr. Spink: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bradley: The hon. Gentleman failed to address the issue that I presented to him, so I am reluctant to give way, but since he has sat through my speech quietly, I will be generous.

Dr. Spink: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. We all want to help truly vulnerable people as much as we can and the hon. Gentleman has presented us with a wish list of many cost enhancements. Has he costed that list? Does he have authority from his colleagues to propose that additional spending?

Mr. Bradley: I do not believe that I did present a wish list; I was commenting on Government policy. I do not need to cost the social fund, for example, because the Government say that it is self-financing, because it is based on a loan system. The money is paid back.

Dr. Spink: What about child care?

Mr. Bradley: I have cited the social fund as an example. The Government—not I—say that it is self-financing. I do not have to justify asking the Government to put more money into a fund that they claim to be self-financing. That seems reasonable to me. We do not have to make the obvious point about trying desperately not to put more people onto unemployment benefit, which costs an average £9,000 a year in tax and lost benefit per person on the unemployment register. We would try to set the economic conditions that would reduce unemployment and so free resources to fund other essential care and benefit packages.

This has been a worthwhile and interesting debate. We welcome any increases in benefit levels, however meagre they may be. We have expressed our doubts about some benefits that have fallen through the net this time and about

the way in which the VAT compensation package has been introduced. We are concerned that some benefits have not been compensated for in the same way as others, which means that certain benefits are no longer in kilter with others. I hope that the Minister can give us some assurance about those benefits.

When we re-run the debate in 12 months' time, I hope that we will not have to raise, yet again, the incredibly important matters of the independent living fund, the social fund, carers, preserved income support for those in residential homes and all those other categories of people who seem to be forgotten continually by the Government.

8.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): This has been an interesting debate, as the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) has pointed out. It has covered a wide range of subjects, some of them even related to the orders before the House, which is always a great consolation.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) opened the debate for the Opposition by saying that the speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State contained few surprises. I had intended to intervene then to say that there would be no surprises in the speech by the hon. Gentleman, but, as it turned out, it did contain one or two surprises.

One of the surprises was that the hon. Member for Garscadden was unable to be very specific in response to questions from my hon. Friends about what Opposition policy might be on certain matters. The hon. Gentleman was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) whether the level of social security spending was enough. The answer was rather like a version of, "We wouldn't have started from here." The hon. Gentleman suggested that economic circumstances would be magically different in the future. He suggested that the economic cycle would be abolished and that there would not be unemployment under a Labour Government, so spending priorities could be different. That was not a credible answer.

The hon. Member for Garscadden suggested that a great deal of money was being spent in the wrong way, but he did not go on to say where the sweeping reductions, which were presumably implied by that statement, might be made.

When my right hon. Friend asked the hon. Gentleman about the schemes for pensions proposed by the then Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), it was surprising that the hon. Gentleman did not feel that he should rule out the means-testing of the pension, or whatever it was that his right hon. Friend proposed.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister has made my point by saying, "or whatever it was". The proposition that he is putting to me is that I should have ruled out my right hon. Friend's suggestion, but I made it clear that I had not had the opportunity to study it. The proposal had been verbally presented on a television programme which I had not seen. I suspect that the Minister is in the same position because he said that I should have ruled out that proposal "whatever it was". That seems an odd position to take up.

Mr. Hague: The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) clearly suggested that there would be some adjustment to the pension as people's incomes rose. To me that is equivalent to means testing, whatever the detail behind the right hon. Gentleman's proposition. We will await the time when the hon. Member for Garscadden receives advice from the Commission for Social Justice in order to clarify that matter.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the guaranteed minimum pension and what discussions may have taken place. The problem of the complexity of that pension and the way in which it interacts with SERPS was raised by the Goode committee as one of the areas in which the Government might seek to simplify arrangements for occupational pension schemes. The Government felt it right to issue a series of consultation papers to take forward discussions on the recommendations of the Goode report.

The Government issued one of their consultation papers about the future of the guaranteed minimum pension, which raised the question of whether there should be an alternative test of how to contract out of SERPS. That alternative test would have to offer security for the rights of occupational pension scheme members. That is what the discussions were about. The Government are now analysing the results of that consultation exercise. If we have any proposals to bring forward as a result, we will do so in due course.

The hon. Member for Garscadden also asked about the guaranteed minimum pension and whether there was any equivalent in personal pensions. There is an equivalent, in that the contracted-out rebate is paid as a minimum contributions into a personal pension. It is then used when a personal pension is turned into an annuity with similar rights to a guaranteed minimum pension.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister is perhaps flattering me, because I said that there was no comparable mechanism in the private pensions sector. I also went on to ask him whether he was satisfied with the present level of regulation, given the problems that have emerged in recent times. Could he address that question?

Mr. Hague: There is an equivalent in that the minimum contributions are paid into personal pensions and personal pensions are turned into an annuity with similar rights in terms of inflation increases up to a certain level, widows' benefits and so on as a guaranteed minimum pension.

The question of regulation is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend at the Treasury. The Securities and Investments Board is currently reviewing what has happened and the alleged mis-selling of personal pensions. It will produce its findings and thoughts on the matter later in the year.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked what is happening to statutory sick pay. It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman does not appear to be listening to my answers, but no doubt the hon. Member for Withington will write it all down for him. The Government will consult industry, unions and other interested bodies now that the amendment on it, which was passed in the other place, has been agreed by the House.

The hon. Member referred to the alternative of a two-week period rather than a four-week period for the reimbursement of small employers as costing "only £10 million". We occasionally get such references from the Opposition about things that will "only" cost

[Mr. Hague]

£10 million. The trouble with tens of millions of pounds is that they add up to rather a lot. If the hon. Gentleman thought it through, I am not sure whether he would consider that alternative an appropriate use of an additional £10 million, especially when small employers and employers in general stand to gain from the changes to statutory sick pay, when the reductions in national insurance contributions are taken into account.

Small employers in particular stand to gain because they tend to have lower sickness rates and they tend to employ many people for whom they are paying the lower rates of employers' national insurance contributions.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister so often tempts me to intervene. However, he is being a little unfair. I said that I considered the figures to be surprisingly low, which illustrates or underlines the fact that only a small percentage of the work force was covered by the provision. Will the Minister give us some idea of what is in the ministerial mind? I recognise that consultation is taking place, but presumably it is a concession granted on the basis that there is a need for action. Is that a fair assumption?

Mr. Hague: The Bill was changed and the Government are consulting industry and trade unions in an effort to make the alternative scheme work. If such a way can be found, we shall lay regulations before the House. If it cannot, there will be a report, as the hon. Gentleman knows. There would be little point in giving a commitment now that there must be a debate on that report if in the meantime employers agreed that for some reason such a scheme would not work. There are many mechanisms in the House and in the other place for securing a debate and no doubt they can be pursued if necessary.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the job seeker's allowance and the reduction from 12 to six months in contributory payments. Two thirds of people who become unemployed leave the count within six months and many of those who remain will be able to claim job seeker's allowance on a means-tested basis or national insurance credits. The measure targets resources on those in need. That is one of the themes that the Government pursue in their reform of the social security system.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) began his speech by saying that he had lost an argument that he was right to lose. That comment could have come only from the Liberal Democrat Bench. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for that little unfairness to him.

He talked at some length about pensioners' living standards. That raises the debate which often arises during Question Time and other times in the House about pensioners' living standards which, as one of my hon. Friends observed, have improved by 42 per cent. on average over the past 15 years. The percentage of pensioners in the bottom quintile of income distribution has fallen from 38 per cent. in 1979 to 24 per cent. on the latest figures. Therefore, some of the points that the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) made earlier are not valid. His comments about pensioners incomes are not true.

In general, pensioners have benefited greatly in the past 15 years. The Government, recognising that not all have shared equally in that, have directed additional resources to those at the bottom of the income scale—£1 billion in extra resources since 1988.

Mr. Kirkwood: I understand the Minister, but in relation to the changes in VAT, relatively small proportions of retired people are suffering terrible adverse financial hardship. What specifically is he doing to address that?

Mr. Hague: As the hon. Gentleman knows, all pensioners are receiving the additional amounts to help with VAT—50p in the first year for single pensioners and 70p a week for couples—a substantial piece of assistance which will pay the lion's share of pensioners' increased fuel bills as a result of value added tax.

Like those on the Opposition Front Bench, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire also implied that social security spending should be higher, but again it is not clear how he proposes to finance it and from where he proposes to take the larger share of the gross domestic product that he would spend on those measures.

The hon. Member raised a number of points about residential care. They are matters for my ministerial colleagues at the Department of Health that I shall draw to their attention. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) also raised a number of matters relating to the Department of Health and the Department of Employment. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) who sadly is not with us——

Mr. Dewar: He has been committed.

Mr. Hague: The hon. Member for Garscadden says that his hon. Friend has been committed; I am not sure where.

The hon. Member for Islington, North referred to a caricature of the Government's position as no longer being able to afford the universal pension or the welfare state. That is not the case. The Government's objective is to ensure that the welfare state is sustainable and affordable in future.

Like many Labour Members, he called for the state pension age to be reduced to 60, although that is not the policy of the Opposition Front Bench. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman considers that to be the best use of £12 billion—that is what it would cost to equalise the state pension age at 60 instead of 65. That money would go to men between 60 and 65, many of whom would still be in employment or have occupational pension schemes in addition to anything they might receive from the state.

Most of the comments of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden referred to my colleagues in other Departments and I shall draw his remarks to their attention. He also made a plea for child benefit to continue. The Government's manifesto commitment to child benefit is clear, but I advise the hon. Gentleman to have a word with his hon. Friends on the Labour Front Bench before the Social Justice Commission concludes its deliberations.

The hon. Member for Newport, West has left the Chamber, so I shall move to some of the other remarks made during the debate.

The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as interested only in costs and not in a sensible and coherent set of reforms. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State set out very clear principles for the reform of the social security system: to focus help on those in greatest need, to diminish

disincentives, to improve the delivery of benefits, to bear down on fraud and to encourage personal responsibility. The measures that he has announced are in line with that.

The Government's commitment to the system has been shown by our record since 1979. Extra help has been focused on those in greatest need, such as less well-off pensioners, to whom I have referred, and low-income families who have had extra help over the past few years totalling £1 billion. Extra benefits to disabled people have totalled £5 billion since 1978-79 in real terms.

The focus of those policies is continuing with the uprating statement: to be generous to those in need while being realistic about what the nation can afford. The uprating will provide a typical low-income working couple with two children with an increase of £4·30 per week. The income of an unemployed couple with two children will also increase by £4·30 per week; that of an unemployed lone parent with one child will increase by £2·90 per week. A typical unemployed family will be £17 a week better off in real terms, after allowing for inflation, than in 1979.

We should compare that with the record of the Government in the 1970s, when spending on families fell by 7 per cent. in total. They have little right to criticise us on these matters.

Mr. Kirkwood: Where were you in the 1970s?

Mr. Hague: I was at school, but I was watching closely the activities of the Labour Government. I recall writing down these figures at the time.

As my right hon. Friend has described, therefore, we have kept our manifesto pledges to pensioners and to families. We have gone beyond that in providing substantial extra help with the cost of VAT on fuel. We are laying the foundations for reforms of social security which will preserve and sustain it in the future, and in doing so we are moving in step with many other countries of the western world who are also reforming their social security systems; countries throughout the European Community and across the rest of the world.

They are raising contributions in France and in most other member states of the European Community; they are linking the uprating of benefits to prices rather than to wages in the Netherlands, France and Italy; reducing unemployment benefit in Germany, France and Spain and reducing its duration in Denmark and Germany; reducing disability benefits in the Netherlands and Ireland; tightening up on sickness benefits in Italy, Spain and the Netherlands; reforming pensions by raising the pension age in Italy, Portugal, Germany and Greece; freezing family benefits in France and the Netherlands, or targeting them more closely in Germany; tackling fraud in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal; and encouraging more private provision of pensions in Italy, Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Spain.

Alone in the European Community, the Labour party is content not to have a policy for the reform and improvement of the social security system and content to make complacent criticisms of Government policy without having an alternative to put in its place. If this is not the right percentage by which to uprate benefits, what is the right percentage? Hon. Members on the Opposition Benches have not told us. If it is not the right way to reform incapacity benefits, what is the right way?

If ours is not the right approach to the state pension age, how would they finance the alternative approaches which they are themselves divided about adopting? If our proposals for ensuring that the social security system can be sustained in the future are not the right ones, what are the alternatives?

The speeches of those on the Opposition Front Bench always draw back from a definitive policy. They always leave the implication that spending would be higher if they were in office, but they are all the time fearful of the brooding presence of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who has told them not to make any specific commitments.

We bring to the House tonight orders which provide specifically for the uprating of social security benefits, for the indexation of guaranteed minimum pensions provided by employers, for the reduction of employers' national insurance contributions, for a new system of assisting small employers with the cost of statutory sick pay; and we do so in the context of policies that will ensure that our social security system is affordable and well targeted in the future. They are policies which are realistic and well judged, to which no alternative has been expressed in the debate and which we are confident will therefore enjoy the approval of the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 228, Noes 53.

Division No. 129] **[9.01 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew

Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Livingstone, Ken
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Jim Cunningham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Guaranteed Minimum Pensions Increase Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 10th February, be approved.

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 10th February, be approved. *—[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

The House proceeded to a Division——

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the event of the motion being defeated, would it be possible to allow an emergency debate to assist my pensioners in Southend? I understand that the Opposition are now voting to stop a pension increase greatly needed by poor people.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Why are Labour blocking it?

Sir Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered):* If the increase is blocked, there will be huge hardship for pensioners in Southend and throughout the country. If the Opposition win the vote, may we have an emergency debate about what we can do to help the pensioners deprived of their pension increase?

Mr. Arnold: Pensioners of Jarrow.

Sir Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered):* This is a serious question.

Mr. Arnold: Jarrow pensioners.

Sir Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered):* Pensioners are having a difficult time these days——

Mr. Arnold: Why are Labour trying to block the pension increase?

Sir Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered):* Please keep quiet. *[Interruption.]* This is serious; this is not funny.

Mr. Arnold: We are being serious.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) well knows that the Chair never anticipates a situation.

Sir Teddy Taylor *(seated and covered):* This is a very serious matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I accept that it is an entirely serious matter, but the point is that the Chair does not anticipate a situation. Let us see whether that situation evolves.

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport) (*seated and covered*): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it a new point of order?

Mr. Banks (*seated and covered*): Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask you for an emergency debate to discuss the motion before us, and that which the House voted on a few moments ago, concerning the fact that Labour Members, with the apparent connivance of the Opposition Chief Whip, have been voting against the uprating of social security benefits and against pension increases in general?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have to draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that we are voting on motion No. 3 on the Order Paper. That is all that we are doing at the moment. Anything else is pure conjecture.

Mr. Banks (*seated and covered*: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am referring to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With or without respect, that is my ruling.

The House having divided: Ayes 231, Noes 50.

Division No. 130] **[9.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy

Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oiner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Spellar, John
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put,

That the draft Statutory Sick Pay (Small Employers' Relief) Amendment Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 10th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have always understood it to be the procedure in the House that votes had to follow the voices. Will you therefore rule on whether it is in order for Opposition Members who have called with their voices for compensation for VAT now to vote against that compensation, presumably on the ground that it is more than the 50p a week, which they regard as adequate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Voices on a Division are specific to that Division.

The House having divided: Ayes 227, Noes 52.

Division No. 131] **[9.26 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David

Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Boateng, Paul
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spellar, John
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dale Campbell-Savours and Mr. Terry Lewis.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put,

That the draft Social Security (Contributions) (Re-rating and National Insurance Fund Payments) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 10th February, be approved.—[*Mr. Andrew Mitchell.*]

The House divided: Ayes 221, Noes 46.

Division No. 132] **[9.37 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Galbraith, Sam
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Illsley, Eric
Lewis, Terry
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spellar, John
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. George Mudie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put,

That the draft Statutory Sick Pay (Rate of Payment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 10th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

The House divided: Ayes 233, Noes 44.

Division No. 133] **[9.48 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Hendry, Charles
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Callaghan, Jim

Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Illsley, Eric
Lewis, Terry
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mudie, George
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Spellar, John
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

PETITION

London Cab Trade

9.58 pm

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): I wish to present a petition on behalf of my constituent, Mr. Alan Howes, and 35 other London licensed taxi drivers.

It concludes:

Wherefore your petitioner prays that your honourable house will consider the following remedy; that minicab drivers register for "the knowledge" of the area where they at present work and that after acquiring the necessary standards they then be anchored to that area in order that other areas are not flooded with taxis. This process of integrating both factions into a one tier system would require that the Public Carriage Office take on additional (temporary) staff in order to cater with the additional workload. This process to cease midnight, 31st December 1999, at which stage we should have a fleet four times its present size but spread over the whole of the metropolis able to serve London's public not only as they would wish but as they both deserve and demand.

To lie upon the Table.

Pennine Wind Farms

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10 pm

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me at the appropriate hour —dead on time. This is an important debate. As many hon. Members will know, my constituency is in a most beautiful part of the country, and the Haworth moors have strong Bronte connections. I will not rehearse with the House tonight the objections to the wind farms that my constituents are voicing to Calderdale council, as that is a matter for the local council and local people. I must thank my local parish councils for all the help that they are giving to this cause.

It is important that hon. Members declare their interests. My interests in the energy industry are wide. I am a member of the Council of Europe's scientific and technology committee. I was a member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. I am chairman of the Back-Bench sub-committee on industry and I am part of an all-party team which advises the industry sector of the nuclear energy industry—I met the unions only the other day.

However, the interest that is paramount is that of my constituents and their welfare. Their welfare is being threatened by wind farms. I say farms because we already have one at Ovenden moor. Two more are planned: one at Cock hill, known to the nation as Fleight hill, has 44 turbines and is a huge affair; the other is in the shadow of Stoodley Pike across the Pennine way. A third is already built and lies on my boundaries at Cliviger. A further wedge of land marching along my boundary has been earmarked for wind farm development by Lancashire county council.

We will live on a porcupine's back. It is an environmental disaster based on what seemed to be a good idea at the time; or, to use that well-known phrase, "it worked elsewhere". Wind farms are set to become the next great folly of the planet. They will be compared in future to that other folly—high-rise flats. They will go into the annals of well-intentioned mistakes. Stop it now, Minister.

I am glad to see my colleague from the Department of Trade and Industry here. He has been here before when I have had the Adjournment debate. Surely we should also have a Minister from the Department of the Environment. On cue, the Minister for the Environment and Countryside has arrived. My constituents would be happy, gentlemen, if the council and planners would take the Ministry's own guidance set out on 5 December 1991, which says that where a proposal would have a detrimental effect on the locality generally and on the amenities that ought in public interest be provided, those amenities should be protected. If that were to happen, there would be no more wind farms in Calder Valley.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Donald Thompson: No. Two of my hon. Friends wish to speak.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. At the beginning of the debate, the hon. Gentleman made a number of declarations. Most of them were non-remunerated, but it should be made clear that the hon. Gentleman is in receipt of remuneration from the cross-party team of advisers to the British Nuclear Forum.

Sir Donald Thompson: That is why it is listed in the Register of Members' Interests. The book is designed to help those hon. Members who have outside interests.

According to a document produced by the Wind Energy Association, 30 per cent. of people in Cornwall, where construction has already taken place, still say that wind farms spoil the countryside.

The details of my constituents' objections have been set out to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs by the chairman of the Fleight hill wind farm opposition group, Mr. Michael Denton. He has argued that the time scale for determining the application on the 600-acre site, which will have a profound effect on the ecology of the area, has been no longer than that provided for considering an extension to a semi-detached house. He has also said that there has been no proper prior consultation, no account taken of recent experiences, and no court of reinstatement, and that the guidance issued has been out of date. His document will be available to the House when the Select Committee reports.

To disregard the historical connections, scale and outstanding location of Fleight hill would be a mistake. Bramwell Bronte worked at the local railway station and his sisters made the moors around the town world famous. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who represents Haworth, is sitting in front of me.

Many local people and national organisations have objected to the plan. The list of objectors includes Ted Hughes, the poet laureate, Lord Savile, Lord Houghton, David Bellamy, Bernard Ingham, English Nature, the Countryside Commission, the Worldwide Fund for Nature, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, the Ramblers Association, the Pennine Way Co-ordinated Project, the Open Spaces Society, the Civic Trust, the National Trust, the South Pennine Pack Horse Trail, the Agro-Gen Resistance Organisation of Wales and many more.

Lord Houghton has reminded us that some time ago people for ever wanted to dam streams, but now they want to spoil our mountains with wind farms.

I have with me a letter from a constituent of mine, Mrs. Barker, signed by more than 60 of the country's leading literary figures—a staggering number. That letter is against the despoliation, the rape, of the Bronte moors. It will be published in full in *The Times Literary Supplement* on Friday.

You will tell me, Minister, that all those groups will have their objections considered when the application is the subject of a public inquiry. You will tell us——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has forgotten that he should be addressing the Chair, not the Minister.

Sir Donald Thompson: The Minister will remind me that he is acting in a quasi-judicial role. I know how much his boss, the President of the Board of Trade, and the Secretary of State for the Environment like to be proactive. I know that they are listening tonight. Surely they could reappraise their policy in the light of the reversal of public, environmental and scientific opinion about wind farms. They are objected to because, among other things, they cause noise, tourist blight and damage to water courses.

If the application is persisted with, it will surely be called in to the Department of the Environment for consideration. Ministers should change their policy before the application reaches them. I should like an early meeting to be held between the Department of the Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry to instruct the planning officers and their inspectors that wind farms in areas such as Calder Valley should be considered obtrusive. They should also rework the premium on unbuilt wind farms.

The planning guidance policy for renewable energy is now out of date. The mood of the country has changed. A document issued by Department of the Environment, written in 1991 at the height of the era of embellishment, when every directive from Europe or elsewhere became a Christmas tree to hang things on, stated:

"The United Kingdom Government's policy is being pursued through: a continuing programme of research, development and demonstration in collaboration with industry; ensuring the establishment of a legal and administrative framework which allows renewable energy promoters to compete equitably in the market with conventional sources of energy."

Some of my constituents do not consider a profit of £600,000 a month for one small wind farm at Ovenden moor to be equitable competition.

The guidance published in 1991 set the premium for landfill gas at 5·7p, for sewage gas at 5·9p, for municipal gas at 6·5p, for hydro-electricity at 6p, and for other waste at 5·9p as opposed to the wind premium of 11p. The producers should use a proportion of renewable energy, but the premium of 11p per kWh has seduced them into spoiling our countryside.

Landfill gas, sewage gas and waste could and should supersede the easy option of ruining green field sites, moorlands, hills and mountains. If the premium were lowered and redistributed amongst the less easy options, the advantages would apply to other renewable energy sources which would properly come into play.

On 26 January this year, there was an interesting exchange of ideas in the Trade and Industry Select Committee, when the Minister for Energy said:

"Clearly there is a level of controversy about wind farms . . . We have, as you know, got at the moment a bidding round out for renewables that includes wind farms. I think we have had something between 10 and 20 times the amount of bids for the renewable subsidy in terms of capacity which we are actually going to be able to subsidise or the consumers will be able to subsidise and clearly one of the issues is going to be how we allocate that capacity to different renewable sources and I have to say that I will be taking into account the concern about environmental aspects of wind farms when we come to make those allocation decisions".

That is a step in the right direction. My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) said:

"do you not think it might be a good idea to avert the subsidy away from wind farming?";

and the Minister replied:

"It is interesting how the environmental argument has shifted with regard to wind farms. It was not very long ago that people were arguing that this was the best possible way of generating electricity".

We have tried wind farms and surely reached the conclusion that they are viable at sea or along a harbour wall. "Harnessing the Wind" by the energy technology support unit states that current estimates suggest that, in Britain, offshore wind turbulence could ultimately produce more than three times as much electricity as onshore machines. Wind speeds are good off shore and such sites might be environmentally more acceptable than those on land.

My constituents agree wholeheartedly with that. But the wind farm industry will not, because it would rather use the 11p subsidy to build wind farms near the collecting points and take the profit. That is not what the 11p subsidy was for; it was for wind farms to be environmentally friendly.

New players are now moving into the game. Defence companies seeking to diversify will try anything for tuppence—or in this case 11p. According to an editorial in "Windfarm Monthly" in December 1993, they will not necessarily succeed. It stated that the Government would welcome big names but warned that a whole list of big companies

"have left Europe and America littered with the corpses of their failed endeavours".

That is from their own magazine. He even makes the point that one of the companies in the Hebden Bridge project is only arguably acceptable.

Wind farming is now based on an over-generous premium which is drawing companies nearer towns. It is based on opportunist environmental policy. It is based on the idea of some people that they should wear a hair shirt to remind them of their environmental credentials and piety. My constituents are being asked to don the green hair shirt of wind farms, and they will not wear it. Now is the time for reappraisal, consultation, cessation. This is not a case of "not in my backyard"; it is a case of "not in my front garden".

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Is my hon. Friend aware that in my constituency Dickinson's dairy has had one windmill on its site for some time and, as far as I know, there has been no local opposition? It is seen as something of a novelty. Is he further aware, however, that a wind farm comprising 13 windmills has recently been sited at Ingbirchworth, near Penistone, and that it is noisy, unsightly and unpopular with the locals? Is it not clear that in areas of natural beauty wind farms are becoming blots on the landscape and should not be encouraged?

Sir Donald Thompson: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. His constituency is next to mine, as is that of the hon. Gentleman I see sitting opposite, the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). The constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley are bitterly opposed to 13 turbines. I already have one wind farm, 41 more planned, another seven in the offing and those at Cliviger. My constituents do not want those wind farms, which can be seen from all over the country.

10.16 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I am glad to have the opportunity of supporting my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) in the concern that he has expressed about the development of wind farms and wind turbines. As my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) said in his intervention, some turbine developments are popular while others are much less so. There is, in my view, a place for wind-powered energy, but turbines need to be sited extremely sensitively, and I am afraid that many of the developments that have taken place at an increasing pace in recent months are not in the right position.

In February last year, the Department of the Environment, together with the Welsh Office, published a planning policy guidance note on renewable energy. On visual intrusion and other matters about which people are concerned, reference was made to the introduction of

[Mr. Gary Waller]

environmental assessments. It was made clear that wind generators would "shortly"—I emphasise the word "shortly"—be added to the categories of projects for which applications must be accompanied by an environmental statement

"if the particular development proposed is likely to have significant environmental effects."

Although the word "shortly" was used, a great deal of time has gone by, a very large number of further applications have been submitted and we still await a statement. Apparently, the responses are still being considered. I believe that far too much time has gone by.

I would also say to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. McLoughlin) that an environmental statement should be published in much broader categories of applications than those that the Government had in mind. For instance, it referred to developments within a national park or areas of outstanding natural beauty, those including more than 10 wind generators or where the total installed capacity was more than 5 MW. One generator or turbine badly placed can be extremely distracting and irritating to many people and particularly to visitors in an area like Haworth, the Bronte country and the Pennines, which are a great attraction for visitors to the north of England.

I would like to see many of these applications called in, because local authorities have a duty to notify the Secretary of State of any development which, by reason of its scale or the nature of the location of the land, would significantly prejudice the implementation of the development plan's policies and proposals. It is clear that, in any development plan for a local authority in our area, the attraction of tourists will be extremely important. I believe that any development involving wind turbines would prejudice that objective.

When he opened a wind farm recently, my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy said that the Government did not have a specific target for wind energy, and that its success would depend on developers finding sites that were acceptable to the public and to planning authorities. Piecemeal development of that kind, however, is simply not acceptable to many of my constituents. We need a strategy: we need to ensure that wind farms and wind turbines are put in the right places. The more time goes by before we develop such a strategy, the more we shall regret the bad mistakes that blight the lives of many of our constituents.

10.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) and for Keighley (Mr. Waller). The four of us share some of the most outstanding countryside in the nation, which just happens to fall within the curtilages of our constituencies. Mine abuts those of my hon. Friends, and I well understand the vigour with which they have expressed their views: people feel strongly about these issues.

The development of renewable energy forms a central part of the Government's commitment to the principle of sustainable development. Our policy is to stimulate the development of new and renewable energy technologies, but only where they have prospects of making an economic contribution to our energy supplies, and where they do not make an unacceptable impact on the environment. In the case of wind, this means that wind farms must not be allowed to make an unacceptable intrusion on to sensitive and treasured landscapes.

I think few would disagree with the principle behind the Government's energy policy—that the promotion of diverse, secure and sustainable energy supplies at competitive prices is absolutely necessary for a strong and viable economy. A key part of the Government's policy seeks to reduce the emission of harmful pollutants, and wind obviously has a role to play in this.

Renewable energy is currently supplying about 2 per cent. of United Kingdom energy, mainly from hydro-electricity in Scotland. In its report to the President of the Board of Trade, the Renewable Energy Advisory Group concluded that, by 2025, that figure could rise to between 5 and 20 per cent. The actual contribution will depend upon the extent to which the different renewable technologies can be made competitive and gain public acceptance. As some of the points made by my hon. Friends demonstrate, public acceptance is very important, especially in relation to the environmental impact on wind farms.

My hon. Friends raised a number of points that I consider more relevant to the duties of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley rightly pointed out, our hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) has some comments to make; I will ensure that those comments are brought to the attention of both my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, whose judicial planning role is relevant.

We have repeatedly stated and reaffirmed our intention to work towards a figure of 1,500 MW of renewable electricity generating capacity in the United Kingdom by the year 2000. The principal instrument for implementing this intention is the making of orders under the non-fossil fuel obligation, and the parallel arrangements in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The so-called "NFFO" is proving to be a considerable success and one of which we are rightly proud. Already, over 250 MW of declared net capacity are operational, of which nearly 60 MW are wind. In most cases, the planning permission for these projects has been granted locally.

I am very encouraged by what has been achieved so far. It does credit to both the foresight of the Government in giving this opportunity to the industry, and the skill and enterprise of the many pioneering companies and organisations behind the projects. In July last year my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy announced a third order, which is expected to be for between 300 and 400 MW, depending on the quality and cost of the prroposals received.

There has been a very encouraging response to the inivitation to register interest in the current "NFFO round", with a large number of applicants in all the technologies, including wind. But the interest of developers and the keenness of their bids are not the only factors that will decide the prospects for wind energy. Progress will crucially depend on developers finding acceptable sites and then gaining planning consent for them. The holding of an NFFO contract does not confer any special presumption in favour of gaining this consent.

I should say a few words in reply to some points concerning the planning system. Renewable energies differ

from the more established forms of generation in terms of land use and other material planning considerations. Recognising this, we have issued specific planning guidance on renewable energy—'PPG 22'. This reiterates the fundamental principles of planning and deals with particular issues raised by the renewables.

It states that planning decisions have to reconcile the interests of development with the importance of conserving the environment—the issue at the heart of sustainable development. In relation to energy, it states that the Government's general aim is to ensure that society's needs for energy are met in a way that is compatible with the need to protect the environment, both global and local.

We have said that planning authorities must weigh carefully the Government's policies for developing renewable energy sources with those for protecting the environment. The guidance states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the structure plans of the county council or the strategic planning authority and the local plans of the district council—plans that are required to include policies for conserving wildlife and the natural beauty and amenity of the land. PPG requires that they also now take account of the Government's policy on renewable energy.

Sir Donald Thompson: My hon. Friend has just catalogued the matters of which the local authorities must take note. Were I to cross-examine him now, he would tell me that these were matters for the Department of the Environment rather than for his Department. The Department of the Environment would tell me that they were in a quasi-judicial category. My hon. Friend's Department and the Department of the Environment should meet urgently—and certainly before the submission of any plans in the next round—so that the guidance may be brought up to date.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment. On these matters, I am always willing to take note of his advice. If he feels that there is a need for contact between the relevant Ministers in the two Departments there will certainly be such contact. We know that, otherwise, my hon. Friend will find many ways of bringing up the subject again.

I genuinely believe that planning is done best at local level. In particular, it would be quite wrong for central Government to decide precisely where wind farms should or should not be built or to direct developers to, or away from, particular areas, such as the Pennines. My hon. Friend would hardly want us to do that. All proposals must be treated on their merits.

Nor would it be right for me to comment on particular proposals or decisions made at local level. Where there are issues of wider than local importance they will, of course, be referred to the Secretary of State, but this will be the exception rather than the rule. We all know how controversial all kinds of planning applications can be, and we are aware of the judicial role of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

On the environmental impact of wind energy, the first thing to note is that wind farms produce none of the greenhouse gases or waste products that threaten sustainable development. This is probably the main justification for promoting their development. However, all forms of energy generation have their impacts, and wind is no exception. Most concern is expressed about noise and —a matter to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention —visual impact.

Well designed wind turbines are generally quiet in operation and, with careful siting, should not be a nuisance. However, rural background noise can be extremely low and, in some sheltered locations, may remain low, even as the wind picks up. So the siting of wind farms requires careful consideration. PPG gives specific guidance on the technical issues involved, and my Department has set up a working group with developers and planners to consider what lessons might be learned from the actual operating experience now being accumulated.

Of course, wind farms have to be in exposed locations to catch the wind, so it is inevitable that they will be seen. They therefore need to be sited sensitively and in sympathy with local features. Whilst objective measures of visual intrusion exist, this remains a subjective issue with which the planning authorities have to deal. Strong feelings can be expressed for or against any particular development.

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 17 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BOURNEMOUTH-SWANAGE MOTOR ROAD AND FERRY BILL (*By Order*)

SHEFFIELD ASSAY OFFICE BILL (*By Order*)

FEDERATION OF STREET TRADERS UNION (LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990) (AMENDMENT) BILL (*By Order*)

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BILL (*By Order*)

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 24 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Cross-border Co-operation

1. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in discussions with the Government of the Republic of Ireland on cross-border security co-operation; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): The British and Irish Governments reiterated at the intergovernmental conference on 28 January that they place the highest priority on developing further the effective co-operation which already exists between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda Siochana.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and encouraged by what he has said. He will know that, last night, another British soldier was severely injured in Belfast. Will he confirm to the House that the bulk of explosives and weapons that are used by the IRA and many of the terrorists come through the Irish Republic? What progress has been made with the Irish Republic to ensure that some of those weapons and explosives are prevented from coming through and being used by the IRA?

Sir John Wheeler: I share my hon. Friend's concern about the injuries sustained by a young soldier late last night. It was a wicked, evil attack on a young man carrying out his duty in the name of democracy and freedom. I am glad to tell my hon. Friend that co-operation between the Garda and the RUC is excellent. There have been a number of important finds of weapons and explosives by the Irish authorities. For example, this week alone near Mullingar in County Westmeath, the Garda and the Irish army recovered a heavy machine gun, two spare barrels, a rifle, a pistol and assorted ammunition, including 1,700 rounds of heavy-calibre ammunition. That and other recent finds demonstrate clearly the Irish Government's commitment to fighting terrorism. I assure the House that co-operative work between the RUC and the Garda has never been better.

Mr. Maginnis: I can understand the Minister's diplomacy and his desire to be courteous to the Garda Siochana—no one disagrees with that—but what steps does his Department take to monitor the activity and the degree of co-operation between the two police services? For example, we all know that South Armagh is at present a hotbed of IRA activity. Can he give me any idea of how many people have been charged during the past 12 months in the Monaghan-North Louth area? From his monitoring, can he give me any idea of the extent to which there is cross-frontier co-operation on intelligence?

Sir John Wheeler: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the co-operation between the RUC and its immediate counterparts in the border police stations of the Republic is extremely good. I can also tell him that the work that is done by my Department and through the intergovernmental conference ensures that co-operation is pursued to the utmost degree. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman precise statistics about the areas that he mentioned, but I shall see that he has them as soon as possible.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that considerable concessions were made to Dublin in the Anglo-Irish Agreement and that in the historic declaration just before Christmas we received considerable assurances from the Dublin Government that they would support the necessary security measures, which would continue to be necessary if the IRA rejected the declaration, as now appears more and more likely? Does he further agree that Britain has every right to expect not only declarations of support from the Irish Government and commitments from the Garda, but that resources will be committed to enable effective support for our security forces along the border and further into Eire?

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. May I make it clear to the House that I do not want statements from either Back Benchers or Ministers. It is now Question Time and I expect to have brief exchanges during these important Northern Ireland questions.

Sir John Wheeler: The co-operation exists. It is improving and finds by the Irish police authorities continue. There were finds in county Louth on 16 January and county Monaghan on 21 and 24 January, when mortars, weapons and equipment were recovered. That will continue.

Mr. Mallon: In the recent security discussions with members of the Irish Government, was reference made to the fact that, in recent months, murderous attacks have been made by loyalist paramilitary groups on 18 members of our party, all of whom were elected representatives? Does he agree that it is the duty of all of us to give every help and protection to those people who have been working tirelessly for peace through the political process? Does he further agree that some of the insidious and disgraceful remarks made by hon. Members, such as those made by the

right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) yesterday about Irish people working on the channel tunnel, are, in effect, an incitement to such murderous attacks? Will he, with me, condemn that?

Sir John Wheeler: I agree with the hon. Gentleman on the first part of his question. The threats and attacks against those who have been elected through the democratic system in Northern Ireland are taken seriously. I am currently studying with great concern a number of cases involving SDLP councillors. The remarks of other right hon. or hon. Members are a matter for them, not for me.

Peace Initiative

2. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Government's peace initiative.

5. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made by his latest talks with Dublin on the future of Northern Ireland.

9. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will report the latest progress towards a peace settlement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): We have been working closely with the Irish Government to see that everyone fully understands the joint declaration. The declaration, by which we both stand, demonstrates that there is no obstacle in the path of anyone who wants to argue a political case, provided only that he rejects the use, or the threat of, violence in its support. It rests squarely on the principles of agreement, consent and democracy, and it provides a framework and a process for peaceful democratic progress. The two Governments also are maintaining, with the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, their commitment to the urgent search for an overall political accommodation through the three-stranded talks process.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. and learned Friend share my distaste at the way in which Gerry Adams was feted on his recent trip to America, and on the "Walden" programme last Sunday? I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to keep the broadcasting ban in place, not least because Sinn Fein dislikes it so much. Is not it outrageous for Gerry Adams to claim that the key to peace in Northern Ireland lies with the British Government, when the IRA and Sinn Fein have been responsible for the mayhem, misery and murder in Northern Ireland over the past 25 years?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The last part of what my hon. Friend said is right. Last year, 86 people were killed by terrorists in Northern Ireland, while no single death was caused by any member of the security forces, which underlines exactly what my hon. Friend said. I regretted the treatment that Mr. Adams predictably received in the United States. I believe that now, people in the United States, as here, are waiting to see whether the promise to give up justifying violence will be delivered. The broadcasting ban is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Heritage Secretary, who made a statement on 4 February in which he said that it will remain in place, but will be kept under review in the light of changing circumstances.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, when the talks in Northern Ireland began, the Irish Prime Minister, Mr. Reynolds, said that the window of opportunity then could bring peace before Christmas? As that does not seem to have happened, should not we reiterate the fact that Northern Ireland and its people are as much a part of the United Kingdom as the people of Essex or any other part of the United Kingdom and they are not up for grabs or negotiation?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I saw a report that Mr. Reynolds had expressed the hope which my hon. Friend mentioned. Unfortunately, that hope has not been fulfilled, although it should have been. There is no excuse for continuing violence and there never has been. As the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) recently said, the declaration has destroyed every declared reason for the continuance of violence that has ever been put forward by the IRA and those who represent it.

As for the conclusion of my hon. Friend's question—that people living in Northern Ireland are part of the United Kingdom—of course that is so and the joint declaration reiterates that constitutional guarantee.

Mr. Hain: May I urge the Secretary of State to leave no stone unturned in an effort to get the republican movement involved in the talks? While we all accept the rejection of violence as a precondition for everybody's participation, is not it absolutely essential that the Government do not stand on ceremony over issues such as clarification when it is vital for peace to get Sinn Fein to the discussion table? I remind the Secretary of State that Ministers, through the United Nations, are currently talking to the Bosnian Serbs, who are responsible for one of the most evil acts of genocide in history. Besides that, the IRA's atrocities, evil though they are, pale into insignificance. It is vital that we do not nitpick at this stage but get Sinn Fein to the discussion table to make progress with the declaration, which I welcomed at the time.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I shall not join the hon. Gentleman in comparing one act of political violence with another. All political violence is atrocious and totally unacceptable. It is important to note the distinction between Bosnia and our own country. If one negotiates with people who bring bombs and guns to support their arguments in a political democracy, apart from anything else one fatally undermines those who may share their broad overall objective but subject that to the discipline of constitutional politics. We have never done that and we never shall. There is now no justification whatever for Sinn Fein to continue to exclude itself from the forum in which the constitutional position of Northern Ireland is open for debate.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the Secretary of State remember that, at the previous talks, neither the Union nor the Government of Ireland Act 1920 was on the table? In view of his widely reported statement at the weekend that one of the outcomes of talks based on the declaration could be a united Ireland, does that now mean that the Union and the 1920 Act are on the table and will be discussed at those talks?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: As I said at the very first meeting of the talks process—at which the hon. Gentleman was present—it has always been perfectly clear that, at the end of that process, the British Government would rise from

the table as much committed to the Union as they were when they sat down. That is because there is no prospect in the immediate future or the medium term of the greater number of people in Northern Ireland wishing to see the Union finished. Equally, however, it has always been understood—the declaration also makes this clear—that democracy and nothing else will determine the future of Northern Ireland. That has always been the British Government's position and I find it impossible to understand those who take offence at it.

Mr A. Cecil Walker: Will the Secretary of State admit that the peace initiative is going nowhere? Will he now take steps to set up a Northern Ireland Assembly to cater for all the needs of all the people of Northern Ireland?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The re-creation of a Northern Ireland Assembly is one of the ways in which devolution and the restoration of democratic responsibility can come to the people of Northern Ireland. Article 4 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement shows that that policy is supported by both Governments. The talks process is the correct forum in which ways of achieving that can be explored. As to the first part of the question, I do not agree that what the hon. Gentleman calls the peace process—I think he means the declaration—is going nowhere. It is a statement of the fundamental principle that democracy will decide the future of Northern Ireland, and it will stand.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Secretary of State agree that the prospects for peace would be better if there were more public confidence in the security forces? Therefore, in view of the Amnesty International report referring to evidence of collusion between British security forces and loyalist paramilitary organisations, including the supply of intelligence, arms and even personnel for loyalist death squads, will he consider setting up an independent inquiry?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I take all Amnesty reports seriously, and we shall therefore consider that one carefully. It produced no fresh evidence in addition to that which has been examined already in support of the assertions that gained such publicity. Of course it is right that the security forces should command the confidence of the public. I see the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding frequently. I notice that in the past year the number of complaints against the police force in particular has fallen substantially and that is important. I make one last point about the Amnesty report: it was disappointing that, rather than calling upon the paramilitaries to desist their attacks upon the security forces, it called only for them to desist their attacks on what it called innocent civilians, and that was a pity.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would be helpful if President Clinton repeated his support for the peace initiative when the Prime Minister goes to Washington, thus denying Sinn Fein the support it expects in America?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: President Clinton probably needs no encouragement for that, as he has been outspoken and warm in his support of the declaration. With that goes his recognition that there is no conceivable arguable ground for the continuance of violence for political purposes, unless those who use violence for those purposes acknowledge that they cannot get what they want by democratic means and therefore use violence.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Opposition welcome the meeting that is to take place on Saturday between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach and trust that they will use that occasion to confirm their intention of seeing through the principles in the Downing street declaration? Does he accept that it is of vital importance that both Governments should be seen to be acting in concert, that nothing should be seen to be driven between them and that no unilateral action should be taken by either of those parties, given the three strands of the relationship?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is important that the two Governments should be seen to be standing together in support of the principles set out in the joint declaration. That is exactly where we stand. It is also important that the talks process should continue and that there should be no hiatus. Nobody is waiting upon a Sinn Fein decision, in the sense that some policy has been put in abeyance. As long ago as last April, I said on behalf of the Government that I would seek to put forward ideas that would give direction and focus to the talks process. That initiative has been welcomed by the main constitutional parties participating. Unfortunately, the Democratic Unionist party is not participating. It is open to anybody to use such an initiative; I believe that I am perfectly justified in doing so and that it will have beneficial effects.

Mr. Garnier: What steps is my right hon. and learned Friend taking to acquaint the people of the United States, rather than the President and the Government, with the true nature, history and habits of the Irish Republican Army? What steps is he taking to ensure the better understanding of the Government's most laudable peace initiative and declaration in that country?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The people of Ireland, north and south, are only too familiar with the history and character of the Irish Republican Army and do not need instruction from me. As to the second part of the question, I have taken considerable pains to see that the people of Northern Ireland understand the declaration. I have published 200,000 copies and made them available everywhere. In a number of speeches and articles I have used the text of the declaration, showing what it is, what it achieves and what it does not do and that has been generally thought to be rather helpful.

Inter-party Talks

3. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Ireland concerning the resumption of the inter-party talks process.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Ancram): My right hon. and learned Friend is meeting the leaders of the three Northern Ireland parties who have recently been involved in exploratory talks with me to discuss ideas with them for giving direction to further bilateral discussions across all three strands. He has invited the Democratic Unionist party to participate in those proceedings also. At the last intergovernmental conference on 28 January, both Governments confirmed their commitment to the three-stranded talks process and underlined the urgency and importance of the search for political agreement.

Mrs. Roche: In a recent article in *The Irish Times*, the Secretary of State quite rightly said that it was not a question of promoting one tradition at the expense of the other. Given that welcome statement, will the Minister guarantee that, in any such talks, equal emphasis will be placed on north-south institutions, ensuring that they work jointly and are strong and effective, as well as ensuring that links are maintained with Great Britain?

Mr. Ancram: The talks have always been across the three relationships, which is why they are known as the three-stranded talks. In a sense, each of those strands is related to the other. None of them can stand in isolation: one relates to north-south relationships, the second to internal relationships and institutions in Northern Ireland and the third to the relations between the two Governments of the Republic of Ireland and of the United Kingdom. All those strands will be considered in any talks process.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the Minister believe that the Secretary of State was assisting the process of peace by sending the details of his proposals to a foreign country —the Irish Republic—before informing the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland, especially those who are participating in his three-stranded talks?

Mr. Ancram: The ideas that are at present being given to the leaders of the three constitutional parties that are prepared to take part in the process stem from our assessment of the exploratory talks and what had gone before in relation to where the parties stand on the three strands. As they are partners in the process, it would have been strange if we had not made known those ideas to the Government of the Republic of Ireland. That was why it was done.

Dr. Hendron: Does the Minister agree that, while the violence continues on both sides—the Provisional IRA tried to kill a young soldier earlier today, loyalist paramilitaries are firing rockets and bullets and have tried to kill a number of people in my constituency and elsewhere—it is immoral for the political parties not to come together? Will the Secretary of State encourage the parties to come together for inter-party talks with the two Governments, based on the three-stranded approach?

Mr. Ancram: I unreservedly condemn the acts of violence to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I agree that nothing can be allowed to stand in the way of seeking a political settlement within the three relationships that I have described. That is something which we are trying to take forward, and in an intensified way. Our hope is that, as that process continues, those who are on the outside, either because they wish to be or because they will not renounce violence as we have asked them to, will change their minds and become part of that process as well, because a political settlement that will bring peace and stability to Northern Ireland must have widespread acceptance. That is what we would obviously seek.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that there is an absolute need to be clear on issues? We have already had a misunderstanding today when the Secretary of State, in answering a question about the United States, referred to Northern Ireland. Therefore I ask, while we are going on the three-stranded approach, whether they will be on the same pattern as previously—nothing is agreed until all is agreed? What would happen to the business in the House if that were carried through in the light of the present difficulties in getting the usual channels to work together?

Mr. Ancram: The talks are continuing under the agenda set on 26 March 1991 by my right hon. and learned Friend's predecessor. The purpose was to embrace the three strands in the discussions. At the time, round-table discussions were envisaged; we have made it clear that at present we do not think it right or wise to return to that arrangement because the basis for round-table agreement does not yet exist, but we wish to embark on such discussions eventually—under the agenda to which I have referred.

The talks are not an end in themselves, but a means of achieving a lasting settlement. That must be their purpose, and it is certainly the British Government's intention.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Does my hon. Friend draw a distinction between consulting the Government of the Republic, and viewing that Government as a party to the inter-party talks process?

Mr. Ancram: The Government of the Republic are a party to the three-stranded talks, and always have been. The reason for acquainting them with the ideas was the fact that they stemmed from exploratory discussions that I have been having with the parties. We wanted to take those ideas further, and showing them to the Government of the Republic was a matter of courtesy, given the relationships that exist.

Mr. Alton: May I put the question of courtesy aside, and revert to the question asked by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea)? Surely the Minister accepts that political parties represented in the House of Commons should have received the details at the same time as our partners in Dublin. Does he not recognise that the systematic alienation of parts of the loyalist community is now a problem as serious as the alienation of republicans? What is he doing to try to engage loyalist paramilitaries in the important peace initiatives?

Mr. Ancram: The position regarding loyalist paramilitaries is the same as that regarding Sinn Fein and the IRA: if they renounce violence, they can become part of the democratic process. As for trying to bring in other parties, I have said repeatedly—as has my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State—that we hope that the party of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster will return to the talks process. The door remains open, and we will welcome them if they wish to enter; but as long as they stay away from the process, it is not surprising that we will not show them our ideas.

European Regional Funding

4. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the Commission of the European Union concerning financial support for projects in Northern Ireland from the European regional development fund and other funds.

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend and ministerial colleagues are in contact with the Commission as and when the interests of Northern Ireland require it.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that I have here a list of environmental, infrastructure and industrial projects for which European money is urgently needed to create jobs in Northern Ireland? Why is he wasting £61 million on the interconnector with Scotland, which threatens jobs in Northern Ireland? Will he now abandon that plan, and save us the expense and bother of the public inquiry in Scotland which was announced yesterday?

Sir John Wheeler: I cannot respond to that question; it is a matter for other Ministers. I can tell the House, however, that our structural funds plan for 1994-99—in which I know the hon. Gentleman takes a sincere interest —has been placed before the Commission. We have not yet received a formal response, but we hope to do so soon.

Sir James Kilfedder: Why does the Northern Ireland Office seem to discriminate against the good people of North Down by failing to press the Commission to direct a greater share of European funds and investment to my area, to create more employment? Is the Minister aware that there is considerable unemployment in North Down, particularly among school leavers and graduates? The people of North Down feel that they are being penalised because they live in religious and political harmony.

Sir John Wheeler: The interests of North Down are always in the minds of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my other ministerial colleagues. I very much hope that some of Northern Ireland's 52 per cent. portion of the United Kingdom's allocation of structural funds will find its way to North Down by one means or another.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister accept that my colleagues and I are very disappointed and dissatisfied with the way in which United Kingdom representation to the Commission is being made on behalf of Northern Ireland? We are concerned that we are not receiving adequate funds to develop the infrastructure around our ports, or those of south-west Scotland and the north-west of England. What does the Minister propose to do before there is economic devastation to Belfast, Warrenpoint and Larne harbours? When will he robustly seek to ensure that we obtain proper funding and that funding that is being poured into Wales and the Irish Republic is not used to disadvantage our ports?

Sir John Wheeler: Funding into Northern Ireland from the Exchequer and United Kingdom taxpayers will be about £18 billion in the next six years, in addition to the £1 billion that comes from the EC structural funds. As to the Northern Ireland ports, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that if any of those ports is eligible we shall seek to ensure that we obtain the maximum possible benefit for the Northern Ireland ports.

Mr. Hume: Does the Minister agree that it was a serious injustice and a serious error by the Government that Northern Ireland was excluded from the new cohesion fund? Given that that fund is committed to both transport and environment, does he agree that Northern Ireland has exactly the same problems in both those areas as has the Republic, as we are both part of the same offshore island? What has he done about it, and will he do anything about it? It is a very substantial fund, from which we have been excluded.

Sir John Wheeler: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that Northern Ireland receives very substantial sums indeed and I and my colleagues are always looking to see whether we can acquire any additional form of funding from any other source to sustain the programmes that we wish to be developed in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stott: One of the projects that has received European regional development fund funding and is of crucial importance to the island of Ireland is the upgrading of the Belfast to Dublin railway line. Is the Minister in a position to tell the House what progress has been made in the upgrading of that line, as well as the upgrading in the rolling stock? The Minister may well be aware that Sir George Quigley, the chairman of Ulsterbank, has set up a study group to recommend how to put in place a Belfast-Dublin growth corridor, with all the possible economic spin-offs that will occur if that were put in place. The upgrading and modernisation of that rail link are integral and crucial to that concept.

Sir John Wheeler: It is important that the project to which the hon. Gentleman refers should be sustained and encouraged. It is my understanding that £70 million is available between the two Governments to further the work and I very much hope that it will continue.

Health and Social Services Boards

6. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the appointment of non-executive directors to HSS trust boards.

Mr. Ancram: Non-executive appointments to HSS trust boards are made by the Department of Health and Social Services with the approval of my right hon. and learned Friend. The Department seeks to achieve equality of representation in terms of gender and community background, but does not normally consult publicly on its proposals.

Mr. Trimble: Can Minister add a little more to clarify the criteria on which he operates? May I direct his attention to a trust in my constituency, Upper Bann, the recently appointed chairman of which is a Mr. David Cook—a rather strange appointment, in view of the fact that the regional health and social services council, which is supposed to be the watchdog organisation to keep an eye on the boards and the trusts, is chaired by Mr. Cook's wife. Is that not rather an incongruous appointment? Or is that a result of the difficulty which the Minister is in because, as he probably knows, half-presentable members of the Alliance party are rather thin on the ground in that region?

Mr. Ancram: Mr. Cook's appointment was subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, who was both aware of, and took into account, Mrs. Cook's position in reaching his decision. The role of the health and social services council is, basically, to represent the views of the population covered by an HSS board and its contacts are primarily with purchasers rather than providers of services. The skills and experience that Mr. Cook brings to the board will be invaluable in the early days of operational independence, when strong leadership will be vital. I may say to the hon. Gentleman, who I suspect has, behind the last part of his question, the veiled complaint that Unionists are not being appointed, that there is no policy relating to

appointing representatives of political parties. Two active Ulster Unionist party councillors are non-executive directors of HSS trust boards.

Mr. William O'Brien: Is not it time that the Government realised that the way in which people are appointed to trust boards is regarded in Northern Ireland as disgraceful, unacceptable and undemocratic? During the debate in the House on Monday, no one from my party, and not even the representatives of Northern Ireland, supported the appointments to trust boards. Is not it time that the Government reviewed the whole set-up and allowed some elected members on to the trust boards who will be accountable to the people whom they serve?

Mr. Ancram: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. Those who are appointed bring various important qualities to the boards. They have to have some or all of the following attributes: an understanding of top management in large organisations; a relevant specialist skill or knowledge; experience of the voluntary sector; live or work in the area to be served by the trust—at least two on each trust do so—and willing to make the necessary time commitment. Such attributes will serve the health service in Northern Ireland very well.

Cross-border Co-operation

7. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to make on increasing cross-border co-operation.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: These are matters to which the Government will continue to attach high importance. The political talks process provides an opportunity designed to establish the best means of further developing co-operation to mutual benefit, north and south. I also look forward to promoting it at meetings of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Soley: Leaving aside political matters, does the Secretary of State accept that the existence of the border has been a major hindrance to the normal economic development of the north and south of Ireland? Would not it be a good idea if, with the European Union, we invested much more in developing border links, especially in terms of transport, roads, energy and other infrastructure projects, in order to make the border as irrelevant in economic terms as is the border between, say, France and Belgium?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It was very surprising that so little north-south trade was taking place until a few years ago. Whether that was because of the existence of the border or because of what it represented and was caused by, I do not know, but I am very glad that trade is increasing significantly. There is much to be gained for the mutual advantage of north and south from the structures and institutions that will encourage that development of cross-border links.

Mr. Molyneaux: Does the Secretary of State welcome the paper which the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and I presented to the then Prime Minister on 28 August 1985 in which we said that, if we were members of a devolved administration, we would discuss with Irish Ministers matters of mutual interest and concern, provided always that United Kingdom sovereignty remained undiminished and that any illegal claims were removed?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Without having every passage of the 1985 document in my mind, I certainly welcome any step that is intended to develop co-operation in economic and other matters between the north and south parts of that island, between Northern Ireland and the Republic. I have always believed that it can be undertaken entirely effectively without in any way impinging on the sovereignty of Northern Ireland, which remains part of the United Kingdom in international as well as national law.

Mr. McNamara: Does the Secretary of State accept that, to be effective, any cross-border institutions involving trade, the economy or the infrastructure should have a strong executive role on the basis of ground rules laid down by both Governments?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: What I do think is important is that any organisation—a board, a structure or whatever it is called—that has such an objective should have a very clear jurisdiction. It is very important that there should be a clear jurisdiction with very clearly defined lines of authority or vires coming from wherever is appropriate, whether from Westminster, Dublin or any subsequently established legislative body. I hope to see them established and I believe that, once they are in place, they will be seen to be playing an effective part. It is a matter for strand 2 discussions in the talks.

Political Parties (Violence)

8. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which political parties in Northern Ireland have now notified him that they have a policy of not supporting violence.

Mr. Ancram: The policies of the different parties in Northern Ireland are well known not only to the Government but to the community at large. What everyone in Northern Ireland wants to hear is that those who support violence will now turn away from it for good and accept that the only way to advance political argument in a democracy is through peaceful, constitutional means. The joint declaration offers a clear opportunity for all violence to be brought to an end.

Mr. Shaw: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the majority of the people of Northern Ireland want the peace process to continue and to move forward and, through their political parties, support non-violence? Do not the majority of the people now feel that the time is rapidly approaching where parties such as Sinn Fein, which do not support the abolition of violence, should be excluded from the peace process? Should not we be moving forward and getting an agreement on which the people of Northern Ireland can depend for peace?

Mr. Ancram: First, I can certainly confirm that the constitutional parties reflect the desire of the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland to achieve a peaceful accommodation and settlement. Secondly, I must make it clear that Sinn Fein is not part of the process at the moment because it has not renounced violence on a permanent or even a temporary basis. The choice for Mr. Gerry Adams is clear. If Sinn Fein wants peace, it must renounce

violence and renounce it permanently, that is logical. If it has sufficient confidence in its own beliefs, it must come into the democratic process and, like any other democratic party, seek to sell its ideas through the democratic process rather than at the end of a gun.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 February.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Welsh: Does the Prime Minister accept that the withdrawal of guns from Sarajevo is not the end of the story if they are freed for use elsewhere in Bosnia? Does he accept reports from one of my constituents that Bihac has been under constant shellfire since the day after the Sarajevo massacre, that 18 people died in a direct hit on a hospital last Monday and that there is hand-to-hand fighting? In wishing him success in Sarajevo, can I ask him what follows from that?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right that, although Sarajevo is central to our concerns at the moment, there are many other areas of grave difficulty besides Sarajevo. The only satisfactory conclusion that we will get is by pursuing the political negotiations to achieve a satisfactory, agreed political settlement. Those political negotiations will proceed. The United States is clearly going to take a higher profile than previously in the peace negotiations and that will be extremely welcome.

Q2. **Sir Ralph Howell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Sir Ralph Howell: In view of the Government's excellent record of and commitment to safeguarding the value of pensions, is it not remarkable that last night the Opposition voted against uprating? Is this not a case of fine words and weasel actions?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend is right about the vote yesterday. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is enormously time-consuming. I urge the House to be quiet.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is still right in what he said a moment or so ago. We shall judge Opposition Members by their deeds and not just by their words, and last night they were in the wrong Lobby.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Prime Minister tell us why, in his article in today's *Daily Express* entitled "What I mean by Back to Basics", there is no reference whatsoever to taxation? Is this deliberate or accidental?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows very well—for I have told him from this Dispatch Box on previous occasions—that "back to basics" runs right across the whole of Government policy, including the economy. He will know that, as a result of the sensible economic policies that we have been following, we now have growth unmatched by other countries across Europe.

Mr. John Smith: If "back to basics" covers all these things, why, in the article, is there no reference to taxation? I remind the Prime Minister that, speaking to a rally on 7 April—two days before the general election—he told his audience:

"More tax cuts for all: that is our basic Conservative belief."

Why did such a basic belief disappear suddenly?

The Prime Minister: The reality is that the Conservative party is the one which cuts taxes, and it always has been. Not even the right hon. and learned Gentleman can conceive of any circumstances in which, or any occasion when, taxation would be lower under a Labour Government than under a Conservative Government.

Mr. John Smith: Is not the truth that the Prime Minister was so gravely embarrassed by the duplicity of his Administration before the election and by their incompetence since the election that he dared not even refer to taxation in his article on "back to basics"? The right hon. Gentleman, in his article, goes on to claim—perhaps understandably—that this is not a moral crusade, but he does say that it has a moral dimension. Does not that moral dimension include telling the people the truth about tax?

The Prime Minister: Over the last 14 years, the Conservative party has cut tax after tax after tax in Budget after Budget. What did the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) have to say? He said:

"The Budget decisions the Conservatives made in the 1980s"—

those that cut taxes—

"were completely unacceptable."

The hon. Gentleman is nodding and confirming that those tax cuts were unacceptable. I am delighted, for we now know that the Opposition are not in favour of tax cuts, even when the opportunity presents itself. That can mean one thing and one thing only: the Opposition thought then that tax cuts were unacceptable, and they have no intention of cutting taxes in the future.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in this country there is very widespread recognition of the fact that his decision that we should join in the ultimatum to the warring factions in Bosnia was a very difficult one, was characteristically courageous and, in the circumstances, was absolutely right? Will he give the House an assurance that if we have to take military action our troops will receive all the back-up support and air cover that they require? Does he share my conviction that, if called upon to act, our forces will behave with all the bravery and professionalism that they have demonstrated on similar occasions?

The Prime Minister: There is no doubt that the British contingent of UNPROFOR has performed with the highest distinction and I am certain that it will continue to do so. The United Kingdom and a number of other countries have received several further requests from the United Nations. We are able to meet some, but not all of them. The most immediate is for help in consolidating and monitoring the

ceasefire at Sarajevo. The Government agreed this morning to provide some urgent assistance. Two companies of the Coldstream guards will be redeployed from central Bosnia to help in the demilitarisation of Sarajevo. We shall also provide a mortar-locating troop of around 60 soldiers equipped with Cymbeline radar. The United Nations also asked for additional battalions from—*[Interruption.]* I should have thought that the House might be interested in what is happening in Bosnia. The UN also asked for additional battalions for UNPROFOR from several countries. As Britain already had a large contingent there, we decided not to send an additional battalion as part of the general—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister is answering a—*[Interruption.]* Order. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is a statement."] Order. I am prepared to name people today. The Prime Minister is giving a serious answer and I want us to hear the end of it in silence.

The Prime Minister: The House may not have heard the last few words that I said. I made it clear that although the United Nations has asked for additional battalions from several countries, as we already had a large contingent there, we decided not to send an extra battalion as part of the general reinforcement.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister realise that that answer will be taken as a "no" to General Rose's request for further troops in Sarajevo? Does he realise that that will be heard as music to the ears of the Serbs? Should the proper response of the British Government to a British general who asks for the resources to do the job that we have asked him to do, not be if, but and maybe, but yes?

The Prime Minister: Due to the noise from Opposition Members, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman did not hear what I said a moment ago. I told him—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will listen now and not ask such stupid questions in future. I said that the most immediate need is to help in consolidating and monitoring the Sarajevo ceasefire. That is what General Rose asked for and I said that the Government agreed this morning to provide that extra assistance. Two companies of the Coldstream guards will be redeployed from central Bosnia to help the demilitarisation. That is what I told the House a moment ago and, based on that, the right hon. Gentleman's question is an absurdity.

Mr. Bates: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to see the latest edition of "Teesside 2000", which gives details of some 20 separate investments totalling some £3.5 billion in the Teesside area? Is not that good news for Teesside and an adequate demonstration of how the Government's policy of Government agencies and the private sector are succeeding in regenerating the north-east, whereas the policy of state hand-outs to inefficient nationalised industries from the Opposition failed?

The Prime Minister: There is no doubt about the attractiveness of Teesside and of other parts of the United Kingdom to investment from overseas. Of course, that relates to a number of things—the general economic situation, the tax structure and the fact that investment in the country is welcome and is producing a good return for overseas investors.

Q3. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Denham: The Prime Minister is paid £78,292. Is he aware that only people who are paid more than £64,000 a year will have seen their tax bill fall under the Conservatives? Has it ever occurred to the Prime Minister that if people in his position were prepared to pay a little more tax towards funding the national health service, millions of tax losers would not be facing 50p on their prescriptions?

The Prime Minister: Even the hon. Gentleman should have heard about the vastly increased resources that taxpayers are providing for the national health service. When the hon. Gentleman's party left office, the expenditure on the national health service was about £8 billion. It is now well over £35 billion. That has come as a result of increased investment in the national health service by a Conservative Government.

Mr. David Atkinson: Following my right hon. Friend's successful visit to Moscow earlier in the week, will he assure the House that everything possible is being done to encourage and assist the Russian people to become good democrats and to avoid the fascist, ultra-nationalist policies of Vladimir Zhirinovsky and his party in the forthcoming parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia in two years' time?

The Prime Minister: We have to continue to do all that we can to build the relationship between the western nations and Russia. I reached a series of agreements with President Yeltsin during the visit over the past couple of days that contribute towards that. There is no doubt about the scale of assistance that is going to help Russia deal with its economic problems. I believe that it is right to provide that assistance; right for Russia, and right for us because it is in our interest to ensure that Russia remains, not only in the short term, but permanently, a good neighbour to the democratic nations of western Europe.

Q4. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Salmond: Does the Prime Minister recall the bit in the taking stock initiative about the Union being a partnership? If so, is he aware that British Gas has announced the locations of the headquarters of its five new business units? None is going to Wales and none to Scotland, which supplies the bulk of the gas; all five are going to England. Is the Prime Minister prepared to condemn the unequal distribution of headquarters units by a so-called British company—or is that something else which is not a matter for him?

The Prime Minister: I shall no more condemn that individual action than I would wish to condemn the actions of many companies that have specifically decided to invest in Scotland over the past decade, to such an extent that Scotland now receives more inward investment, and has made greater changes in its quality of life over the past decade, than in any previous decade.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 21 FEBRUARY—Consideration in Committee of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

TUESDAY 22 FEBRUARY—Second Reading of the Intelligence Services Bill [*Lords*].

WEDNESDAY 23 FEBRUARY—Remaining stages of the Sunday Trading Bill.

THURSDAY 24 FEBRUARY—Opposition day (4th allotted day). There will be a debate entitled "The Unelected State" on an Opposition motion.

FRIDAY 25 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 28 FEBRUARY—Opposition day (5th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion. Subject to be announced.

Motion on the Building Societies (EFTA states) Order.

Motions on the Scottish Revenue Support Grant Reports.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement and for the Opposition day, which I am sure we are all looking forward to. In view of the Prime Minister's statement during Question Time, can the Leader of the House arrange for a statement or a debate on Bosnia in Government time at the earliest possible opportunity?

Was not the Security Service Bill taken on the Floor of the House in its entirety in 1988, and if so, did not that set a precedent for the Intelligence Services Bill? Will the Leader of the House confirm that the Government intend to take the whole of that legislation on the Floor of the House?

In view of the decisions and arrangements being made in another place concerning the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill, will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Home Secretary to come to the House of Commons and tell us what is going on, rather than all the statements, changes and announcements being made either in another place or in the newspapers?

May we also have an early debate on overseas arms contracts and the illegal hidden subsidies provided by the much put-upon British taxpayer?

Finally, will the right hon. Gentleman raise with the BBC, on behalf of us all, the question of "Today in Parliament" being moved to long wave alone? Many of our constituents enjoy listening to us on FM, and at least they know where we are.

Mr. Newton: The whole House thought that the hon. Gentleman was chancing his arm a bit with that last remark —but I will ensure that his concern, which may be shared by others, is drawn to the attention of the authorities at the BBC.

On overseas arms contracts, the hon. Gentleman will be aware of the statements that have been made and inquiries that are under way in a Select Committee. I do not think that a debate is appropriate at the moment.

As for the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill, it seems to be entirely appropriate that when legislation is under discussion in another place, statements relating to that process of discussion should be made in another place. Certainly, if it were under discussion here, grave exception would be taken by the Opposition Front Bench to comments being made in another place.

I can tell the hon. Gentleman that it is not our intention to propose that the Intelligence Services Bill should be taken in Committee on the Floor of the House. I simply make the point that there is beginning to be a gathering inconsistency between the demands made on me, not least by Her Majesty's Opposition, for additional time to be taken on the Floor of the House, and the demands made on me to respond to the Jopling report. The House will have to decide whether it wants to move in one direction or the other.

As to Bosnia, of course I will undertake in general terms that, in a developing situation, and especially looking ahead over the next few days, I will ensure that statements are made when that seems to be appropriate, and we will keep under close review the possible need for a debate.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the growing public concern about the suffering of live animals being transported to the continent, and the growing frustration in Parliament that there is absolutely nothing that we can do about it, may we have a debate next week to enable the House to express an opinion on whether the Government should put a proposal to the EC that member states could ban the export of live cattle?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has taken a long and honourable interest in these matters, which I respect. I cannot promise a debate. However, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will be here to answer questions on Thursday, and that sounds like a point which my hon. Friend may well seek to raise.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Will the Leader of the House acknowledge that, having regard to the indefinite war of procedural attrition that is being waged by the official Opposition, by next week they will have had five Supply days devoted to subjects of their choosing and the previous minority party Supply day was in October last year? Having regard to the fact that all the minority parties get only three Supply days in a parliamentary year, will he give us an assurance that an early day will be allocated to the minority parties' subject?

Mr. Newton: That is a reasonable request and I will certainly look at it sympathetically, although I cannot make a specific promise at the moment. At least we are in a position to talk to the hon. Gentleman in the normal way.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): On the question of the Jopling report, will my right hon. Friend seek an early meeting with the Leader of the Opposition and ask him whether he agrees with the views of his Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong), that sitting all hours available is not the best form of parliamentary democracy? Is my right hon. Friend aware that he will have the support of the public and, indeed, a majority of the House if he presses ahead with reforms, with or without the dinosaurs of the Labour party?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's understandable remarks chime with something I said earlier. I see that the Leader of the Opposition has departed, perhaps in response to my

[Mr. Newton]

hon. Friend's remarks. It is certainly the case that the right hon. and learned Gentleman's PPS made remarks at the time, to which my hon. Friend referred, which are totally inconsistent with the way in which Her Majesty's Opposition are behaving.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we please have an early debate on the closure of old people's homes and the awful effect that has on the people living in them, for whom these are their homes? Is he aware that the shortage of funds for local authorities such as mine causes terrible anguish for people in Bewcastle house in my constituency, which is under threat, and for old people's homes all over the country? Will the Government show some compassion and help these homes to stay open, and recognise that the people in them need to live there?

Mr. Newton: The hon. and learned Gentleman will realise that I am not in a position to comment on the specific case that he raises. I have no doubt, and I certainly hope, that he has raised it directly with his local authority because he may well be accurately reflecting its concern.

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): Will my right hon. Friend consider providing time for an early debate on political correctness in local government, with particular reference to Labour-controlled Dudley council? Extraordinarily, that council has branded Thomas the Tank Engine, Super Ted, Fireman Sam and Postman Pat as sexist male stereotypes—characters that are enjoyed by tens of thousands of children, including my own.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The council's decision was utterly ludicrous. I hope that my hon. Friend's comment will be considered by those who took that absurd decision.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Would not it be helpful if the Treasury appended a note to the Scottish Revenue Support Grant Report, which is to be debated on Monday week, giving its response to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities' calculation that the transition costs of Scottish local government reform will be at least £720 million and that there is no money available? Will the Treasury make a serious response to the COSLA figures? Will he raise the matter with the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. Newton: As always, I will bring the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of my right hon. Friends, but I remind him that Scottish local government will be discussed in the debate that I announced today and in the Standing Committee on the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is a member of the Committee, but there are ample opportunities to raise the matter.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): As my right hon. Friend is a sagacious, restrained, well-balanced and realistic Leader of the House, does he agree that Select Committees do not exist at the behest of hon. Members who are not numbered among their members? The Committees have a parliamentary existence that is separate from interference from the Leader of the Opposition or any other politician, and that includes legitimate requests for trips abroad.

Mr. Newton: Even without my hon. Friend's kind words, for which I express gratitude, I would have had no difficulty in agreeing with him. The sillier aspects of current events underline the point that I have made several times: the actions of her Majesty's Opposition do not damage the Government but Parliament.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) may have offered the Leader of the House kind words, but they had nothing to do with next week's business, with which, I remind Members, we are now dealing.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) will be allowed to become a member of the Select Committee on Procedure only following a Division of the House of Commons, which means that the motion will have to be moved before 10 o'clock at night?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman continues to wage what I regard as a nasty little campaign, and I do not intend to engage in it with him.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Before the House debates the important question of Bosnia, will my right hon. Friend undertake that someone in the Government—preferably the Prime Minister—will ask President Clinton why, if Bosnia is so important to the United States, the United States does not commit ground troops to Bosnia?

Mr. Newton: I will bring the point to the attention of my right hon. Friend, who I think will meet President Clinton before too long. It would perhaps be fair to say that all countries make contributions in various ways to various peacekeeping operations and that very few countries are in a position to contribute to all of them.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Before the beginning of next week's business, will the Leader of the House hold serious discussions with the Prime Minister on his growing habit of coming to the Dispatch Box and making serious statements in such a way that he cannot be questioned in detail? I instance as evidence today's statement on Bosnia. It is of great concern to every Back-Bench Member who is likely to have soldiers from regiments in their constituency committed to Bosnia. It is not a matter for light treatment. I seriously ask the Leader of the House to protect the interests of our constituents.

Mr. Newton: I know full well that my right hon. Friend did not in any way intend to treat the House lightly, and he did not do so. If the House was treated lightly, it was because the Opposition did not listen to an important reply that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave in the way that they might have been expected to—I sense that you, too, Madam Speaker, felt that. Relatively minor adjustments to force levels are made frequently. We have made a small but useful addition to the capabilities of General Rose in Sarajevo. We have not adjusted our policy in any way that would necessitate a statement to the House.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, two weeks ago, I asked for an early debate on the subject of the spending commitments of the Opposition

—particularly the Labour party? Over the past two weeks, the Labour party has made further commitments which run into billions of pounds. As it is a matter of great urgency, may we have such a debate next week?

Mr. Newton: With a bit of ingenuity, my hon. Friend might manage to get those points into the debate under the rather curious title "The Unelected State". It certainly would be helpful if the Opposition were to come clean on their incredible spending pledges.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the Leader of the House find time next week, or at an early date, for a debate on the failure of the national health service to provide dental treatment in all parts of these islands? Is he aware that, in my constituency, in many other parts of Gwynedd and Clwyd and no doubt elsewhere, people are unable to get on to dentists' lists because the dentists will only take people on a private basis? Will the right hon. Gentleman please arrange a debate on that important matter?

Mr. Newton: I have heard that suggestion being made more often than I have seen clear evidence of it. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is due to be here to answer questions next Tuesday.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Winchester): Perhaps my right hon. Friend will note that there has been disappointment in the House that we have not been provided with an opportunity next week to debate the interesting policy of cutting pensions for pensioners and benefits for the poor that we saw last night. He may also note that, in a helpful way, I have written to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), asking him to outline that new policy and hoping that he may come to the House to explain it further. Will my right hon. Friend provide an opportunity for the House to go into it in depth? Perhaps it is a leaked report from the Social Justice Commission; if so, the House needs to debate it.

Mr. Newton: Perhaps the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), who is deputising today on the Opposition Front Bench, will pass on that suggestion as a possibility for the Opposition motion on Monday 28 February, along with the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans). Having been Secretary of State for Social Security, I cannot recall an occasion when the Opposition—or some significant number of them—felt it right to vote against the pensions increase. I hope that the constituents of those who voted last night against the increase will have that fact drawn to their attention.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When will the Government make a statement on the abandonment of the local government review throughout Britain? The House heard the exchanges between the right hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) regarding Scotland, where local government reorganisation will cost about £700 million. It is estimated that, for England and Wales, we are talking about another £1.5 billion, and it is reckoned that we do not have that money in the country. Nearly every county association, including many Tory associations, is against the review. It is no good saying that individual orders will be brought before the House. We want the whole policy to be put in the political dustbin.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman may want that, but he is not going to get it.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): As the ultimatum to the Serbs expires at midnight on Sunday, will my right hon. Friend ensure that, whatever happens, there is a statement in the House on Monday?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows the way in which I have responded on those matters in the past, and he knows that I have done so in good faith. I will not seek at the moment to add to my remarks on the subject earlier. I will, of course, bear my hon. Friend's remarks in mind.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Will the Leader of the House consider having an early debate on the economic situation in the northern region? Despite the comments made by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) in Prime Minister's Question Time, the situation in the northern region is not as rosy as he has painted. For instance, my constituency lost 1,100 jobs last week, when one mine closed. There are other examples of that in the northern region, where we have lost the major industries of shipbuilding and coal mining. In my view, the subject is worthy of a day's debate.

Mr. Newton: I am, of course, well aware of some of the difficulties that have been experienced in the north-east and in other parts of the country during the difficult period of the recession and, indeed, earlier. I am also aware of the new opportunities that have been brought to the area by the policies that we have pursued, not least in the modern electronics industry as represented by Fujitsu and in the motor industry as represented by Nissan.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend share the fear that I expressed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary before Christmas that the killers of PC Patrick Dunne may never be brought to justice? May we have a debate on the effects of drugs and violent crime on civil disorder in our cities, particularly the growing practice of witness intimidation and the imposition of the code of silence? There is a growing fear in the House and outside that a particular category of vicious drugs barons is now above the law. If a brave and popular policeman can be gunned down and if others in future may be gunned down and their killers cannot be brought to justice, we shall have reached a serious situation and we should debate it.

Mr. Newton: There are many who will sympathise with my hon. Friend's concern and they will certainly include my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. As my hon. Friend will know, the Government are acting in many ways to tackle the problem that he describes. I will certainly bring his remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Has the Leader of the House had time to study the report from the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology on breathing in our cities, which points to the link between vehicle emissions and respiratory illness? May I draw his attention to the recommendations, which point to the need for a reduction in vehicle usage? As that flies in the face of current Government policy, as evidenced this week by the events in Wanstead and the lunatic proposals of the Department of Transport to drive an urban motorway

[Mr. John Austin-Walker]

through Woolwich, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an early debate on the Government's transport policies so that we can discuss that serious issue?

Mr. Newton: I have two points to make in response to the hon. Gentleman. First, in response to his point about Wanstead, which is in the direction of my part of the country and which I pass fairly frequently, nothing is more damaging or raises the level of emissions in the atmosphere more than stationary traffic stuck in traffic jams. That point is sometimes underestimated. Secondly, my right hon. Friends have made their approach clear in various ways, including what has been said and done about road fuel taxation, not often, I have to say, with the support of Opposition Members.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Could my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on employment so that the House can have the opportunity to discuss the impact on employment prospects of a national minimum wage and of the payroll tax proposed by the Labour party?

Mr. Newton: That is another very good idea for the Opposition day debate on Monday week. I hope that it will be borne in mind.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): We have already had two statements on Bosnia today: one by the Prime Minister during Prime Minister's Question Time and a short one by the Leader of the House in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). The statement made by the Leader of the House had nothing to do with business questions. As we have had statements, should not we have the opportunity that normally follows statements to question the people who make them? The Prime Minister should be brought back to the House later today so that questioning can take place and all of us can be involved in it. There was little time in Prime Minister's questions to ask questions on the matter.

Mr. Newton: All I have been seeking to do is respond to questions that were put to me. I did not add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, and I certainly do not intend to do so now. But I have outlined the approach that we shall adopt to the possibility of statements and, indeed, debates at future times.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): May I urge my right hon. Friend once again to arrange for an early debate on waste and corruption in local government? Does he agree that such a debate would provide an excellent opportunity for the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) to expand on her remarks in *The Times* that Lambeth
"is falling to bits with corruption"?

Mr. Newton: That is another point which may well, with minimum ingenuity, be in order in next Thursday's debate. I imagine that part of the target of next Thursday's debate will be those activities that local authorities have contracted out to get them done more efficiently. One could turn the point round. Perhaps my hon. Friend takes my point.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): The Leader of the House is aware that during the passage of the Railways Act 1993, the Minister for Public Transport told us that the charges imposed by Railtrack would be 50 per cent. higher than the charges imposed at that time. We now know that the increase is 300 per cent. May we have a statement from the Minister for Public Transport on the reasons for the increased cost so that we can be sure that it does not all go into the pockets of private operators?

Mr. Newton: In a written answer yesterday, my right hon. Friend simply reported the latest progress made by Railtrack in producing charges for access to the rail network. I think that the hon. Gentleman is reading too much into that statement.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the Leader of the Opposition's campaign of non-cooperation in the House? Can we have a debate on that subject tomorrow—[HON. MEMBERS: "Tomorrow?"] I mean, next week. We should note that the Leader of the Opposition voted in only three of this year's debates after 10 pm. My right hon. Friend will remember that the Duke of Plaza Toro
"led his regiment from behind—
He found it less exciting."
We should reflect on the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is leading his troops in the evenings from his bed—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Newton: The reaction of Opposition Members shows that my hon. Friend's comments come as something of a surprise to them, and I think that they may care to look into the subject, which is interesting. I would hesitate to inform my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Liddington), whose private Member's Bill—in which I have an interest—is due to be discussed tomorrow, that that debate is to be overtaken in the way suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold).

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a debate next week on the progress of work in the Select Committees? That would give Tory Members an opportunity to explain how angry they are at the fact that the extensive travel programme in which they all propose to participate is being brought to a halt. The £100,000 that has so far been spent by Select Committee members going on fact-finding tours to every part of the world by club-class travel could be devoted to the staff of this place. The results of those tours rarely emerge on the Floor of the House.

The money saved could be used to provide cars for the staff of the House after 10 pm instead of after 10.30 pm. That would prevent employees, many of whom are women, going into the night and travelling potentially dangerous journeys of up to one and a half hours after serving this place perfectly well.

Mr. Newton: I will respond to the hon. Gentleman as his question seems to invite only when he assures me that Labour Members intend to undertake a permanent self-denying ordinance not to go on any Select Committee visits abroad.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Will my right hon. Friend allow time next week for a debate on the business environment to ascertain whether the Government intend to incorporate in their policy any aspects of Labour's second business plan? Labour's first business plan, otherwise known as the shadow Budget, bombed disastrously at the 1992 election, so we should perhaps call the debate the "state of the unelected".

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has ingeniously worked his remarks into a context that would be relevant to next Thursday's debate. Labour's business plan for Britain shows every sign of being a plan for a bankrupt Britain.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): We understand that the Leader of the House is a fair-minded person, so will he find time next week to debate a motion setting up the Select Committee on Northern Ireland? Three years ago, there was unanimity on that subject, so why has there been a delay? Will we have to wait until the next leap year?

Mr. Newton: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman knows that discussions are proceeding actively among the interested parties. I cannot give him a date, but I think that he knows full well that I am seeking to make progress as soon as possible.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week to consider the magazine entitled "The Best Sex Guide", published by the Health Education Authority, which so many hon. Members have received with great consternation? We should debate the editorial content and method of distribution to our children of that magazine.

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can promise a debate next week on that subject. The magazine sounds like a document which most of us would be fairly cautious about being seen with in the present circumstances. I will bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, who will be here to answer questions next week.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Despite the answer that the Leader of the House has given to some of his hon. Friends, would it not be useful, on reflection, for the Government to make a statement next week to make it clear that they fully apologise, and will make amends, for the contemptible way in which they have treated Parliament, which has led to the present position of non-co-operation? Is it not clear to the Leader of the House that, since that policy has been in effect, the Opposition have shown that we are here to defend parliamentary democracy and that we cannot be treated with contempt, such as the guillotining of two Bills even before their Second Reading? Unless the Government recognise that it is time that they made a full apology, our non-co-operation policy will continue well into the summer.

Mr. Newton: Even on more reflection than I have had while listening to the hon. Gentleman, I would not go down that path. As I have said several times, if the hon. Gentleman looks at what I said in justification of the motions to take action to implement policies on statutory sick pay and national insurance contributions by April, he will find that everything that I said has turned out to be right.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread dismay in the tourist industry regarding the European Union's draft directive on distance selling? May we have an urgent debate next week on that topic and, in particular, an opportunity to tell the European Commission to get lost with its absurd suggestion of putting up black flags on beaches that are alleged to be unsafe?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a debate of that kind next week, but I promise to bring my hon. Friend's question to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Will the right hon. Gentleman simply tell the House how long the farce over the Jopling report will continue? Is he aware that it will be two years to the day tomorrow since the Jopling report was issued? It was in the Tory party manifesto for the 1992 election and the Queen's Speech following that election. Does he understand that the failure to act has nothing to do with the present policy of non co-operation? It is a long-standing failure, which depends on the Leader of the House coming forward with proposals that will commend themselves to wide sections of the House. When will he do that?

Mr. Newton: I make no complaint about the fact that the hon. Gentleman asked effectively the same question last week, although, confusingly, from a different corner of the Chamber. From whichever corner of the House he asks it, his fire should be directed about five yards in front of me.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will my right hon. Friend find time in the near future to debate the contentious issue of begging in our streets, which does so much to besmirch this country's image with visitors from abroad? There have been reports today of bogus beggars with L-registered Vauxhalls on the streets of Sheffield, drawing motability, invalidity and, I dare say, gullibility allowances at the expense of the British public. Should not we debate tightening up social security, and should not the Opposition support us?

Mr. Newton: I have seen those reports. I have no doubt that the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Social Security have also seen them and will consider them, along with my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): May we have a ministerial statement condemning the excesses of cheque-book journalism, whereby certain newspapers could offer a £40,000 inducement to a woman to sell her story when she was rescued from the Cairngorm mountains earlier this week? Given that 151 rescue workers from the RAF and voluntary rescue teams risked their lives, and in some cases, suffered loss of wages to save that woman's life in a two-day rescue operation which cost £120,000, is it not time that the Government stepped in to stop such mercenary malpractice by certain newspapers?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will probably acknowledge that the scope for the Government to intervene as he suggests contains some dangers, as well as the advantages that he sees. Equally, the whole House will understand why he has raised the matter and will respect his comments.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will it be in order in next Thursday's Opposition day debate to raise the issue of the 40 councillors' wives, children and close relatives employed on Monklands district council, which appears to be an unelected state—

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman asking a direct question about business next week? If he is, he should get on with it. *[Interruption.]* Order. Is the Government Whip seeking to catch my eye?

Mr. Shaw: I was asking whether in next week's debate it would be appropriate to raise the matter of the 40 unelected members of the council—

Madam Speaker: Order. It is a question for me whether it would be in order appropriate to raise it. Therefore, when the time comes, if the hon. Gentleman raises the matter with me, I shall give him an answer.

Mr. Shaw: If I may— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must try harder.

Mr. Shaw: I will try harder, with your encouragement, Madam Speaker. I am trying to achieve a motion next week which, if it has not been tabled already, will enable us to discuss the unelected state within a state in Monklands district council, where 40 close relatives of councillors are employed by the council, and the unsatisfactory state of affairs where poor Tom Macfarlane lost his job for "being a naughty boy" in relation to the Labour mafia families on the council. He appears to have upset the ruling councillors. Would it be appropriate to raise that matter in the debate next week?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend may have moved from asking whether something was in order to whether it was appropriate. I am sure that you will guide him on whether it is in order, Madam Speaker. I will guide him that, if it is in order, it might be appropriate.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): The Leader of the House will recall that the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Employment have both in the past fortnight stated their concern about unemployment in my constituency and promised to act quickly on it. As RECHAR 2 was announced by the European Commission yesterday, will the Leader of the House arrange for the President of the Board of Trade to make a statement next week promising to match that cash so that we can get going with it immediately to solve some of our desperate problems?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise what the hon. Gentleman asks, but I can promise to make sure that my right hon. Friend is quickly made aware of his request.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have a debate next week on local government taxation, so that we may examine how the Conservative Ealing council has again been able to reduce the council tax by an average of £100 and compare it with the Labour council which, in 1987, raised it by 65 per cent. in a single year by imposing additional taxation on old people and on Ealing hospital of nearly £500,000? What do they care about the national health service? The matter should be examined by the House.

Mr. Newton: I am tempted to think that the success that my hon. Friend describes must have something to do with his own assiduous efforts on behalf of his constituency.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): May we have a debate next week on the plan to reduce from 86 to 49 the number of women cleaners working in the House and its outbuildings and to subject them to training programmes to teach mature women how to dust and use vacuum cleaners? Those women have been serving the House for many years and many of them are no longer young. Is not it a despicable way to treat those loyal servants of the House?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman probably knows that his remarks are more properly to be directed towards the Chairmen of the Administration Committee or the Accommodation and Works Committee, neither of whom is in his place at the moment.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Is the Leader of the House aware that, precisely when Ministers at the Department of the Environment were answering questions in the Chamber on water, sewage charges, EC directives and costs, civil servants were sneaking out a statement welcoming a new proposal from the Commission that would effectively ban bathing from some of our most famous beaches? Is it not extraordinary that, as a result of the Prime Minister's initiative at the European summit and the meddling that took place thereafter, we have a worse muddle and we do not even have the opportunity to question Ministers in the House? Will the Leader of the House ensure that there is an opportunity next week for us to question the Secretary of State for the Environment on that important issue?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will realise that I cannot give precisely that undertaking, but his question probably links with one asked a few moments ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason). I will bring those questions to the attention of my hon. Friends.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on inward investment, especially into the south-east, which is of great interest to the CBI in my constituency in Hertfordshire? May we also debate the maintenance of this country's excellent record of attracting inward investment over the past decade and the likely effect on that record of the so-called business plan from the Opposition, which would undoubtedly increase business costs and deter investors, as well as undermining the competitiveness of businesses that are already here?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's remarks are absolutely on the ball, if I may use a colloquialism. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), who speaks for the Opposition today, is still here to listen to another suggestion for Monday week's Opposition Supply day.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that, despite having had several stabs at it, his responses on the manner in which the announcements were made on Bosnia today are still entirely unsatisfactory, particularly as, to justify their being made as an oral answer, he had to diminish the importance of a statement in his second response to the House? Does he not realise that the matter was much more important than he allows: first, because it was a tactical deployment, which will not only add troops to Sarajevo, but, by definition, withdraw them from central Bosnia; and secondly, because it is a refutation—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not in order to discuss policy during business questions. If he has a point to put to the Leader of the House, he must must do so. We are not in a political discussion at this stage.

Dr. Reid: I am not in a political discussion; I am seeking to describe the reasons why there should have been a statement today—I hope that there will be a statement next week—because it was a refutation from the Dispatch Box of a request by a British general to send more troops. *Will the* Leader of the House ensure that when such important statements are made on matters of life and death they are made in the form of a statement so that hon. Members on both sides of the House, of all political persuasions and whatever their opinions on the matter, get the opportunity to question the Prime Minister on it?

Mr. Newton: I have now responded twice to such points. I do not think that I can add to what I said earlier. I have already made it clear that the possibility of statements, and, indeed, of debate, will be kept closely under review.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): The Leader of the House will have seen early-day motion 496 concerning the tension on the Korean peninsula.

[*That this House, aware of possible intervention by the U.S.A. against North Korea, and that Her Majesty's Government's policy is for the peaceful re-unification of the peninsula , calls upon Her Majesty's Government to have urgent discussions with the U.S. Government in an effort to avert a possible war which will prevent re-unification and for the sake of détente and peace.*]

As the Government's policy is for the peaceful reunification of both north and south, will he ask his right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to have urgent discussions with the American authorities on this critical situation?

Mr. Newton: I will bring the hon. Gentleman's concern to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Will the Leader of the House confirm that primary legislation is needed to close the Commonwealth Institute? Is it not therefore improper that, because of the withdrawal of public funding, the institute is issuing redundancy notices to its staff, and will continue to do so? When will we look at that primary legislation, because it is wrong to close a place before we have given consent, is it not?

Mr. Newton: I was not aware of the circumstances of the redundancy notices to which the hon. Gentleman refers. The right course for me is to bring his question and his concern to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Points of Order

4.13 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, which arises directly out of business questions. During business questions, the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), an experienced and well-liked Member of the House, came in with the clear and deliberate intention of referring to remarks that he says were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong), who serves as the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition. The thrust of his question to the Leader of the House was that, somehow, the hon. Lady's views were at variance with the official policy of the Opposition.

Can you, Madam Speaker, confirm that it is a convention that, if a matter of this kind is to be raised, the hon. Gentleman should inform the hon. Lady that he intends to refer to what he thinks are her views, so that she can have an opportunity to be present and refute them if he is wrong?

Madam Speaker: That is the customary procedure here. When one hon. Member intends to refer to another, it is a matter of courtesy for that hon. Member to give notice to the Member who is to be mentioned, so that any statements that are made can be challenged.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: I do not think that there can be a further point of order. I have given a ruling. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to raise a different matter?

Mr. Bottomley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. For most of my years in the House, it has been the convention for an hon. Member intending to attack another to give that person notice; but I did not think that it was necessary to give notice if one intended to repeat another hon. Member's remarks—in no derogatory sense—by quoting from the *Official Report*.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Member who is to be mentioned might reasonably reply, I think that it is a matter of courtesy to give that hon. Member notice that he or she will be mentioned.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I draw your attention to pages 267-68 of yesterday's Votes and Proceedings, particularly items 9 to 13? Between 44 and 50 hon. Members voted against certain motions. Two or three Conservative Members said that the Opposition had voted against pension and other increases, which is completely untrue.

There are 270 members of the parliamentary Labour party—not to mention the Liberal Democrats, the nationalists and the Ulstermen—and I understand that the 44 to 50 hon. Members who voted against the motions did so because the increases were not large enough. It is wrong for Conservative Members to pretend otherwise.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. I cannot comment on the accuracy or otherwise of the *Official Report*; the record stands.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I want to try to assist in the conduct of business—which you, of course, manage so very well.

There were difficulties during Prime Minister's Question Time. This place is sometimes very noisy, which I consider right and proper: sometimes there is an outburst of anger that is very difficult to control, when hon. Members think that they are being abused by the Government. On this occasion, the Prime Minister made what amounted to a mini-statement during Question Time. Such action deprives hon. Members of the opportunity to ask questions about what has been said, and of what many regard as a good opportunity to question the Prime Minister generally: it destroys two opportunities at the same time.

I suggest, Madam Speaker, that it would help both you and the House if you made it clear to the Prime Minister, and other Ministers, that if they want to avoid causing difficulties for you as a result of anger in the House, they should make statements from the Dispatch Box about important issues such as the sending of troops to other countries, to make bombing raids and possibly kill people.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: No. I do not wish to take any more points of order. I appreciate the efforts of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) to avoid creating difficulties for me; it is most unusual for any hon. Member to go out of his way to do that. I understand the frustration felt in many parts of the House, but the Prime Minister was perfectly in order today in answering the question that was put to him. I am always disturbed when there is so much noise: it takes up a great deal of time. The Prime Minister could not be questioned further about what he had said, because the time had been taken up by a great deal of noise —which, I must add, comes from all quarters of the House.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During business questions, the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr.Spink) referred to a sex magazine; in fact, he described it as a sexy magazine. The Leader of the House replied.

Is it not conventional for a document referred to by a Front Bencher to be placed in the Vote Office? If that happens in this case, what action will be taken to control the queues?

Madam Speaker: If I understand the position correctly, only quotations from state papers appear in the Vote Office. As the magazine was not a state paper, the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) was perfectly in order simply to bring it to our attention.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sure that, as the defender of the rights of Back Benchers, you have observed, in your visits to Parliaments abroad, that they often have, especially in the newly democratised states, more subtle methods of voting than we have in our Chamber, whereby they do not have to vote yes or no; there are other possibilities, using sophisticated electronic systems. Last night in the Chamber, many of us spoke in the debate on the social security measures, and we wished to express a certain point of view. That point of view was to support pension increases but to be highly critical of what the Government were doing. The only method available for us to do that was to vote no. Will you consider other possible methods by which we can express that point of view?

Madam Speaker: Of course, abstention is always open to hon. Members. I think that if the hon. Member is seeking to change the method by which we vote, he ought to refer it to the appropriate Committee.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As a matter of fact, there was another reason why we voted last night. I think we ought to draw it to your attention because sadly you were not in the Chair; you had other business to do, no doubt. There were five votes. There happened to be a meeting of the 92 Group across at Queen Anne's Gate, which was being addressed by the Secretary of State for Social Security. Prior to that, the leader of the 92 Group, the hon. Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner), was in some trouble. He looked like being carved up by the left of the Tory party. We wanted to ensure that the Tory party remains divided. The only way in which we could do it was to stop that business taking place, so we had five votes.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Bolsover is being as helpful as ever.

Royal Navy

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

[Relevant document: The Eighth Report from the Defence Committee on Royal Navy Commitments and Resources, HC 637 of Session 1992-93, and its First Special Report, HC 142 of Session 1993-94, containing the Government Reply thereto.]

4.21 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): It is, of course, a year which has been of great significance for all of us, marking as it does one of the great events of history—the deciding battle, 50 years ago, for the future of Europe and the greatest combined land, sea and air operation of the second world war.

It is only right that the achievement of our forces who fought throughout the second world war with tremendous determination and courage should be marked by special commemorative events. The Royal Navy, the subject of today's debate, paid its own special tribute in May last year when Merseyside hosted a series of events commemorating the 50th anniversary of the battle of the Atlantic, the longest continuous campaign of the second world war. The Royal Navy will also play a full part in the forthcoming D-day events which commemorate the largest amphibious operation ever undertaken in history.

Among other things, such commemorative events serve to remind us of our responsibility to ensure that such a war never happens again. The military tasks of today for our armed forces, set out in the defence White Paper "Defending Our Future", published last July, are those deemed necessary by the Government both to maintain the freedom and territorial integrity of the United Kingdom and its dependent territories and to enable the United Kingdom to pursue its legitimate interests at home and abroad.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way so early. Before he departs —perhaps he has just done so—from the subject of the 50th anniversary of one of the greatest events that led to the total elimination, downfall and defeat of Nazism, may I ask whether he is aware that many of us take the view that not enough is known by the younger generation about the significance of D-day compared, for example, to French children, who perhaps have a better reason for understanding it? Can he do anything with his ministerial colleagues in other Departments to ensure that, in schools at least, there is far greater understanding of the significance of D-day? The people who participated and lost their lives did so for the most heroic cause conceivable. All of us are deeply proud, 50 years on, that the people who took part—the people who died and the people who survived—did so to ensure that Nazism was defeated.

Mr. Hanley: I agree, and I am sure that the House agrees utterly with the hon. Gentleman's sentiments. I am certain that associated with the 50th anniversary of D-day will be a number of events throughout the country and television programmes and media opportunities for explaining exactly what he has said. It is important that this generation understands the sacrifice that was made, and the reasons why it was made 50 years ago.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Those are wonderful sentiments. I remember looking at the maps from Benghazi to Tobruk and all the rest as a little kid and thinking about those great victories, but I also reflect on what has happened today. The Germans have captured Rover and there is a Japanese flag flying over the Greater London council.

Mr. Hanley: As usual, the hon. Gentleman fails to rise to the occasion and is somewhat flippant. The matters to which the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) referred were far more serious than the hon. Gentleman's weak joke.

Hon. Members will be aware of the significant changes that are taking place in the strategic setting of our overseas and defence policy. Some have enhanced the security of the United Kingdom and its allies; others have added to uncertainty and created new commitments. It is reasonable to ask where maritime forces fit in this modern world.

The whole ministerial team at the Ministry of Defence and I remain convinced that there is an enduring need for sea power. The generic capabilities of our maritime forces —their reach, endurance, mobility, flexibility and ability to station off a hostile coastline—make them ideal for deterrent or peacekeeping missions, or both. The Polaris and, in the future, the Trident submarines, of course, provide the ultimate deterrent. As for conventional forces, the three core elements of the Royal Navy are the capabilities provided by our nuclear-powered submarines, our aircraft carrier task force and our amphibious forces.

The SSN—the strategic submarine nuclear—has tremendous mobility which allows it to be deployed rapidly and covertly and it can contribute greatly to enforcing sea control. Carriers and their escorting frigates and destroyers can provide considerable support to the land battle, with fixed and rotary wing support and, of course, air defence, surface strike and anti-submarine warfare. Our amphibious ships are a highly flexible national capability which is admired and admirably suited to the present strategic environment.

In the Adriatic, our national carrier task group, with HMS Ark Royal currently acting as flagship, continues to stand ready to provide additional protection for British forces ashore in Bosnia. The carrier-based Sea Harriers have been conducting training missions over land in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to ensure their readiness to provide close air support if required. They have also been flying air defence missions as part of the NATO operation to enforce a no-fly zone over Bosnia and are available to take part in NATO air operations if called upon to help protect Sarajevo and its citizens from further bombardment by the parties to the conflict.

Four Sea King MK4 helicopters from 845 Squadron have been based in Split since November 1992. They provide key casualty evacuation support for land forces operating with the UN and have almost become stars in their own right on television. Support ships, the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries Resource and Sir Geraint based in Split, are also playing a key role in providing essential logistics support to our troops ashore. In addition to our national forces deployed, we have ships in NATO's Standing Naval Force Mediterranean and the Standing Naval Force Atlantic, which are both operating in the Adriatic in support of Operation Maritime Guard, the joint NATO-WEU operation to monitor and enforce compliance with the arms embargo against the whole of the former Yugoslavia and the trade sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro.

[Mr. Hanley]

Elsewhere, our long-standing commitments in the Gulf, the south Atlantic and the Caribbean continue. In the Gulf, the Armilla patrol—currently HMS Glasgow and HMS Cumberland, supported by Royal Fleet Auxiliary Bayleaf—is now in its 14th year of continuous operations. The Armilla patrol makes a valuable contribution to regional security and stability and to the protection of British interests in the region. An interesting recent development has been the occasional presence in the Gulf of a Russian task group which has operated alongside allied ships in support of the remaining UN sanctions against Iraq.

In the south Atlantic, the Navy continues to patrol around the Falklands and provides a visible demonstration of our continued commitment to the security of the islands. HMS Endurance also continues to deploy annually to the area in support of our interests in the Antarctic region. Indeed, earlier this month, HMS Endurance pressed further south into the Antarctic's Weddell sea than any other royal naval ship in history.

In the Caribbean, the West Indies guard ship—the WIGS—has continued to carry out its duties successfully in support of the ground forces in Belize. This commitment has afforded the opportunity for the Royal Navy to make an important contribution in the area by assisting the United States and other authorities in the international campaign to counter the operation of drug traffickers. WIGS has achieved a number of successes in this area over the past year. It has been finding millions of dollars worth of illicit drugs.

The West Indies guard ship, in the latter part of the year, also assisted in the United Nations embargo operations off Haiti. Our future defence policy in that region—including the need for the full-time presence of the WIGS—is currently under review. I envisage, however, that our historic ties with the area will continue, and that the Royal Navy will continue to deploy there.

In the far east, the three Hong Kong patrol craft provide support to the Hong Kong garrison and assistance to the Hong Kong authorities in a variety of law and order tasks. In south-east Asia, until mid-November last year, Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel made a valuable contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Cambodia.

The Royal Navy also carries out a range of overseas visits which support and extend bilateral naval contacts and are also undertaken at the request of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in support of Her Majesty's Government's interests and our industry overseas. One of the most notable overseas visits of recent months was that carried out by HMS Norfolk and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Grey Rover to South Africa at the end of January. The aim of the visit was to renew relations between the Royal Navy and the South African navy, and they were the first foreign naval ships to visit since sanctions were lifted. The ships and crew received a remarkably warm welcome in Simonstown and Cape Town, where 69,000 people visited our ships.

The Navy is also playing a full part in the process of developing contacts with Russia and countries in central and eastern Europe. An impressive programme of contacts has been developed with these countries over the past four years, and highlights of the past year have included visits by royal naval vessels and submarines to ports in Russia, Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria. HMS Avenger's visit last September to Novorossisk in Russia, where no foreign warship had visited in living memory, coincided with the 50th anniversary of the city's liberation during the second world war, the 150th anniversary of its founding and the 300th anniversary of the Russian navy.

Reciprocating those visits, for the first time ever, three Russian frigates visited the Gibraltar naval base and, on departure, took part in a short exercise with HMS Brilliant. Here in the United Kingdom, in October, the Russian training ship Gangut visited Dartmouth and Britannia royal naval college. Also, the Royal Navy will again be working closely with the Russian armed forces in March, when a royal naval destroyer will take part in a multinational maritime exercise in the Barents sea, which has been devised in response to an initiative by our Norwegian allies.

The House will also be aware of the important agreement, announced this week in Moscow by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, concerning joint military exercises between units of the armed forces of the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom, beginning in 1995. The exercises will represent a major step forward in the process of deepening our defence relationship with Russia, will usefully promote closer contact and better understanding between our respective armed forces, and will accord fully with the spirit of the partnership for peace proposals announced at the NATO summit in Brussels on 10 January. Details of those proposed exercises are to be developed jointly by our respective military authorities, and also add to the excellent work of my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State, who visited Russia last year.

All that shows that we can be proud of a Royal Navy that continues to operate in all parts of the globe—from the north Atlantic to Antarctica, from the Caribbean to the far east, and many places in between. At home, the Royal Navy has continued its task of ensuring the integrity—

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): In his list of deployments, the Minister mentioned Ark Royal and its current station off Bosnia. Both he and the Secretary of State will no doubt be aware of the correspondence that I have had with the Department relating to Ark Royal and its refit in 1959, when asbestos was stripped out of its boilers by ratings who often had inadequate protection. I have mentioned to him the case of Mr. Michael Ward in my constituency who is now suffering gravely from asbestosis. Will the Minister agree to look at those case papers and, if he feels it appropriate, is he prepared to meet Mr. Ward and me to make representations on his behalf?

Mr. Hanley: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving notice of his intention to raise this matter concerning a previous HMS Ark Royal. Mr. Ward has telephoned a number of officials in the Ministry. On several occasions, he has been invited to write giving details of his claim, but he has not yet done so. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will encourage him to get in contact. It is not possible, without details, to consider his claim. We do not know his employment record since his discharge from the Royal Navy in 1963, and it is not immediately clear that his asbestosis is necessarily attributable to his naval service. However, we shall gladly look into the matter. If details are provided, the hon. Gentleman and I will be able to contact each other again.

At home, the Royal Navy has continued its task of looking after British territorial waters and protecting British rights and activities in the surrounding seas. The maintenance of a 24-hours-a-day, year-round presence in our waters provides considerable reassurance to merchant vessels and other mariners that they can rely on the Royal Navy in the event of an accident or emergency.

The Navy's fishery protection squadron is continuing to conduct fishery protection patrols on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency. The squadron also carries out a number of duties for other Government Departments, including the monitoring of dumping at sea, combating oil pollution and the famous search and rescue operations. In 1993 naval search and rescue crews responded to 647 call-outs and winched to safety some 600 people requiring assistance. Assistance can be provided to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise when the opportunity allows. Last year, three Royal Navy vessels assisted customs officers to board a merchant vessel suspected of drug trafficking off Land's End.

Measures to improve the safety of fishing vessels operating in waters frequented by submerged submarines have recently been implemented. Moreover, the recently introduced SUBFACTS information scheme, which broadcasts advance warnings of dived submarine movements to other mariners, has been extended to include the Sea of Hebrides, the Minches and sea areas off Plymouth and Portland. It is only right that I should pay tribute to Members of Parliament of all parties for the constructive way in which they have helped in the development of the SUBFACTS programme by recognising the need for it.

The Royal Navy also supports the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the defeat of terrorism in Northern Ireland. Ships of the Navy's Northern Ireland squadron conduct counter-terrorist deterrent patrols in both the coastal and the inland waters of the Province. The Royal Marines provide troops to support operations and contribute commando units on short tour infantry deployments. In addition, since last year and until further notice, Royal Navy Sea King helicopters—currently from 707 Squadron —have contributed to military operations in support of the RUC.

It is the Government's clear intention that, at a time of public expenditure stringency, we should obtain the greatest possible output from the available resources. It is, of course, entirely appropriate that defence should play its part. As hon. Members will be aware, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has established a radical and searching scrutiny of defence support functions. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who heads that initiative, will deal in more detail with "Front Line First" later, if time permits and if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It is important to remember that, in spite of major changes in the way we do business, as well as the pressures on the defence budget, there is still a healthy naval procurement programme in hand. Work continues on the landing platform helicopter, our helicopter carrier ordered last May; tenders are outstanding for a further batch of up to seven Sandown class single role minehunters; 18 new FRS2 Sea Harriers are on order, as part of a deal worth some £200 million; and a contract has been awarded for the development and production of Sonar 2076, which is part of our extensive programme to modernise the Trafalgar class attack submarines. My hon. Friend the Minister for Defence Procurement will spend more time on that aspect of our work later in the debate.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): As my hon. Friend will know, almost 400 conventional submarines are deployed around the world, more than 200 of them by third-world countries. It is therefore essential that we keep our power of anti-submarine warfare at full capacity and I was grateful for the account that he gave of some of the programmes. Does he agree that it is essential that we go ahead undisturbed with the programme to purchase the excellent Westland EH101 Merlin helicopter, which is an essential part of our anti-submarine warfare capacity?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is a former Defence Minister and will know that we are well aware of the excellent capabilities of the EH101s. Will he allow my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to respond to that question? Negotiations are under way but, if there is anything to add, I am sure that my hon. Friend will be able to do so.

I was mentioning the Trafalgar class attack submarines and the fact that my hon. Friend may be able to spend a little time on that subject later. I shall conclude my opening remarks to allow hon. Members as much time as possible to speak on the wide range of issues which cover the Royal Navy. I wish to emphasise that at the heart of the Royal Navy, including the Royal Marines, are our men and women. They serve at sea, on shore and in the air to maintain the high standards of quality, loyalty and efficiency of which we are justly proud. It is encouraging to report that they are working hard and that those with key operational commitments especially find, and continue to find, their work rewarding and stimulating.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I hesitate to interrupt my hon. Friend at that point, but does he agree that the morale of the excellent young men and women who serve in the Royal Navy would be damaged if compulsory random testing for drugs were introduced? That would have implications for the majority of young sailors; as we know, although the problem exists, it is small.

Mr. Hanley: Compulsory random drug testing is being studied by all three forces. My hon. Friend will be aware that the Army recently carried out two trials, one in Berlin and one in the United Kingdom, and the results are being examined. My hon. Friend has said that it is a small problem, but it is growing and it is serious, especially when we are talking of men and women who have control of not only expensive but potentially dangerous property. A mistake or an action that has been caused by, or has been affected by, drugs or drink—causing serious episodes when abused—has great impact. We must consider those issues seriously. The Royal Navy has no immediate plans to introduce compulsory random drug testing, but I would support it if it decided that it was necessary.

I was telling the House that morale in the Navy is generally good. I pay great tribute to all in the Royal Navy for keeping their morale as high as it is. In difficult times of contraction of our armed forces, the men and women in the Navy understand the rationale behind the decisions. Morale is good, notably among those working on some of the modern, lean-manned ships, such as the type 23 frigates with reduced complements, where particular challenges are

[Mr. Hanley]

offered. Even on type 23 frigates, men and women work together. We are living in times of change and times of challenge, but I know that our men and women are rising to those challenges.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): My hon. Friend refers to men and women rising to the challenge. Does he agree that it is not a universal view in the Royal Navy that the mixture of sexes at sea in a front-line fighting unit is necessarily for the good and that there are many who believe that the efficiency of the Royal Navy has been diminished by the presence of Wrens at sea?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend expresses a view which I hear from time to time when I visit Royal Navy ships and bases, but it is not shared by the majority of people who work in the Royal Navy. The women in the armed forces have always undertaken a wide variety of duties and, over the past three or four years, we have announced decisions to widen their employment opportunities further and to recruit more. The number of women in the services in general has increased over the past five years from 16,000 to 18,000. That shows that not only are there places in the armed forces for women but that women want to take those places. I see no reason on earth why they should not do so.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Apart from the additional costs of accommodating women at sea—a factor that I am sure my hon. Friend considers seriously—will he comment again on the substantial costs to the Exchequer that have been incurred in granting compensation awards to women of the Royal Navy who have become pregnant? It is an intolerable state of affairs that people who sign on to serve their country, and who thereby should be available for any duty at the behest of the Crown, are compensated for not being available.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend mentions a matter which has caused considerable concern over recent months. It is a finite problem, because those women who were discharged from the armed forces between August 1978 and August 1990 would have no reason to be discharged now because the employment regulations have changed. We were apparently at fault in discharging women in that way. The level of compensation paid to them seems to have been extremely high, but it would not be right for me to query the right of a woman to take an action in court or the amount of the settlements, since those are beyond our control.

I recognise that this matter has given rise to offence in many quarters, especially as the compensation may have been seen by some as excessive in the light of elements of compensation for people wounded in warfare or in action. Nevertheless, that has been the law.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): It appears that the Minister is trying to mislead the House because, in answer to a written question which I tabled, he said that the average compensation was just over £5,000. That does not seem high to me.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman may be confusing the difference between the settlements which were arranged between the parties and those in which people took the passage of law through tribunals to the furthest possible extent. There are differences between awards made recently by certain tribunals and cases in which women, who were quite within their rights, negotiated with the forces, which regard themselves as responsible employers, and reached what I regard as sensible settlements. It is a finite matter. As I said, the employment practices changed in August 1990, so we should see an eventual end to such cases.

Those matters are peripheral to the main impact of the work of men and women in our forces. Women in the Navy are contributing at every level. Not a single hon. Member could visit a Royal Navy ship and, standing on the bridge, fail to recognise the contribution that women are making to the Royal Navy. The amalgamation of the Wrens into the Royal Navy allows women no longer to be subject to any discrimination over rank. I would not mind seeing—my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) may regret the day—a woman admiral in the Royal Navy. I would not mind a woman driving a ship.

Mr. Ottaway: That would be perfectly acceptable to me if it were an all-Wren ship.

Mr. Hanley: I am sure that my hon. Friend would love to serve on such a ship. But there is no need for all-Wren or all-male ships. Men and women work extremely well together. There are only some areas in which women cannot serve, such as on minesweepers, where the accommodation is far too small, and in submarines, which were not built to allow separation for the purposes of privacy. Times have changed since my hon. Friend served on HMS Eagle. His service was not only gallant but long, and I look forward to his advice in future—but on this subject he is on a losing wicket.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of women afloat, will he consider the possibility that the answers that he is given by serving officers and others in our armed services are conditioned by the feeling that perhaps their answers should be politically correct?

Mr. Hanley: I am afraid that I must tell my hon. Friend that I do not regard it as "politically correct" to open up the opportunity for the armed forces of this country to accept those who are talented and intelligent and want to serve, and to choose from 100 per cent. of the population rather than from less than 50 per cent. The opportunities afforded to women have shown that they can achieve the highest level of national life, and there is no reason why they cannot serve in the armed forces, where that is possible. There are certainly areas in which it is still impossible for women to serve. We understand that, but the number of such areas is falling dramatically.

We have a woman monarch, and we have had a woman Prime Minister and a woman lord mayor of London. I see no reason why we cannot have—[HON. MEMBERS: "And a woman Speaker."] And a woman Speaker, indeed. I must mention that. There is no reason why we cannot have a woman first sea lord in due course.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We have a woman Deputy Speaker as well, and she would like to see the Minister's face rather than his back.

Mr. Hanley: Actually, Madam Deputy Speaker, you were seeing my better side.

Indeed, we have a Deputy Speaker who is not only a woman, but a lady as well. I must mention your interest in

the Royal Navy, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I know that, by convention, you are not allowed to make speeches in this place. Your interest in the Royal Navy over the years has been as great as that of any hon. Member—indeed, greater—and you have led several delegations to me in the interests of the Royal Navy. I hope that you do not mind if I break that confidence.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): On that theme, getting back to basics, could not the Minister, on behalf of the Government Front Bench, say that some of his best friends are women?

Mr. Hanley: I do not think that I shall comment on that.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a serious point, now that we have discussed the roles that women have played in the life of the nation, one thing is missing from the list. When will Royal Navy ships be provided with woman-sized equipment? For instance, fire fighting suits are much too big and cumbersome for women to join firefighting teams and some of the shoring-up equipment is far too heavy for women to lift. Problems have been reported from the decks of many ships because of women's inability to lift the heavy loads and to take part in some of the ordinary team workings of the ship. Either some of the equipment will have to be made smaller and adapted for use by female sailors, or women will continue to be discriminated against on the mess decks of our ships. That serious problem was reported to me extensively during my time with the Navy last year.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is right; practical problems have been inherited from times past, and changes are being made. My hon. Friend mentioned firefighting suits. Not long ago I was on HMS Norfolk during a firefighting exercise, and women were taking a full part, wearing suits that fitted them perfectly.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): That was just for your visit.

Mr. Hanley: I do not think it was. In any event, I believe that those uniforms are available for all women serving in the Royal Navy. My hon. Friend made a good point about the fact that we must adapt to new circumstances. Obviously, there are certain tasks in which those who are not as physically strong as others will find themselves restricted, and we must continue to work on those areas. I hope that my hon. Friend does not feel that there is a general feeling of inadequacy surrounding women serving at sea. According to a recent survey, they seem to be serving extremely well, and more and more men serving at sea welcome both their presence and their ability.

Mr. Devlin: I am sorry to press the point, but it is important. We should have discrimination on grounds not of sex but of size and strength, just as there are restrictions on who can join the firefighting service in civilian life. Women who cannot lift certain loads, are not of a certain size and cannot perform certain tasks are not allowed into the civilian firefighting service, so why are they allowed to go to sea when they are patently not able to do the job?

Mr. Hanley: Women will go to sea if they can do the job. I assure my hon. Friend that we take into careful and serious consideration the ability of people, whatever size they are, to use the equipment safely for the purpose for which it is intended. It would be wrong to require a person of diminutive stature to take on a task that he or she could not safely do, whether on board ship or anywhere else.

Dr. Reid: Male or female.

Mr. Hanley: Indeed, male or female.

In introducing the debate I have covered a wide range of activities both at home and abroad—

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I was waiting until my hon. Friend's peroration to hear whether, although this is a debate about the Royal Navy, he would make even passing references to the Merchant Navy. He mentioned the worldwide role which the Royal Navy plays, and he also mentioned the Falklands. He will recall that half the fleet that went to the Falklands consisted of ships taken up from trade.

I am sure that the Ministry of Defence will have considered the size of our merchant fleet, and what would happen in any future operation similar to the Falklands campaign—there are likely to be many of them from now on, in support of the United Nations or under a NATO banner. The Ministry must consider not only whether we have enough ships to take up from trade but whether, if those ships happen to be foreign ships under charter, we have enough British crews and officers in the Merchant Navy available to man them.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend has raised an important point. I am glad that he has intervened, because it would be wrong not to mention the extremely valuable role played by the United Kingdom merchant fleet and the tasks that the courageous men and women serving in it carry out every year. I must agree with my hon. Friend that in the past decade there has been a significant decline in the British-flagged merchant fleet. The Ministry of Defence, in conjunction with the Department of Transport, keeps a close watch on the numbers of strategic ships to ensure that its plans are capable of being carried out if—God forbid—another Falklands campaign were needed.

The reasons for the decline range from the worldwide slump in the fortunes of shipping registries to changes in trading and even, in some parts of the world, changes in fiscal policy. In recent years the rate of decline has slowed, but the decline seems set to continue, albeit at a much reduced rate. However, we are confident that we can still meet the need for ships and crews should it arise.

Finally, as I have already said, I have ranged widely in geographical terms, with good reason. Had I not done so, I could not have hoped to give any real impression of what the Royal Navy is doing. This is an annual debate, and it is therefore right that it should, in effect, be a catalogue of what the Royal Navy has achieved over the past 12 months, not only in defence of this country but through its personnel in their role as diplomats extraordinary as they travel the world. It is also important that we as a Government do as much as we can to ensure that the senior service remains one of the most capable and effective navies in the world. I know that I take the whole House with me when I say how proud we are of our Royal Navy.

4.59 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): On behalf of the Opposition, I am pleased fully to endorse what the Minister said about the Normandy landings and D-day, which I suppose in defence-speak today would be called a

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

wonderful example of amphibiosity. That is one of the many new words that the Ministry of Defence has coined, rather like "downsizing", which reminds me of London Underground saying that fares will be "revised" when it means increased.

Clearly, Labour Members share wholly with the Government and hon. Members on both sides of the House pride in our Royal Navy, admiration for the skill and expertise of the men and women in the Navy and confidence in their ability to respond to a changing world as the kaleidoscope of international events makes such changes necessary.

Although few hon. Members have direct knowledge of life in the Navy—the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) is one such example, but perhaps a bad example because his views on women may derive from an earlier age—there is considerable expertise, especially among members of the Select Committee, whose reports are always widely respected and eagerly awaited. Undoubtedly, that expertise will be displayed tonight.

The main focus of our debate will be partially overshadowed by the grave developments in Bosnia. It is appropriate to put on record our position on Bosnia, where the Royal Navy is mightily involved. First, we regret that there has been no statement today on the Government's response to the key new development—the United Nations request for more troops. Secondly, the Opposition have maintained an unwavering record of support for the deployment of British forces to assist the humanitarian effort in Bosnia.

Over the past days, thanks to the negotiating skills, determination and courage of our British United Nations general, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, and the forces under his command, a ceasefire has been in operation in Sarajevo. General Rose has called for an additional 3,000 troops to help him to enforce that ceasefire. Certainly, we believe that the United Kingdom should contribute to those forces.

The Government's response, which was announced this afternoon, is welcome so far as it goes. It amounts to the redeployment of two companies of Coldstream Guards from Vitez—although that begs the question about the consequential effect on the situation in Vitez. The response also involves the additional deployment of 60 new troops who are specialists in mortar location.

General Rose specifically asked for an additional battalion, but that United Nations request has been refused by the Government. His aim was to avoid possible military escalation, particularly a necessity for air strikes when the deadline expires on Sunday evening. His request was the result of an assessment of need. There is still time for an adequate response, and we hope that the Minister will give an assurance that we will use the time before Sunday's deadline to pressurise our allies, including the United States, for additional contributions.

Mr. Colvin: Will the hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to correct one misunderstanding that prevails at present? Although General Rose is British, he is not the British Commander, he is a NATO-United Nations commander. Some 7,600 troops from other United Nations and NATO partners are ready to be deployed in Bosnia. It is time that other countries did more to take part in this operation, rather than leaving it to the British and French.

Mr. Anderson: Certainly, the British and French contributions are substantial. I can confirm that, although General Rose is a British national, he is acting as the United Nations commander in Bosnia. We should view his assessment of the need with great respect. History will judge us badly if, because of our over-cautious response now, there is an escalation of warfare in Bosnia and the window of opportunity afforded by the ceasefire is lost. That is as much as I wish to say about Bosnia.

To obtain a clear idea of the scale of the recent changes, which have fundamentally altered the role of our Royal Navy, I invite my parliamentary colleagues to read the three previous debates on the Royal Navy, especially the debate held four years ago this month in February 1990. That shows exactly how the world has changed over the past four years.

In February 1990, the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert), the Under-Secretary at the time, opened the debate. His speech referred inter alia to President Gorbachev's policy of perestroika, the fact that HMS Achilles had visited Rostock in East Germany, the submarine capability of the Soviet Union and its ability to mount a surprise attack against the NATO countries in Europe. He said that the Soviet Union was continuing to invest heavily in modernising its armed forces. He gave as the Royal Navy's primary NATO role its anti-submarine warfare capability. He said that the primary potential threat remained that posed by the Soviet submarine fleet.

Today, we are in a different world. However, there is one aspect of that speech four years ago that I invite hon. Members to hear. The Under-Secretary said:

> "Our force of destroyers and frigates stands at 48 vessels, of which 44 are available for operations immediately or within a short period. We remain committed to a force of about 50 and we plan to order sufficient ships to meet that commitment."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1990; Vol. 166, c. 657.]

Since then, as we say in this House, an amendment has been tabled. There is a United States saying that a promise is something to run on, not to stand on.

The current figure for frigates and destroyers is about 35. We must add to that the current defence share of gross domestic product of 3·7 per cent.—in 1984-85, it was 5·3 per cent. It has been projected by the Treasury that it will fall to 3·24 per cent. in 1995-96, and by defence experts that it will fall to 2·9 per cent. by 1999-2000. That is a sign of the financial pressures facing the forces as a whole.

Mr. Hanley: I seem to remember that, at the Labour party conference in October, some 79·9 per cent. of members voted—I believe that that makes it official party policy—to reduce the defence expenditure of the United Kingdom to the European average, which is about 2·4 per cent. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman is saying that, whatever the pressures on our defence budget and, indeed, whatever the reassessment caused by the changing world order and the fact that we do not have anyone threatening to attack our shores any more, the Labour party would do even more to reduce our defence expenditure and, therefore, run riot with defence industries, the Army, the Navy and the Air Force.

Mr. Anderson: I was expecting that intervention. I assume that it will be followed by a question as to whether I was ever a member of the CND.

Clearly, we need to look not at conference resolutions but at the Labour party's manifesto at the last election,

which I happen to have with me. In that manifesto—I hope that the Minister will regard this with the same care as he reads conference resolutions—we said:

"We will provide whatever resources are needed for effective defence for our country, providing the necessary level of forces with the appropriate equipment and weapons."

We do not need to consider Government resolutions as we can consider their actions. Their figures are Treasury-led and not strategy-led and have fallen rapidly.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): As a keen observer of Labour party conferences, I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to get away with his cavalier and dismissive words about conference resolutions. Will he confirm that conference resolutions that are passed by a majority of two thirds or more are binding on the Labour party? In the example mentioned by my hon. Friend the Minister, the resolution to reduce our defence spending by one third—equivalent to wiping out spending on the navy—was passed by a 79 per cent. majority.

Mr. Anderson: I confirm that Labour policy is that which appears in its election manifesto. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is eagerly awaiting the manifesto that will win the Labour party the election in three years' time. Our actions in response to that manifesto will be more credible and honest than the Government's actions, as I showed when I compared the Government's promises four years ago and the actuality today.

Mr. Colvin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Anderson: The hon. Gentleman has had one go and I suspect that his intervention will follow in the vein of other rather silly interventions.

Mr. Colvin: I was going to say that the Liberals are not here.

Mr. Anderson: The Liberals could speak for themselves if they were here.

The key complications in the Royal Navy are the long research and development times and the expected length of service of new ships. A good example of that problem is the history of the Upholder class submarine, the design contract for which was placed in May 1980. In November 1983, the build contract for the first of class was placed with Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. The contracts for the remaining three boats were placed in 1986. Hon. Members will know of the history of cost overruns, but all four boats did finally, and very recently, go into service.

The "Options for Change" White Paper, which appeared in July 1990, stated that only four boats would be built in that class, yet in July last year the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" announced that the Ministry of Defence decided to withdraw Upholders from service by 1995 and were taking steps to dispose of them, after a total spend of £910 million, claiming that there would be savings in running costs of £25 million to £30 million per annum.

In a note for the Public Accounts Committee in October last year, the MOD claimed that a number of potential markets for the Upholder class boats had been identified. Last month, however, a Ministry source was quoted as saying that no country had come forward with a realistic offer and that, when taken out of the service next year, the four boats would "rust away". Will the Minister confirm that there is no realistic prospect of orders, that almost £1 billion has effectively been wasted and that total savings in running costs amount to £25 million to £30 million per annum?

It is clear that the financial reasons that led to the Upholder decision last year were regretted by many people in the Royal Navy. They recognised its role in the training of captains and crew who go on to larger vessels and with our special forces. They also believe that it would be more likely to be used in the future operations that we envisage.

There is clearly a close correlation between morale in the Navy and the retention of such vessels. I am reliably informed that the premature voluntary retirement rate shot up among Upholder personnel immediately after the decision was announced. The Upholder decision and other examples of cost cutting, such as the helicopter carrier, should encourage a little caution and humility among Conservative Members who demand to know how much we would spend on defence and our priorities. They expect us to produce fully worked-out operational plans three years before we take power and when we are consistently denied access to data because of the unnecessary and foolish cult of secrecy in the MOD.

Mr. Hanley: Things have never been more open.

Mr. Anderson: I refer the Minister to the fact the Opposition Front-Bench team has still not been provided with a copy of the semi-public speech on the RAF by Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon to an audience that included a number of Conservative Members. We have sought to obtain a copy of that speech, but without success.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the speech was made at a private function. It is therefore not available for the Government to issue it. On openness, last year's Government White Paper set out its proposals in more detail than ever before—some people, including members of the Labour party's Front-Bench team, said that they were surprised by the openness of the document and the extra details that it contained. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman cannot say that we are not open with our information. Will he confirm that this very week he and his Front-Bench team were afforded a full briefing on the Army? That briefing was one of a series that demonstrates the openness of which the MOD and the Government are proud.

Mr. Anderson: Of course we welcome the briefing:

"And e'en the ranks of Tuscany
Could scarce forbear to cheer."

It marked a welcome breakthrough. I repeat, however, that the air chief marshal's speech was made to a semi-public body and that when we asked for a copy of that speech, we were referred to the office of the Secretary of State for Defence. We have still not been supplied with one.

The Minister mentioned the new openness. Will he assure the House that the interim reports and the final report on the "Front Line First" study will be made available to the House? What impact will that study have on long-term costings?

There is a substantial contrast between the Government's rhetoric and the reality. That contrast is the reason why many people in the defence community are disillusioned with the Government and the reason for the recent MORI finding that, on defence matters, the public trust Labour more than the Conservatives. That is a matter of record.

[Mr. Anderson]

Clearly, the changes in the security context have led to pressures for changes in NATO and to a rethink on defence priorities in all countries, not least the United Kingdom. The "Options for Change" statement of July 1990 has been further refined, if that is the word, in the light of Treasury pressures. NATO is in a transition phase. It is instructive to read the Brussels summit communiqué of January this year, which placed a new emphasis on the build-up of the European pillar in defence—the European defence identity and the common foreign and security policy outlined in the Maastricht treaty.

Increasingly, the United States is reassessing its role in Europe, prompted by a number of pressures, not least financial. For example, on the 7 February of this year, President Clinton presented his 1995 budget to Congress. It amounted to a strategy of global withdrawal and a major reduction in the defence share of Government expenditure. In the United States, the share of gross domestic product that is allocated to defence will fall to 13 per cent. by 1999 —a third of the share during the cold war and the lowest share since the isolationist 1930s. In the 1990s, the share amounted to as much as 40 per cent. of the federal budget. Britain and Europe must respond to changed United States policy perceptions.

Those who claim that the special relationship continues do so with much less credibility. They are not helped by the Conservative party's assistance to the Bush candidacy during the last presidential campaign, which posed major problems for our embassy in Washington because the Washington bureaucracy is so highly politicised. Despite having a remarkably expert ambassador in Sir Robin Renwick, we face a wall of problems as a result of the Conservative party's foolish partisan intervention in the campaign. I remind Government Members that the United Kingdom's concession last week to the allies over air strikes in Bosnia arose in part because of the fear that inaction would excite the pressures of isolationists within the United States.

The link between our defence policy overall and European Union developments is as yet uncertain, but the trend is likely to be an increased United States disengagement, coupled with a strengthening of European Union cohesion.

The Royal Navy is vitally affected by our perception of the changes in the nature of the threat, and our response to that threat. The old and clear role of anti-submarine warfare in the gap between Greenland, Iceland and the United Kingdom has now gone, and a new role is being worked out with a much wider definition of security. The United States marine corps White Papers have spoken of a change

"from a focus on global threat to a focus on regional challenges".

A United States naval strategist has talked of new threats from

"zealots, crazies, drug runners and terrorists"

while another warns of

"the growing wealth of petro-nations—available to bullies and crazies".

It is instructive to see the Government's response in that context. The Government have argued that the "Options" statement was "strategy-led, not resource-disciplined", but virtually everyone outside the ranks of Ministers accepts that it is resource-led and strategy-disciplined. That makes it essentially a cost-cutting exercise.

The versatility of the Navy is vital for poise over the horizon and inshore for political and military objectives. There is the flexibility of deployment without the necessity of support from the countries involved. For example, Harriers can go up in any weather, and carriers can travel 400 miles in 24 hours. There is an increasing role for the Navy in support of the civil powers, such as in disasters, drug matters and the defence of small states. That is a particular Commonwealth role, and one thinks of Grenada and the debate over the defence of micro-states within the Commonwealth. That debate began in the 1980s and, alas, has not reached a conclusion.

Clearly, the Royal Navy has special advantages in the new circumstances because of its versatility. At the time of the Falklands crisis, SSN craft were the first to the area, and one SSN spent over 100 days unsupported at sea.

The hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) mentioned that there is a widespread distribution of submarines nowadays. There are 376 conventional submarines in 44 countries around the world, 222 of which belong to 30 third-world countries. More than 3,000 advanced Exocets have been obtained by 29 countries.

How has the Royal Navy been able to move from the old to the new? Are the resources available? Hon. Members will know the three "defence roles" set out in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993" and I shall not repeat them. The total force elements which were assigned to various defence roles were set out clearly, and it is accepted by the Government that there is much double counting.

The total of the fleet remains at four ballistic missile nuclear submarines or SSBNs, 12 nuclear-powered attack submarines or SSNs, three carriers, 35 destroyers and frigates, eight amphibious ships, 25 mine counter-measures vessels, or MCMV, and 16 Royal Fleet Auxiliaries.

The Government will be aware that there are major concerns within the defence community about fitting the forces to the defence roles. Those concerns include our amphibious capability, where there is a shortfall which makes it vital to proceed with work on the two landing platform docks to replace Fearless and Intrepid. The helicopter carrier decision was much welcomed.

As far as aircraft carriers are concerned, the follow-on to the three carriers which require replacement between 2009 and 2016 must be considered. That is roughly the same time as the Sea Harrier is due to be replaced, but nothing is as yet planned.

Since there is no prospect of our ordering big carriers, we may eventually have to convert to helicopter carriers. No other aircraft will be available, unless the next generation of Sea Harriers is ready by that time. The European fighter aircraft cannot fit on to our small carriers. Will the Minister confirm that the Government are considering the next generation of Sea Harriers in their long-term costings?

I will just say in passing that France has similar problems in relation to its carrier fleet. France has two major, but aging, carriers—the Clemenceau and the Foch, which came into service in the early 1960s. There was a cry of anguish in the early February issue of *Cols Bleus* from Admiral Coatane, the French chief of naval staff, who regretted the many delays in the Charles de Gaulle. Admiral Coatane hoped that a second carrier would enter into service some years after. It was anticipated that the

Charles de Gaulle nuclear carrier would be completed five years ago, but France is now saying that it will be completed—at the very earliest—in 1999.

It is sad that France has such a nationalist procurement policy. The Sea Harrier was appropriate for the French carriers, but it was not ordered. France is, of course, ordering the Rafale for the nuclear-powered Charles de Gaulle.

The "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993" suggested that only 24 destroyers and frigates would be required for fully active service, while other ship numbers will be at a reduced level. Is it the intention of the Government to withdraw the type 22 frigates speedily? Clearly, the lower complement of the type 23—175 crew, as against 250 on the type 22—is important.

Will the new type 23 be ordered at the expense of the common new generation frigates being jointly developed by the United Kingdom, France and Italy? One assumes that such joint procurement of expensive projects will be increasingly necessary. Yarrow claims that further delays in the common new generation frigates could mean the United Kingdom losing its present frigate-designing skills. I understand that the two United Kingdom consortiums involved—Yarrow and Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd.—still have not heard which has been awarded the contract, whereas the key manufacturers in the other participating countries have been selected.

It would be helpful to know the current state of thinking of the Royal Navy on joining in the developments of the conventionally armed stand-off missile, or CASOM, which has a range of over 1,000 km. That would be a major increment in the power-projection of Royal Navy frigates.

As to nuclear-powered attack submarines, or SSNs, is there a clear commitment to begin the construction of the first batch 2T class submarines at Barrow when the Trident vessels are completed? As always in industrial matters, we need to retain our expertise. Trident has now been given a sub-strategic role, following the Secretary of State's announcement on 4 October last year during the House's debate on the defence estimates for 1993. That sub-strategic role has caused concern by doubling the number of potential nuclear warheads to 96 on each Trident submarine from 48 on each Polaris. In our judgment, warheads, not explosive power, are the key factor. That role is also a blow to those who seek to discourage nuclear proliferation. It is clearly an unfortunate signal to countries that are developing their own nuclear capacity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) will say more about mine counter-measures vessels. There is clearly an urgent need to order the next batch of Sandowns, which are very much valued in multi-national operations. I shall dwell a little on the Royal Fleet Auxiliary—the point raised by the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). It is necessary to use ships taken up from trade to supplement the existing tankers and replenishment ships to meet the total requirement under defence role 2. There is much scepticism in defence circles about the number of seamen listed in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993", because the figures given were swollen by including foreign seamen in British ships and even trainees still at school.

I refer the Minister to the excellent report by the House of Commons Employment Select Committee entitled "The Future of Maritime Skills and Employment in the United Kingdom", which was published on 2 November last year. It shows an alarming decline in seamen and ships arising in particular from a lack of Government support for the industry. I refer the Minister to the fifth and 10th recommendations in that report, which are very pertinent to the capacity of the Navy to respond in emergencies.

I remind the Minister that, during the Gulf war, the Government were required to charter ships at exorbitant rates. They chartered 127 foreign flag vessels at a cost of £180 million. The peace-time equivalent cost was estimated at £85 million. The key question is whether the Government recognise the need for a core fleet of militarily useful merchant vessels. If so, are they prepared to give fiscal and other incentives to achieve that before it is too late? The position will certainly have deteriorated even since the report of the Select Committee was published in November last year.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I ask this question in support of the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. Is it not also the case that the recently retired First Sea Lord has spelt out clearly in a meeting of the parliamentary maritime group his real anxieties on the issue that the hon. Gentleman raises? I find it difficult to accept the view of Government Front-Bench Members that all is well and there is not a problem.

Mr. Anderson: Government Front-Bench Members continue to repeat that all is well as our merchant marine sinks beyond the horizon. We must treat with considerable respect the views of people with such long experience as the former First Sea Lord. I urge the Government to take the problem seriously and ask themselves whether we in Britain need a core merchant capacity and, if so, what we are prepared to do about it.

It is clear that ship ordering has vital industrial and regional consequences. I need cite only two examples. One is the success of Vickers in bidding over Swan Hunter for the construction work, valued at £211 million, for the helicopter carrier. That led to the collapse of Swan Hunter and the loss of thousands of jobs on Tyneside.

The second example is the contest between the two royal dockyards, Rosyth and Devonport, which led to the £5 billion Trident refit contract being awarded to Devonport and the consequent pledge by the Secretary of State that Rosyth, by way of compensation, would be guaranteed refitting work on more than half the fleet for 12 years.

The Minister will be aware that fears are now widespread that the Government could be forced to reverse that decision because the Treasury has demanded even greater cuts. The results of the defence costs study, which I understand will be completed towards the end of next month but published in April or May, are awaited with great trepidation in Rosyth, which employs 3,700 people. There is great anxiety that the pledge given only last November will not be met.

It is said that the cuts envisaged in the defence costs study will go well beyond those envisaged in "Options for Change". The Treasury has given officials the target of saving £750 million in each year from 1996-97. Is it still considered feasible to maintain two yards with the reduction of the destroyer-frigate force to 35?

As for naval helicopters, the Government are presumably watching with some concern the hostile takeover bid by GKN for the Westland group, made on

[Mr. Anderson]

8 February. It is claimed that British Aerospace, which had an interest in Westland, an independent producer, at an earlier stage, was warned off by the Ministry of Defence.

Perhaps the Minister could comment on that and on what role, if any, the Government are playing. It is certain that helicopters will play an increasing role in the regional warfare of the future, in which equipment for rapid response is needed. The highly versatile EH101 Merlin will obviously benefit the Royal Navy. That point was made earlier by the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle).

I shall conclude by discussing some of the human factors in the Royal Navy. Our capacity as a naval power clearly depends on motivating our sailors at a time of reduction and restructuring in the new strategic context. If we compare Royal Navy pay scales for 1978 with those in 1994 in real terms, we see that, although salaries for the higher ranks have risen by between 15 and 18 per cent., the salaries for the lower ranks have decreased in real terms by 13·7 per cent.

There are other key anxieties about the conditions for the men and women in our Royal Navy. One is that the conditions of overstretch lead to personnel spending increasing time at sea away from families. The possibility of spending time ashore has been made more difficult by the Government's programme of contractorisation. Men previously expected to spend some time in jobs at home. Those jobs may no longer exist as a result of contractorisation.

The shore-sea ratio is of considerable importance to morale. It has regional variations. The danger is that, in the ideological pursuit of privatisation, the Government could harm our Navy. Similarly, "Front Line First" will involve a trade-off with morale as shore time is likely to be further limited not only as a result of contractorisation but as a result of the likely conclusions of the "Front Line First" study.

As for housing, the Royal Navy clearly was not consulted about the decision to sell off the stock of housing. The ensuing housing association would be the largest in Britain, with major problems in relations with local housing authorities, tenant participation in the giant authority that will emerge and management structure. It is clear that many of those problems have not been thought through. Again, the decision was motivated by a once-for-all saving of £500 million and a desire to avoid Treasury demand for further cuts.

Will the Minister ensure that the findings of the independent survey of the married quarters estate are published? What is he doing to ensure that cheap rented accommodation is available to service families who want it when they leave Ministry of Defence property? There was a helpful Rowntree report on that a year or so ago.

In conclusion, in spite of the reductions and changes over a short period, our officers, men and women in the Royal Navy remain remarkably cheerful and resilient. By a neat recasting of the defence needs and juggling within the categories, the Govenrment have given an appearance of producing a highly flexible and well-motivated force. The new military traits of mobility, flexibility and inter-operability in a highly uncertain world would make the tasks of our Royal Navy even more vital. Further cuts, which will undoubtedly be justified yet again on strategic grounds, as the shadow of the Treasury looms over the Ministry of Defence, will risk endangering the current state of morale and readiness of our forces.

Having read the speech on defence capabilities that the Secretary of State gave to the Centre for Defence Studies on Tuesday, I cannot help wondering how much the Government are clinging to an expensively structured role of anti-submarine warfare from an earlier period when there was a very different threat. Should there be more emphasis on power projection, with the anti-submarine capability being ancillary to that?

The Government's attempts to meet so many commitments are a means of avoiding choices between a continental or maritime future and between specialisation or collaboration with our allies. We may want to stay in the business of a major warfare capacity, but is there not a danger of us ending up with units that are too small for the tasks demanded of them? The time of choice is fast approaching as the cost of systems and commitments continue to rise and budget constraints become even more onerous.

How long will current plans last after "Options for Change" and the current review? Over the next six years we shall approach the time when, it is estimated, defence expenditure will be only 2·9 per cent. of gross domestic product. The moment of choice cannot be long delayed.

5.42 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I join my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) in paying tribute to the Royal Navy, not only for what it did for us 50 years ago, but for the way in which this country's safety, independence and freedoms have been guaranteed for the past 500 years by the way in which the Navy has defended our shores and overseas interests. It would be a fundamental error for anyone to imagine that the importance of the Royal Navy is less today than it has been during the past 500 years.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, the role played by the Royal Navy can be summarised in three categories. First, it represents our interests abroad, and looks after our trading interests and prestige abroad in peace time and in limited warfare. Secondly, it provides the naval contingent of any force that we give to the United Nations, the Western European Union or our allies if we are called upon to do so. Thirdly, and ultimately most importantly, it safeguards this country and its security in times of all-out war. I shall follow my hon. Friend the Minister of State in exploring the way in which the Royal Navy is able to fulfil those tasks, and its capability to do so properly.

I welcomed my hon. Friend's comments about the way in which our ships sail around the world and represent us. In Russia, South Africa, the far east and the West Indies, our ships represent us and show the white ensign in foreign ports. They enormously enhance this country's prestige and its ability to trade internationally.

I was puzzled by my hon. Friend's precise comments on the current and future role of our ships on the West Indian station. He rightly paid tribute to the way in which that ship has contributed to the anti-drug smuggling exercise and the way in which it has supported our troops, who, sadly, have now withdrawn from Belize. He mentioned the invaluable task that it has carried out in representing our interests in that part of the world.

My hon. Friend said that the ship and its posting was under review. In almost the same breath he said that he thought it was extremely important that we should continue to have a ship in that part of the world. If that is true, I very much hope that it will not be necessary to review the position for long. When my hon. Friend the Minister of State replies to the debate, I look forward to an assurance from him that there is no plan to withdraw the West Indies guard ship.

During the last debate on the Navy I spoke of piracy. My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton), then Minister of State for the Armed Forces, was less than sympathetic to the view that we should be able and prepared to play a role in defending the merchant fleet and shipping routes, particularly in the far east, against the dangers of piracy. I hope to receive a more positive response today.

There were 100 incidents of piracy and armed robbery in 1992, 80 per cent. of which were in far eastern waters and some of which involved British ships. I am sure that the House will recall the tragic and appalling murder of Captain Bashforth and his chief officer in December 1992, when their ship was boarded.

Such incidents cannot be allowed to continue, but they are growing in number and there is a substantial risk that they will spread. Indeed, such incidents are spreading—from the South China sea to the Hong Kong-Luzon-Hainan triangle. In 1993 there were several sophisticated attacks on ships in those waters when hand grenades and machine guns were used. It is a problem that Her Majesty's Government should take seriously. The Royal Navy should play a positive role in the Association of South-East Asian Nations to ensure that, in those waters, both our ships and those of other countries are safe.

The merchant fleet is vital to this country. The hon. Member for Swansea, East touched on its importance and capability, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey (Mr. Colvin). Our capability to carry out, if necessary, another Falklands-style campaign was also mentioned. The Government have assured the House that they are confident that we would be able to do so by hiring foreign-flag ships if necessary. I, like the Select Committee and most of those in the Royal Navy to whom I have talked, do not share that confidence.

I know that Treasury Ministers have been asked by the British Chamber of Shipping—supported in high places—to undertake a specific test of our ability to run a Falklands-style campaign. They want a day to be picked at random during the coming year and an official exercise to be carried out to see whether there are ships available to enable us to carry out such an operation. I understand that that request has been turned down flat by Ministers.

I can think of only two reasons for the refusal. First, we can be assured that such ships are available, so the test is unnecessary. But I am afraid that I have seen no such proof and am deeply sceptical about the availability of such ships in some circumstances. The second reason could be that Ministers are frightened that such an exercise would show that we could not carry out a Falklands-style campaign. It would therefore be necessary for the Ministry of Defence to spend more money on, and give greater support to, the merchant fleet than it is currently prepared to do.

Mr. Ottaway: I do not know whether my hon. Friend has read General de la Billiére's book, "Storm Command" on the deployment of ships during the Gulf war. He said that about 146 ships were chartered to ship goods to the Gulf, of which only three flew the United Kingdom flag. That shows that 143 foreign vessels were chartered for that exercise. That shows that such ships are available.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: My hon. Friend says that the ships are available. I could enter a prolonged debate on the circumstances in which they might not be available. Foreign-flag ships would not be available in two circumstances. First, they would not be available if the country where they are flagged out did not support the United Kingdom in the exercise being undertaken and would not permit its ships to be used. I think that India withdrew and refused its ships to be used for that reason.

Secondly, ships might not be available if their crews decided that they were not prepared to serve because of the high-risk nature of the operation. Neither the Falklands exercise nor the Gulf exercise was of very high risk to our ships—although, in the former case, we were extraordinarily lucky. Neither case contained such an element of risk that foreign crews refused to serve on safety grounds, but I can easily envisage different circumstances in which they might. Therefore, although the required number of ships exist, their availability must be called into question.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): Given the hon. Gentleman's experience of defence matters, he will be aware that much of the Falklands campaign was fought with a flotilla of ships, many of which were adapted at the Devonport dockyard in my constituency. Does he accept that such a campaign would no longer be possible because the rundown in the Devonport dockyard since the early 1980s means that we do not have the civilian expertise in the dockyard to carry it out?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I accept that it would now be substantially more difficult to find the expertise in British dockyards generally than it was 12 years ago because we have fewer dockyards and fewer dockyard workers. That is another aspect of our eroding defence capability that could lead to danger.

The most obvious and topical example of the support given to the United Nations is the current role of the Royal Navy in the Adriatic. The Defence Select Committee hopes to visit our forces in the Adriatic and in Croatia in a fortnight's time. I hope that the activities of certain members of the Opposition Front Bench will not prevent us from doing so and that the usual party system will re-establish itself so that my Labour colleagues on the Defence Select Committee can travel in a way that they are currently blocked from doing.

If we manage to make that trip, there is a great deal that we shall wish to see. It is important for the House that, at such critical times, the Defence Select Committee, in particular, manages to see exactly what is happening in the areas where our troops, sailors and airmen may find themselves in danger. I should regret it were we to be balked in our attempts to do so. I hope that we shall be able to reassure ourselves on two matters: first, on the command system; and, secondly, on the availability and suitability of the aircraft currently in that station on Ark Royal.

I welcome the Government's decision to order more FRS-2 standard Harriers, which are good all-purpose aircraft. I am not clear about how many currently on station are equipped with the Tiald equipment necessary for targeting and reconnaissance. I should welcome anything that my hon. Friend can tell me about that, and any

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

reassurance that he can give me. Will the weapons on those aircraft and on Jaguar enable the Sea Harriers and Jaguars that we have available in the Gulf to play a full role in whatever may be necessary should the United Nations decide to carry out the air strikes that are currently threatened against the gun positions?

The House should also take account of the fact that the operations in the Adriatic have caused much difficulty in the Royal Navy in terms of the commitment of our available ships there and elsewhere. It is remarkable that half of the 14 type 22 frigates have already served there, and that half of the 12 T-42 destroyers have served there, at least one of them twice. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary has done magnificent service in the Adriatic and the Olwen has not been relieved since the Ark Royal group sailed there over a year ago.

Those details show the extent to which the Royal Navy is fully stretched, or possibly over-stretched, by our present commitments. When so many of our ships are involved in one task, it must eat into their availability to carry out the other tasks that I mentioned earlier, represent our interests across a broad front and appear round the world to show the presence of Great Britain and its interests.

Another aspect of the Adriatic operation that needs attention from the House, which the hon. Member for Swansea, East touched on, is the question of the Upholder submarine fleet. The Upholder submarine is admirably suited to operations in shallow seas. Diesel submarines are much better than nuclear submarines in shore, in operations used in covert landing, and in shadowing other submarines in shallow waters.

If we need any submarines in our present operations, we need the Upholder, yet that fleet is about to be scrapped, mothballed, or sold. It is new, extremely expensive and, as the hon. Member for Swansea, East said, we have been going ahead with it at great expense, even after the "Options for Change" proposals of 1990.

Mr. Donald Anderson: May I commend to the hon. Gentleman broadsheet 92 of the Royal Navy magazine, in which Lieutenant Commander Peter Hinchliffe, commanding officer of HMS Ursula, gives a great hymn of praise to the Upholders' capabilities? That would have been published in January 1993, shortly before the decision to abolish the class altogether.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Personally, however, I doubt whether the removal of the Upholder submarine from our armoury results from a change in strategic assessment. I fear that it is led by a shortage in the funds available to my hon. Friends, who have made a difficult decision which is hard to justify in defence terms. I hope that my hon. Friends will note the value of those boats and the use to which they can be put, and review their decision to lose Upholder. Even if that means that some other part of our defence capability must, sadly, be reviewed, we need to keep those boats and should certainly not allow them to be sold to foreign flags.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my hon. Friend comment on another aspect of that strange decision? Are not many countries enhancing their conventional submarine capability, not least the Iranians with the purchase of Soviet boats? Has not the United Kingdom traditionally been a strong exporter of submarines and submarine-related systems? Is it not poor economics for us to prejudice our position in that market and leave it increasingly open to our competitors, such as the Germans, French, Dutch and Swedes?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Those are all good and valid points. Indeed, I would go further on the purchase of submarines by other nations. Even more dangerous than Iran is the situation in Korea. Hon. Members will have noticed the growing interest expressed in the British press about what is happening in Korea and the growing public awareness of the grave danger that North Korea might be about to embark on another foolish exercise, such as it did in the early 1950s, and invade South Korea. It is not a paper threat but a real possibility.

North Korea has just bought a further 24 or more SSKs from the Russians and has an enormous submarine fleet. The Korean waters are shallow and ideally suited to diesel-driven submarines. Should North Korea invade South Korea, I have no doubt whatever—I have good grounds for saying so—that our American allies would look to us for support. I am not sure what support we would give them. I do not know whether the Government have assessed what we could or should give them in the event of being called on to produce something useful for our allies.

I suggest that the Upholder submarines and our mine-clearing vessels would be two ways in which we could enhance the United States' ability to resist a Korean invasion. Both those vessels would be admirably suited to a United Kingdom contribution to the war which I fear may come within the next two years.

I welcome the addition of the landing platform helicopter. That was quite a battle. It replaces Hermes, which we lost in 1983, so I regret that we have already gone for a long time without an LPH. I also regret that its capability has been cut from 800 to 500. In a good article, Colonel Southby-Tailour, an experienced marine officer, set out in graphic detail why that cut is deeply damaging. He pointed out that, although the new vessel is designed to carry 500 people in normal circumstances, it is intrinsic to its design that it will also have a 300 overstretch capability.

That means that 300 more men will be crammed on to a ship designed for 500 men. The conditions in which they would be expected to live, tough though marines are, would put them under grave pressure. They would not be able to inhabit the LPH for long sustained periods, in the Adriatic, for example, where we might want to put troops into a vessel and hold them in readiness offshore. Although the LPH will bring unwelcome restrictions in the numbers she can carry, I welcome her addition to the fleet.

I am worried by a rumour—I know not who started it—that, because we have the LPH, we may not have the full complement of three aircraft carriers, and that the first aircraft carrier to come out of service will not be replaced. I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will reassure me that there is absolutely no foundation whatsoever in that rumour and that the LPH will be in addition to and not in substitution for an aircraft carrier, which carries out an entirely different purpose.

As many right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak, I shall summarise my remaining remarks. The ultimate role of the Royal Navy is to keep our seas open in times of war. Neither I nor the Select Committee believes that the fleet that we now operate is capable of carrying out that task or

of playing its full role in a NATO attempt to carry out that task. I look with particular concern at the rundown in the number of SSNs and the fact that we now have only about 35 frigates, not all of which will be on station where they are needed should war break out.

It would be very foolish for the Government to assume that, because Mr. Yeltsin is sympathetic to the west, Russia is now safe and that there is no potential threat from Russia or the Russian Federation and a group of her allies against Britain or NATO in the near future.

Mr. Yeltsin is not safe and events in Bosnia make his position less safe. As violence in Bosnia escalates, Mr. Yeltsin will face increasing pressure from the Duma and from his Conservative opponents for co-operating with us and not supporting Serbia wholeheartedly. If we get what the Russians laughably call a Conservative Government, by which they mean a Communist reactionary Government, or a return to a socialist Government in Russia, it would not take very long for the Russian forces, notwithstanding the recent rundown, to be re-established.

There are now moves in Russia, even under Mr. Yeltsin, to reunite with the Crimea and Byelorussia. There are strong elements in Russia that want the Ukraine back as a single unit within the Russian Federation. If they achieve that and move into the Baltic states, we will face the core of the old Soviet Union, in so far as it represented power, very little diminished in size or strength as a result of that reamalgamation.

We must look to the long-term future with the possibility that we shall still need a strong, united NATO and a British contributory force in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force capable of carrying out a role in an all-out war against us. It is the finding of the Defence Select Committee that our Navy is not strong enough properly to fulfil such a role.

6.4 pm

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). May I take the opportunity to congratulate the Defence Select Committee on its work and on many of the good reports that it has produced?

No doubt the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will be pleased to know that I shall concentrate on "Front Line First", the fancy title of the defence costs study. Once again, the Royal Navy is experiencing the impact of a Treasury-led defence policy. As the Defence Select Committee said in its report on the Royal Navy published last September, we are still awaiting the publication of the future size and shape of the Royal Navy. While we wait, we see the fleet shrinking, along with support services and the civilian and naval personnel employed.

As the Defence Select Committee said, the Government's policy seems to be leading not to extended readiness but to diminished readiness. Rosyth naval base is certainly being diminished; it considers itself to be in the front line for the Treasury guns which are poised to blast it into complete non-existence. Hon. Members will not be surprised to know that I intend to concentrate my remarks on Rosyth naval base, although they also have a wider relevance.

I begin by emphasising why I believe Rosyth naval base is in the front line for closure; then I shall argue why Rosyth should continue as part of Britain's front-line capability.

The first reason why Rosyth is lined up for closure is the reduction in the surface fleet. That affects the entire Royal Navy and concern has been expressed on both sides of the House about it. There are, of course, constant promises from Ministers about the replacement of that fleet, but a fog always descends when we try to pin Ministers down about the timetable, size and detail of that replacement.

According to the 1993 defence estimates, there were 29 vessels at Rosyth. Of those 29, three were engaged in trials or training, so 26 were active or within imminent capability. Today, there are only 11 active or ready vessels at Rosyth—hardly a secure number for a naval base.

The second reason why Rosyth's future seems insecure is the continuing effect of "Options for Change" which, back in 1991, nearly led to Rosyth's closure.

Rosyth has experienced a drastic loss of jobs as well as a reduction in the surface fleet. By 1995, it will have lost 1,100 civilian jobs and 2,900 service personnel. Most recently, there have been rumours about senior officers retiring and not being replaced.

Only this week I received another noticeboard letter from the Ministry of Defence. I do not know how other hon. Members feel, but when I pick up a letter from the noticeboard with the Ministry of Defence symbol on it, my heart sinks. It sank again when I opened the letter this week to find that yet another 155 staff from Rosyth naval base are to go between September 1994 and March 1995.

Of course, I am assured by the Minister that the further reduction has nothing to do with the "Front Line First" initiative. I believe that just as much as I believe that it is too early to speculate on the future of Rosyth naval base. We were given similar information back in 1990-91, when there was a clear Ministry of Defence memorandum stating the Government's intention to close down the naval base at Rosyth.

As well as the reduction in the surface fleet and the number of personnel, Rosyth has seen a reduction in its role and functions. It is now a base for minor war vessels. Much of the work carried out by those vessels now seems insecure—for example, fisheries protection. As hon. Members know, fisheries protection is provided through contract between the MOD and the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency. That contract ends next month. I have yet to hear anything about its renewal. Indeed, in a letter of November 1993, the Minister said that the current arrangements would be viewed in relation to the demands that they made on the defence budget.

I am sure that other hon. Members share my concerns about the wording. There is no guarantee that fishery protection work will continue to be carried out by the Royal Navy; we may see an end to it, as we have seen an end to what were once the regular patrols of offshore oil and gas installations.

A fourth reason why Rosyth thinks that it is in the front line and targeted for closure is the insecurity of other facilities nearby. Rosyth dockyard may have been promised allocated surface work, but the fleet reduction hardly makes that secure. Nor does the full-scale privatisation of the dockyard, which is, I believe, the Government distancing themselves from the future of Rosyth and Devonport dockyards. Also under threat is the national rescue co-ordination centre at Pitreavie, even though the decision to make it a national centre was announced only in July 1993—it is due to become fully operational at the end of this year.

[Ms Rachel Squire]

Rosyth and the people of Fife, and indeed, Scotland, have learnt from bitter experience not to trust any promises or protestations from the Government. I have already mentioned the attempted closure of Rosyth naval base in 1991. At first, it was stated that no closure was planned. Then it was stated that all naval bases were being treated equally. Then we were told that the Scottish Office would be part of that decision-making. It was a diary of deceit and deception. We are now hearing similar statements. Is it any wonder that the people of Fife do not believe them?

Allow me to bring hon. Members up to date with the events of the past month. On 19 January, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) met the Minister for Defence Procurement to discuss Rosyth dockyard and naval base. No mention was made of the review that was announced the next day by the naval base commander. Why did the Minister say nothing to us at that time? Will he also comment on the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), who, like his predecessor, is calling for the closure of the naval base?

The Minister is saying that all bases are being treated equally. We have evidence that that is no more the case now than it was three years ago. At Rosyth, there is a failure to get information to straight questions and answers; three studies are taking place, not just one; and a questionnaire is being circulated at the moment asking personnel where they would like to go if the base closes. We know full well that a number of people in powerful positions, including those on the naval board, see Rosyth as expendable; as first in the front line of fire. Let me fire back on behalf of Rosyth, and argue why it should remain part of our front-line capability.

The first reason is strategy. One of the three main objectives set out in the defence estimates 1993 is to

> "Ensure the protection and security of the United Kingdom and our dependent territories, even where there is no major external threat."

Whatever else changes, Britain will remain an island nation with a coastline measuring 3,010 miles. It is argued that the loss of the only base on the north-east coast could seriously inhibit forward defence and rapid redeployment. It could go against the speed and protection of North sea interests and expose the seas around Norway. Rosyth's closure could also inhibit the protection of waters in the north Atlantic and the defence of convoys.

As hon. Members have already said, since the break-up of the Warsaw pact, arguably, we live in a more insecure and less predictable and less stable world. I listened this morning to the captain of HMS Ark Royal in the Adriatic, talking on the radio about its extended and constant readiness, waiting as the hours tick by for the news of whether it will be actively intervening in air strikes on Bosnia. There is no longer a nice neat line between us and them, between the enemies and the allies. The abandonment of Rosyth would leave the entire North sea coast, one side of the United Kingdom land triangle, exposed without a naval presence.

I shall now deal with the navy's peacetime role and mention again fishery protection, and along with it the anti-smuggling drug interdiction and environmental roles, which are played by the fleet. Rosyth provides an ideal and cost-effective training base for new commanders. It also provides invaluable assistance for an important Scottish industry—the fishing industry. I make particular mention of the Braer disaster off Shetland. While we all hope that that will never occur again, the fast forward reaction of the crews from Rosyth undoubtedly helped to control and contain the pollution, and saved lives in the horrendous conditions of a storm force 11. That speed and skill should not be lightly cast aside.

Like many other hon. Members, I believe that fishery protection and all that is associated with it provides an irreplaceable and invaluable training ground and should be maintained as a Navy function at Rosyth and elsewhere. Rosyth is within two hours of the training area for mine-sweepers—another point in its favour. The vessels maintain a United Kingdom presence in northern waters.

The closure of Rosyth would lead to the concentration of the United Kingdom's naval bases on less than 3 per cent. of the United Kingdom's total mainland coastline. There are strategic arguments against such a concentration. The closure of Rosyth would also lead to the costly loss of a centre of excellence for engineering, support and expertise, and mine-hunting navigational systems. For all those strategic reasons, Rosyth should be seen as part of our front line.

Recruitment and retention is another area in Rosyth's favour. Rosyth, Fife and Scotland have provided 30 per cent. of the United Kingdom's naval personnel. Its closure would lose a good number of people. It would lead to the loss of experienced men and to significant extra costs and duplication of facilities. There have been comments about morale being good. I can say to hon. Members that morale in the Rosyth area is at the depths; it is at rock bottom. It seems to me that no consideration is given by Ministers in the Ministry of Defence to the Navy's most precious asset —its people, who serve, who are loyal and are committed. I am thinking particularly of the people of Rosyth and the people of Scotland as a whole, who have served the defence of the realm over the centuries.

Let me quote not an admiral but a general—General Cromwell. He put it very plainly when he said:

> "I had rather have a plain russet-coated captain that knows what he fights for and loves what he knows, than that which you call a 'gentleman' and is nothing else."

The men and women of Rosyth know what they fight for, and they have already made their commitment clear. Rosyth has saved the Ministry of Defence millions of pounds already; it is the most-studied naval base in the country, and it has proved its cost-effectiveness. Savings of 40 per cent. in overall running costs have been achieved since "Options for Change". Land sale receipts are bringing in more than the original estimates, and the commitment continues to increase savings each year.

I believe that the minor war vessels base at Rosyth is cost-efficient and cost-effective. Its closure would cost the Treasury more than it would save.

I need tell no hon. Member of the vital importance of such bases to the local economy. Indeed, during the last battle over Rosyth's future, the Prime Minister acknowledged Rosyth's importance to Fife's economy. In answer to a question, the Prime Minister said:

> "No decision has been made to close Rosyth or any other naval base. We fully recognise the implications that closure would have for employment in the area. Those implications would be fully considered and examined before any such decision was taken."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1991; Vol. 185, c. 159.]

I hope that that is still the case. The role of the base in providing employment is even more vital following the job

losses that have resulted, over the past three years, from the rundown of the base and the reduction of the dockyard. As hon. Members will know, those job losses will continue.

Even with the reductions that I have mentioned, 5,000 jobs are still related to the base; however, its closure would lead to a rise in unemployment to a rate of between 20 and 30 per cent. in an area that now has the highest unemployment level in Scotland. It would also dig a £96 million hole in the local economy. Service and civilian personnel spend a large portion of their money on local goods, services and businesses; 250 companies in Fife would lose business if the base closed—82 per cent. of them small businesses. Some would collapse, leading to a loss of revenue for the Government. Skills would also be lost—skills whose availability is a major attraction for possible alternative industries. Twenty-five per cent. of the work force at the base have been there for more than 20 years; they are not at all confident about finding new employment.

The Treasury is kidding itself if it thinks that closures of this kind will save money. If Rosyth is closed, the Treasury will incur costs in the form of unemployment and other benefits, and the loss of tax and national insurance revenue. If the amount per person is £9,000 a year, the Treasury will lose £45 million annually.

Let me ask the Minister some questions. Will the MOD release terms of reference for the studies of minor war vessel base porting that are being carried out at Rosyth, Plymouth and Portsmouth? What, to date, has been the cost to the Government of the task change at Rosyth, in terms of redundancies, associated costs for civilians and costs associated with the transfer of naval personnel? Can the MOD provide an update on the annual savings anticipated from the change in task, over five years? Will the Government confirm that the social and economic implications of changes at Rosyth will be taken fully into account now as they were in 1991? Does the Minister agree that Rosyth retains strategic importance as a minor war vessel base?

At the beginning of my speech, I referred to "Front Line First". I hope that I have explained why the people of Rosyth, Fife and Scotland as a whole feel that they are in the front line—being fired on. Since 1990, we have lived with uncertainty hanging over the naval base, the dockyard and now, again, the naval base. Rosyth has been plagued by rumour, counter-rumour, reversed decisions and broken promises.

We will not stand by and watch the closure of Scotland's only surface vessel base, and Britain's only north-east coast base. The people who are based at Rosyth have served the country for nearly a century: they, and the surrounding communities, are only too well aware of the power of the sea and the price that it demands, and they know what it means to be in the front line in times of both peace and war.

Let me end by reminding the Minister of Sir Winston Churchill's words on 11 October 1940. The circumstances were very different from those that we face today, but I think that his observations are very relevant to the development of a defence policy that deals with the reality —the fact that a maritime nation must be able to be in the front line in both peace and war. Sir Winston said:

> "You may look at the map and see flags stuck in at different points and consider that the results will be certain, but when you get out on the sea with its vast distances, its storms and mists, and with night coming on, and all the uncertainties which exist, you cannot possibly expect that the kind of conditions which would be appropriate to the movements of armies have any applications to the haphazard conditions of war at sea."

6.27 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), who chairs the Defence Select Committee so admirably, sensibly drew our attention to the grave concern that is felt about future developments in Russia and the need to preserve our overall NATO capability. His chairmanship of the Committee has done us a great service.

The end of the cold war has made the defence equation not less difficult, but much more difficult. There are obvious pressures to reduce spending. We can take some comfort from the fact that our reductions are less, in percentage terms, than the reductions in the budgets of our NATO allies, but it is clear to me that we live in a very unstable world.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on his excellent speech to King's college this week, when he set out admirably the realities of an unstable world of which conflict is sadly a continuing feature, and the certainty that there will be trouble somewhere in the future—trouble that will require our involvement. He set out cogently the need for the United Kingdom to maintain strong, well-balanced forces. I assure him that he will have very strong support from Conservative Members in his battles with the Treasury.

We may wish to have a larger Navy, but what we have is, I know, a strong, capable, well-manned and well-led force, retaining an all-round capability above, below and on the surface of the sea. With the end of the cold war, the number of ships has decreased, as has the size of the navies of all our allies. The target strength of the United States navy, obviously the largest navy in the western world, was 600 ships. That navy achieved 546 ships before the end of the cold war. It is now down to 373, and will soon be down to 346. It has halved the number of submarines and it is more than halving the number of surface escorts. Those figures for the United States include the equivalent of our Royal Fleet Auxiliaries.

We maintain a Royal Navy fleet, including RFAs, of more than 100 ships. That is a commendable contribution to the world naval scene.

When the trouble blew up in the Adriatic, the Navy —as always—responded instantly and effectively, in spite of having to maintain its other commitments around the world. It was interesting to see a list of places where the crews of our ships spent Christmas day a few months ago. Apart from the numerous ships in the Mediterranean, there were vessels in Brazil, in the Falkland Islands, in the Gulf and in the far east. "Join the Navy and see the world" remains true today.

No praise can be too high for the men and women who serve on those ships and support them ashore, and for their leaders. They are professional, competent and loyal. Visiting one of our ships, one is immediately struck by the age of the crew—at least, someone of my age is struck by the age of the crew—which, I am told by captains, is now, on average, less than 21: officers are included in the calculation. It is amazing that a destroyer or a frigate in harm's way in the Gulf or the Mediterranean would have a crew with an average age of less than 21.

We are going through what seems to those crews to be a period of constant change in the Navy. We understood

[Mr. Neville Trotter]

the reasons, but I would say to Ministers: let us have an end to reviews with the present "Front Line First". They inevitably bring worries about the effect on careers and we need a period of stability in the years ahead. Therefore, let "Front Line First" be the end and let us finally decide where we are going as a result of that review.

The Adriatic is very much in our thoughts. I was fortunate enough to go there recently and have a briefing at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation headquarters in Naples. It is a very successful operation under Admiral Mike Boorda, the American admiral commanding the southern flank of NATO. It is an exellent example of NATO and the Western European Union working together. There is joint tactical command of the ships at sea, which is working effectively. There is burden-sharing between the many nations that are supplying the ships for the blockade. About 30,000 merchant ships have been interrogated and about 500 have been directed to ports in Italy for examination. The blockade has been completely successful.

We also have in the region the carrier group led by HMS Ark Royal. Our thoughts on Tyneside are especially with Ark Royal and her sister carrier, as they were built at Swan Hunter on the Tyne. If there should be air action over Bosnia in the next few days, we know that the Fleet Air Arm from the Ark Royal will be ready to play a full and effective part.

The need for deployment in the Adriatic has again shown the value of the carrier. It is free from any problems of basing ashore. However, I must pay tribute to what I heard of the support given by the Italians to the operation in the Adriatic. They have given full support on the sea and in the air and have made available every possible facility to the United Nations forces. The carrier is nevertheless free from the problems of having to find a base—it carries its base with it in the RFAs. It makes possible a quick reaction and, interestingly, it can steam to avoid the bad weather that, at times, can close the shore bases from which the air forces operate.

I shall say a few words about the fleet train, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, of about 21 ships. Recently on one day, two were in the Falkland Islands, four were in the Adriatic —where they are playing a vital role—one was in the Gulf, one was in the West Indies and three were exercising with the Royal Marines. Without the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the warships could not operate as they do. They provide the Navy with endurance and flexibility. They are indispensible, but some are getting rather old. Indeed, some are becoming very old ladies.

There is a case for going ahead, in the near future, with some new auxiliary oiler replenishment vessels or something on those lines; perhaps somewhat simpler than the two that were added to the Navy in recent years, and perhaps something less suited for all-out war in the Atlantic, but suited for support of task forces in areas such as the Gulf or the Adriatic.

I shall now discuss the main surface warship fleet—the destroyers and frigates. It is a commendable feature of the fleet that the average age of our destroyers and frigates is now only 10 years. There never has been, in my time, such a low age for the escorts in the Navy. Indeed, it is the lowest figure since the first world war. It means that, as we take new ships into service, we will be paying off old ships at the age of perhaps only 15 years.

One can argue that, with such a modern fleet, we should stop ordering new ships, but I am sure that that would be a bad decision. I do not believe for a moment that it is the one that will be taken by the Government. New ships have the obvious advantage of the latest technology, but they also need smaller crews, they do, or should, need less maintenance and they should take less time to refit. As a result, they should be more available and provide better value for money for the taxpayers. There is a strong case, therefore, for continuing with a warship-building programme and I believe that that is the desire of the Government, even if it means that we shall pay off some escorts at a relatively early age.

As part of the programme that has been announced by the Government, there will be new mine counter-measures vessels, new submarines, more type 23 frigates and, at last, replacements for the landing ships HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid, which is important for the Navy, the Royal Marines and, I hope, Tyneside.

On the horizon—not so far away, I hope—is Project Horizon, the joint NATO frigate, of which we are supposed to buy 12, the French four and the Italians four. The people in British industry expect that the sharing of the work will be equated to the number of ships being ordered by each of the three countries. There is nothing, at present, to lead one to suppose that that will not be the case, but it is a factor which needs to be watched.

It is essential that we maintain our shipbuilding capacity. We must bear in mind—returning again to the wise remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster —the fact that we need to maintain the capacity to regenerate if things go wrong on a massive scale. One cannot build a shipyard overnight. There is a case for maintaining a capacity for future expansion if necessary. At the same time, the more yards there are, the better will be the competition and, presumably, the value for money for the orders that are placed by the Government.

I know that the House would expect me to mention the sad case of Swan Hunter, which collapsed shortly after the previous Navy debate. The Government were justified in their decision to have the three frigates being built there completed. It was interesting that, at the time, the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister of State assured me that they had not approached any other yard to have that work done, and they had rejected the approaches made to them by other yards keen to take over the work of completing those frigates.

That decision to support Swan Hunter has been fully justified. HMS Westminster sailed on time, built to the highest possible standards, and I believe on or below the target cost. Work on the other two frigates is progressing well and the Navy remains, as always, a satisfied customer of Swan Hunter. Ministers also sent to the yard the work of completing the Fort George, after her trials.

The highest tribute is due to the work force at Swan Hunter for the way in which they have continued to perform magnificently under the most distressing of circumstances, with half their colleagues losing their jobs around them. The labour force there is a great asset, and potential buyers must value it highly.

The Government fought hard and successfully—an uphill battle, as I know from my experiences of visiting the Commission in Brussels—to obtain intervention funding

for merchant shipbuilding at Swan Hunter. The door was very nearly shut at the start of the battle. The battle raged for months and was eventually won by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry. That will enable Swan Hunter to compete in the merchant navy market, and intervention funding of up to £7 million is available for that.

An interesting feature in the argument that eventually prevailed in the face of great opposition from Brussels was the fact that the Government pointed out the special facilities at Swan Hunter. If they were not to be available, they would have to be replicated elsewhere to provide the Navy with all the ships that it will need in the future. I am thinking especially of the eventual replacements for Ark Royal and her sister aircraft carriers.

There is still hope for Swan Hunter. This morning, I had discussions with a potential buyer and, in a few days' time, I shall meet another. The media are obviously extremely interested, but, as I have said to them, negotiations are best conducted in private, not in the glare of media coverage.

Significant naval orders are to be placed in the next few years, but the potential buyers recognise the facts of life. They know that to keep the yard going by relying on Royal Navy orders paid for by the taxpayer is not realistic. There must be additional work, which will have to be in the form of exports.

If the yard is to have a future, it must have a new owner. It is in the interests of the Government that the yard should have a future so that competition can be maximised in orders for the Navy. I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has agreed to allow Swan's to tender for new work, subject to the backing of a new owner. Tenders are being submitted for some work which could be vital to the future of Swan's.

Swan's has retained its design team. I pay tribute to Lloyd's bank, which has done all that it can to help, and to the receiver and his team who have done an excellent job in difficult circumstances. They have slimmed down the yard's overheads and made a yard that was very efficient in terms of the quality of its products much more efficient in terms of a reduction in its costs. It is now a very different Swan's from that of a year ago and it must surely be in the interests of the Ministry of Defence to ensure that the lean, efficient Swan's survives as a traditional centre of marine excellence, providing effective competition for future orders for the Royal Navy and better value for the taxpayer.

6.41 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I am pleased to participate in the debate and, in particular, to be able to add my voice to those who have praised the excellent service men and women who serve in our Navy and in the armed forces and on whom the defence of our nation depends. I note, however, that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) said, the voices of Conservative Members are sometimes belied by their actions.

This week, I received some information from the Library about the monetary rewards given to our service men and women. A service man who had been a commodore between 1978 and 1994 would have received a pay increase of 18 per cent. in real terms. An able seaman in the same period would have received a 13·7 per cent. decrease in pay in real terms. I hope that the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will have something to say about that. I also trust that he has a sharp pencil, because I have a number of questions that I should like him to answer; I am sure that he will.

I shall focus on some issues relating to defence and the Navy which have sometimes been neglected, not intentionally but because they have been swamped by others. Last year, I spoke a great deal about the royal naval dockyard in Plymouth and my concerns about the Trident contract and, since then, I have spoken about the surface fleet repair orders.

Tonight, I should like to focus on two different matters, one of which is the gradual withdrawal of the Navy from Plymouth and the south-west and the "downsizing", as I believe it was called earlier, of the Navy in our area and the effect on the local economy. I shall also say a few words about some important issues affecting royal naval personnel and their families.

Having examined the records of debates over the years, it is clear that such issues have not had an airing in the House, so I shall take this opportunity to correct that. Before I do so, however, I cannot avoid mentioning the royal dockyard at Devonport and I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be surprised if I did not.

Last year, I welcomed the fact that the Trident refit contract went to Devonport. I know that it has been very difficult for my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) who last year fought extremely hard on behalf of her constituents and her dockyard and who put up an excellent fight last year. She has made an excellent case again tonight. I know how difficult it has been for her and I am aware of the many problems in her part of the country.

The Minister will know, however, that things are not altogether rosy in Devonport, because since it was announced that Devonport had won the contract, we, too, have suffered substantial job losses. Most of the Trident work will not flow to Devonport until the end of the century, about 1998. Can the Minister guarantee that there will be sufficient surface work to sustain the dockyard in the meantime, so that, when 1998 comes, the yard is able to carry out the work on the Trident submarines?

I deal now with the privatisation of the dockyards. People who work in the dockyard and people who live in Plymouth have a number of questions. What is the timetable for privatisation? Will the Minister say something about his inner thoughts on this important matter? I shall not rehearse all the arguments about privatisation—that can properly be done in another forum—but a number of questions need to be answered, especially in view of the developments in the last week or so involving Rover.

Rover was privatised five years ago and taken over by British Aerospace. It has now been taken over by BMW. Is it possible that Devonport could be taken over by BMW or some other foreign company? Could such a company have Arab involvement? Could it contain potential enemies who happened to be large investors? The Government had no scruples about selling arms to Iraq, which is why I am seeking reassurance about that matter.

The Devonport dockyard is of vital strategic importance to the Royal Navy and to the defence of our country. If it is privatised, will it be another vital facility about which the Government will say, "It is nothing to do with us," as they have about the Rover deal? After privatisation, what device will the Government use to ensure that the dockyard continues in British ownership and that British interests are served?

[Mr. David Jamieson]

I now raise a matter that is very important in Plymouth and that will be very important in other dockyards and facilities around the country. At the moment, the dockyard is called "Her Majesty's royal dockyard". Will it continue to be called that after privatisation? It is an important issue in terms of the defence of the nation, my constituents' jobs and the prestige of the city of Plymouth.

I have said many times that Plymouth is highly dependent on the Navy and that the Navy is highly dependent on Plymouth. Our record goes back 300 years with the Navy and with the men and women who have serviced its ships during that time. We have a proud history. There have been many changes over the years—we accept that and know the reasons behind them—but the fundamental changes that are taking place now are having a major effect on the economy of our city.

I question the quality of planning by the Navy and the Ministry of Defence and I wonder what sort of co-ordination there is between those dealing with strategic planning and those responsible for financial management. Some important issues need to be addressed about the good use of taxpayers' money; that was mentioned by the Minister when he opened the debate. All too often, we find that millions of pounds are spent on establishments in Plymouth and the south-west that are due to close.

For example, the Royal Navy engineering college at Manadon in my constituency, which is due to close in July 1995, has had maintenance and refurbishment of its buildings totalling £2·8 million in the past two years. How can one justify such expenditure on an establishment that is about to close? It is interesting that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave me an answer in *Hansard* and had to write to me two days later to correct it because he was a few million pounds out. It demonstrates the level of chaos in Ministry of Defence planning.

Even today, I have heard that a contract has been awarded to a builder for the royal naval depot at Coypool in Plymouth. I welcome it because it will bring employment for building workers in my area, but we know that the Royal Marines have been considering moving from Coypool and Seaton barracks because they have been to Chivenor to see whether it is a more appropriate place for them.

Is there a proper relationship between the strategic and the financial planning for those establishments? Millions of pounds are being spent on them and it may be money that is being wasted. I remind the Minister that, in the past two years at Chivenor, £9 million has been spent on office space, yet it has already been announced that the place is to close. I have seen the Minister and expressed my concern about Plymouth and about the need for intervention.

Most of all, the Ministry of Defence needs to co-operate with the local community. It is not enough for the Ministry of Defence to consider only what is in its own best interests. We must look at the broader interests of taxpayers and local communities. If the Ministry were to co-operate with local councils, with the private sector, including chambers of trade and commerce, and with others in the locality, the value added to the land and buildings that it was proposing to leave would be substantially greater than if the matter were left to the Ministry alone.

That is why I am pleased to note that a working party is getting under way in Plymouth, not to take decisions but so that vital recommendations can be made to the Minister by those who know and understand the area. I repeat that it would be a way of adding value to these establishments for the taxpayer. I hope also that the Minister will look at RAF Chivenor to see whether a similar working party could be set up there.

A number of matters affect individual service men and their families, particularly the very large number who are my constituents, one of which is service accommodation. I have referred in the House many times to the number of empty service quarters. In my constituency, we have 227 empty service quarters. In Plymouth, there are 362 altogether. It means that a total of 14 per cent. of the properties owned and maintained by the Ministry of Defence are lying empty in Plymouth. Some are being vandalised; others are having to have money spent on them for security reasons.

The Minister must address that issue. In the whole country, 10,112 out of 72,000 service quarters are empty. As someone has said, that is the equivalent of a small town lying empty, but it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence.

I also want to mention homelessness and what happens when defence personnel, particularly those in the Royal Navy, come to the end of their time in the service. There are three reasons why homelessness affects naval personnel. The first is marriage break-up. There are many tensions in the job, just as there are in civilian life, and service marriages do break down. There are the service families who come to the end of the tour of duty. Others, I am sad to say, have been made redundant under "Options for Change".

Last year in Plymouth, 75 families of former Navy and other military personnel were made homeless. As soon as they leave the service, their right to subsidised rent goes; although some were paying £30 or £40 a week for their homes while they were in the service, their rent goes up immediately to £80 or £90 a week once they leave. That puts pressure on housing benefit and the social security budget, or, in some cases that I have come across, a service man eats into his gratuity to pay the rent on property that he formerly rented at a reduced rate.

Service families may then become what is known as irregular occupants of the property, which is the next stage to being classified homeless. At that point, Plymouth city council has to pick up the tab, the responsibility for these families, and find them homes. In a debate on housing in the Chamber not two weeks ago, we heard that other deserving families were pushed even further down the list.

How will service families fare in the future? I am sure that the Minister has read the consultation document from his hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment entitled, "Access to local authority and housing association tenancies". Section 8.4 of the report says:

"The Government proposes that a local authority should not be under a duty to provide emergency assistance to a person who has any form of accommodation available, however temporary the tenure. In order to align with the new and more limited duty towards persons eligible for assistance, it will be necessary to provide that a person occupying any accommodation, even of a temporary character, will not qualify."

What will happen to those Royal Navy personnel who leave the service or whose marriage breaks down? They will no longer be classified as homeless by the local authority. Who will help them? Will we think it acceptable

that people who have given their working lives to the armed forces and often risked their lives could be on the streets with no home whatever, and not even the local authority has responsibility for them?

The Minister will know that there are in my constituency a number of service personnel living in houses that they consider to be substandard. Recently, I was shown a house that needed major maintenance and in which the carpets were damp. The families concerned have been told that no funds are available for improvements. Those are the families of people serving in the Royal Navy. By contrast, at the Manadon royal naval college, which is just two miles away, £10,000 has just been spent on carpets in the wardroom, despite the fact that the college is due to be closed in July 1995.

It is natural that my constituents should ask why it is not possible to have valuable work done when the health of families is at stake. The Minister, in his letter to me, said that the wardroom work to which I have referred was done for health and safety reasons. Many of my constituents would say that it is for health and safety reasons that work needs to be done on their homes. I hope that the Minister will address that question.

I should like now to refer to a very important issue that affects naval personnel. Two or three weeks ago, I attended a meeting in Plymouth that had been arranged by an action group concerned about the working of the Child Support Agency. It was a packed meeting, and I was surprised and concerned at the very large number of Navy personnel present. Their job gives rise to strains in marriage. Long periods away from home lead to separation. Service personnel are just as prone to marriage breakdown as are civilians.

At the meeting, people expressed concerns relating specifically to service in the Royal Navy. I was told that their welfare departments usually give them very good advice, and in respect of most matters people were full of praise for those departments. However, in the case of the Child Support Agency the people who should be giving advice are not up to speed on the legislation and are not in a good position to advise.

I hope that the Minister will act urgently to ensure that those welfare departments, which usually provide very high-quality service, will be able to do so in respect of matters relating to the Child Support Agency. I assure the hon. Gentleman that these problems are causing very great stress among serving Royal Navy officers and ratings.

The Child Support Agency sends out letters demanding a response within 14 days. Anyone who does not respond promptly enough has a settlement imposed on him. Several people at the meeting that I attended asked how a person on a submarine or serving elsewhere could respond within 14 days. Very often, people encounter great difficulty.

The Minister is shaking his head. Let me make it clear that what I am putting to him has been brought to me, separately and independently, by serving Royal Navy personnel. They tell me that they do not receive notification in time to respond within the period specified by the agency. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will look into that very important matter and will make representations to the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. Hanley: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I have taken that matter up with the Department of Social Security. If there are operational reasons for any response delay, they will be taken flexibly into account.

Mr. Jamieson: I am very grateful to the Minister for that assurance. He may now cross out one of the questions on his list.

Many service men have told me that they can encounter problems throughout their employment if they are found to be in financial difficulty. Some people have found the amounts they have to pay each week being increased massively. I shall not go into all the arguments about the matter, as they were discussed last week, but I should like to know whether people will be prejudiced in their work if they are found to be experiencing financial difficulty.

I want to discuss the education of the children of men and women serving in the Royal Navy. Within the last few weeks, I have come across some very disturbing information. The Ministry has a boarding school allowance scheme, which enables children whose parents live or work away from home to have continuity of education. Such provision is quite proper, and I support it.

Most of the boarding schools are, by definition, private and independent. We all know that such schools have no obligation to follow the national curriculum or to undertake key stage testing, about whose necessity, in the context of raising standards, we have heard so much in the Chamber. Nor are such schools inspected regularly by Her Majesty's inspectorate, and they do not come within the remit of the Office for Standards in Education unless there is some direct cause for concern or a school is trying to have itself registered.

I make those points because many Royal Navy personnel send their children to such schools. and the expenditure represents a very considerable part of the Ministry of Defence budget. The Minister will know that last year the boarding school allowance scheme cost more than £116 million and that the average cost per place was about £7,700. The scheme covers thousands of children. Despite that, the number of inspectorate reports is very small. The schools are funded at four times the level for equivalent state secondary schools, the average cost of the latter being £2,000.

All schools have a very special duty to care for their children—the in loco parentis concept. Boarding schools have a special duty, as their in loco parentis role continues 24 hours a day. Unlike the children in day schools, those at boarding schools do not have direct contact with parents or guardians at the beginning and end of each day. Thus, it is very important that they be able to make private telephone contact with people outside. Sometimes children need reassurance, and sometimes they need to be able to tell people outside things that they cannot put to those running the school.

I put those points to the Secretary of State in a letter of 21 January. I appreciate that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been very busy in the past few weeks and has not been able to find time to reply. My letter contained three very important questions—questions that I am putting now on behalf of Royal Navy personnel. I asked the Secretary of State:

"Are the HMI and OFSTED reports on private schools made available to all the parents who have children at those schools on the MOD boarding scheme?"

I can assist with the answer. Although the Secretary of State for Defence has not yet found time to reply to my

[Mr. Jamieson]

letter of 21 January, the Secretary of State for Education has, within the past hour, replied to a similar letter that I sent to him. The right hon. Gentleman's reply says:

"Any school which is the subject of a published report is supplied with copies, which it can distribute as it sees fit."

It goes on:

"The onus is on the school to distribute the report to interested parties or to advise them where the report can be obtained."

In other words, those reports are not generally available to the service families who are using the schools. They are available only if the school chooses to let the parents know about the report and to send them a copy.

The second question that I asked in my letter was what programme the Department had to check that independent and private schools involved in the scheme were offering good standards of education and value for money. The third question was whether the Minister would urge the Office for Standards in Education to carry out extensive inspections of all private schools that receive subsidies from the Ministry of Defence under the service boarding scheme.

I am concerned about the matter because I have taken the trouble to consider some of the reports on the schools that are on that scheme. Those schools are also on the list of admissible schools, which is sent out by the service children's education authority to Navy personnel who inquire about boarding education. Two schools that I shall mention are on that list. It seems to suggest that those who send it out have some confidence in the schools that appear on it. I mentioned that in the letter to the Minister and I have given him at least a month's notice of what I shall say.

I have the report of the Finborough school in Stowmarket, Suffolk, which has a total of 216 pupils. Two thirds of the children boarding at the school have parents in the armed services. That school receives money from the Ministry of Defence budget and from Navy personnel who send their children there, yet, in the report by Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, serious concerns are raised about the school's standard of education. For example, the report said:

"few lessons were good throughout."

It said of the quality of teaching:

"it was satisfactory in less than half of the lessons seen in the junior school."

It said that there had been a

"relatively large number of expulsions and suspensions . . . Pupils' standards are frequently limited by insufficiently high expectations and a constant lack of rigour and challenge in the tasks set."

That report was conducted in May 1993. What action has the Minister taken on behalf of those children who are being sent there under the boarding scheme? The school receives between £500,000 and £750,000 a year of taxpayers' money, yet, as far as I can see, no action has been taken by his Department or, if it has, that action has not been brought to my attention. Perhaps the Minister has not found time. I shall willingly give way to him if he will tell us something about the school and the action that he has taken.

Mr. Hanley: I merely remind the hon. Gentleman that he spoke to the private secretary of the Under-Secretary of State, my noble Friend Lord Cecil of Essenden, who dealt with that matter. The draft letter and the gist of its contents were explained to the hon. Gentleman. It was explained that the draft letter was in its final stages and that the Ministry of Defence needed concurrence from the Department of Education. The hon. Gentleman knows that such things take a few days to complete. It is not quite fair of him to say that nothing has been brought to his attention about those matters when he knows from the gist of the letter that the matter has been dealt with fully and that in a short time he will receive the official response. By the way, I am grateful to him for raising the issue.

Mr. Jamieson: I am glad that my telephone call to the Minister today seems to have initiated some activity in his Department and that we are now receiving answers on behalf of the children in those schools. I did not seek the answers for myself, but for the children in those schools and their parents.

Perhaps, while the Minister has the matter in his mind, I shall turn his attention to another school. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, no."] Conservative Members are saying "Oh no." May I remind them that in their constituencies, there are probably children who attend some of those schools? They may not be concerned about the standard of education that those children receive, but I am. The parents have a right to know what the reports contain. The reports are treated almost as if they are secret documents and it is only proper that the contents are brought into the public domain, since public money is being spent on those schools through the Royal Navy and the boarding school allowance scheme.

The Rodney school in Kirklington, Nottinghamshire, was inspected in June 1991. As far as I know, it is in operation and 27 per cent. of its pupils are on the boarding schools allowance scheme. An article in *The Times* a year later said:

"A second independent school in little more than a week was yesterday given six months to improve standards or face closure."

What has happened about that school since 1992? Children of service men and women have been attending that school week on week and the taxpayer is paying for it to be maintained.

I found another school that is not on the list——

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is talking about education, which may have some tangential, but only a tangential, relationship to the debate on the Royal Navy. Is it in order to speak for 35 minutes and for the past 10 minutes to talk about education in a debate which is devoted to the Royal Navy?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): There is no time limit on speeches, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware. It is up to individual Members. So far, the hon. Member has been quite in order.

Mr. Jamieson: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that reassurance. I must say to the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) that I am talking about the education of children of parents who are serving in the Royal Navy and in the armed services. If I were out of order, I am certain that Mr. Deputy Speaker would have ruled me so.

Another school, which is not on the list of admissible schools, but has a large number of children who are on the boarding school scheme is Hillsea college in Basingstoke, Hampshire. It received a critical report in June 1991 by Her Majesty's inspectors. I am glad to say that it closed in July 1992, but not because of any action taken by the Ministry of Defence or by the Department for Education. It

eventually closed because there were too few pupils going to the school. *[Interruption.]* Some Conservative Members are jeering.

Mr. Hanley: I am not.

Mr. Jamieson: The Minister is not jeering. He is listening to the argument seriously, for which I am grateful. Some hon. Members behind him have jeered at some of my comments, but my concern for those families is substantial.

I shall refer to another school that I am glad to say closed some years ago. A report on the Crookham Court school by Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in 1987 highlighted safety hazards and unsatisfactory teaching standards. The report said that the school was in a "dirty and depressing state". One of the reasons why the school was closed was given in an article in *The Times* in July 1990, which said:

"the owner of a private boys' school was yesterday convicted of sexually abusing one of his pupils."

One of the staff was also convicted. The report on the school said that that private school catered mainly for service families. I have tried to make some points on behalf of the families and the children of those people serving in the Navy.

I have tried to raise some important matters on behalf of those families, because some of the children are in poor schools, some of which are in a dangerous condition. I have read the reports, and most of the children are in good schools, with high standards and good exam results, which look after their pupils with great care. My concern, which the Minister should take on board, is that a substantial minority of the schools are not meeting even the minimum standards that one would expect for a reasonable education.

I have raised those matters on behalf of service personnel and their families because they are vital to the morale that we need in the services for the men and women who serve their country every day of their lives.

7.20 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I hope that the House will excuse me if I do not follow the comments of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), although I would wish to associate myself with what was said by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) about Rosyth dockyard. My constituents in Portsmouth would well understand the worries that she mentioned. We who represent dockyard constituencies fight hard to maintain their position, but in a positive manner, seeking to present the qualities of our own areas and never seeking to damage the prospects or opportunities of other dockyards or constituencies.

In the past I have intervened in debates of this nature to call for more ships and more men. That is probably expected of those of us who represent naval constituencies. Tonight I am concerned about the efficient use of the resources that the Royal Navy has at its disposal in a world in which circumstances change so rapidly that planning becomes especially difficult.

In the 19th century one could respond to an international situation by sending a gunboat. Nowadays it is essential that, if a Royal Navy presence is to be deployed to meet an international situation, we are certain that the vessel concerned is capable of meeting the needs of that situation, and is equipped so as to enable it to make a positive contribution then and there. It is also vital that the operations of the vessel should be properly supported and protected.

Much has been said today, and even more on previous occasions, about the situation in Bosnia. At some point the naval presence that we have maintained there for some time may be called upon to play a more active role. The great difficulty is that it is not clear exactly what that role would be. Would it be to assist in landing further troops? Or might it be to help with the emergency withdrawal of troops and civilian personnel from the area?

For example, a few months ago it was not clear whether the port of Split would fall to hostile forces, in which case the whole course of the operation would have been changed. It is not possible simply to say that so long as we have some ships to send we shall be solving the problem.

I am old enough to remember the appalling casualties suffered by the Royal Navy after the end of the second world war in that same Adriatic sea, when our ships ran on to mines laid, we believe, by the Albanians. That was an appalling situation that caused great loss of life, and it reminds us of the fact that the Navy has to face unknown dangers wherever it operates.

That is why I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to give thought not simply to how many frigates we should have —although I suppose that we can never have too many —and not only to how many minehunters we should have, but to whether we shall have a sufficiently balanced fleet today, in a month's time, in a year's time, or in five or 10 years' time. Over all those different time spans, we must have a sufficiently balanced fleet to operate effectively in the uncertain conditions that may arise.

The idea of another Falklands operation has already been mentioned. I do not wish to say much about that, but I remind the House that the Falklands emergency arose suddenly and we had to put together a fleet quickly. Fortunately, we still had the kind of vessels that could maintain an operation in the south Atlantic in sufficient force to achieve our purpose.

The question that I now ask is whether in a short time we could mount an operation against a defended shore, to put troops on the beaches and inland to support forces already present in a theatre of operations, be it Bosnia or elsewhere. I am reminded of the fact that when close inshore operations were required in the Gulf conflict the greatest threat came from minefields. The Royal Navy's presence there included mine hunters of the latest type, capable of clearing a way not only for Royal Navy vessels to get in close, but for vessels of the United States navy, whose helicopter-mounted anti-mines measures were found to be less effective than those of the Royal Navy. We must ensure that we can clear the way before vessels arrive and that when they get to their station they are of the correct kind.

Our assault ships Intrepid and Fearless have already been mentioned. We are aware of the large sums spent over recent years to maintain those vessels in service, but I ask my hon. Friend whether he can give me an assurance that both vessels are available for service and could be used if necessary to mount an operation against a defended shore. Rumours suggest that that is not entirely the case, and I should like a firm assurance.

Can my hon. Friend also confirm that, when he mentions a landing platform dock, he is talking about two replacement vessels, not one supplementing the existing assault ships, or one stretched to a slightly greater

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capacity? Two landing platform docks are essential if we are to maintain our capacity to operate away from home waters and to maintain a force ashore in hostile territory over time.

We all welcome the decision to proceed with the landing platform helicopter. That type of vessel would be essential if we needed to move large numbers of troops in or out of a theatre of operations in a short time. However, can we be assured that the Royal Navy will have sufficient helicopters of the right kind to ensure that the vessel will be used efficiently and effectively when it is available and that it can be operated in the meantime from the platforms that we may have to improvise?

There is an urgent need to supplement the Merlin programme of the EH101, the purely naval programme, with procurement of a utility version that would provide the kind of heavy-lift high-flexibility capacity that could be necessary in Bosnia by the beginning of next week. I doubt whether we really have the capacity today to operate in that way efficiently and effectively.

I seek an assurance that we are not simply saying that we have a certain number of vessels, and that means that we have a certain operational capacity but a fleet whose design is based on operational requirements and a clear strategic plan prepared for the future. We must not have simply a residue of ships after the Treasury's budgetary restraints have been met. We need a fleet that can act as the operational arm of the interests of this country and protect those interests overseas effectively, efficiently and flexibly. That is perhaps much more important than simply the number of any one sort of vessel.

Each year I look in vain in the reports on the defence estimates for a clear statement on exactly what sort of operations we anticipate that this country would acept on behalf of the United Nations, NATO or our own national interests, and in which parts of the world we would be prepared to commit our forces. Until we clarify the circumstances in which the Royal Navy might be called on to operate in support of the other two arms of the armed forces, we cannot judge whether the Royal Navy will be able to carry out its task efficiently in the short term, the medium term and the long term.

I ask my hon. Friend to give specific assurances on HMS Fearless, HMS Intrepid and the two landing platform docks. I would also like a wider assurance that the Ministry of Defence has a clear picture of the operations that we could properly undertake and those which are not within the capacity of the United Kingdom.

7.31 pm

Mr. Jamie Cann (Ipswich): What I shall say is complimentary and complementary to what the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) said: first, it is complimentary in that I agree with what he said: secondly, it is complementary because what I shall say goes along with what he said and perhaps extends it in one specific area. I have no constituency interest. There was the tiniest reserve outfit in Ipswich harbour, which was supposed to look after the harbour during the war, but that has long since gone. I shall not criticise the Government's policy with regard to the Navy. I shall merely talk about what I see as the role of the aircraft carrier in the Royal Navy at present and in the past, and how it will fit in with our needs in the future.

The Royal Navy was the first navy to have an aircraft carrier. It stripped the guns from four battle cruisers and replaced them with strutted landing platforms for the take-off of seaplanes. During the second world war, our Navy was one of the first to have metal decks on carriers. It was certainly the first navy to have angled take-off decks and mirror-aided landings on carriers. We have a proud history in these matters.

Everyone recognises that between the wars we lost our leadership over the navies of other nations. Certainly, in the second world war, the Americans and the Japanese far outstripped us in the use of these vessels. They were the first to recognise that the carrier was the capital ship. That was true, certainly from 1942-43 and perhaps all the way through to the early 1970s.

In exercises using British hunter-killer nuclear submarines—the modern capital ships—it has been proved that no carrier group can protect the carrier and its centre from such vessels. Therefore, we must recognise that the capital ship is the hunter-killer and if the carrier has a role at all it is different from its previous one.

We recognised that before other countries. We scrapped HMS Illustrious, HMS Victorious and so on—one of the smallest, Hermes was the last—and replaced them with a different vessel at the same time as the USSR was building carriers.

The USS Nimitz was built in 1975, and the French are still building a large carrier, the Charles de Gaulle—I suppose it would have to be called that—which is not yet commissioned. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, we produced a different vessel altogether. Basically, the new Invincible class carriers were designed for anti-submarine warfare. One of them is either on extended refit or in mothballs, according to whom one talks to.

Then a strange thing happened, rather like Ipswich. Ipswich was behind the times when everyone else was knocking down terrace houses and putting up blocks of flats. This country got it the wrong way around in terms of carriers. When we were scrapping the large carriers with fixed-wing aircraft and producing carriers for anti-submarine warfare in the north Atlantic against the threat from the USSR, the cold war disappeared over the horizon. We had wars in the Falklands and in the Gulf, and now we have things to do in Bosnia. Goodness knows where we will go after that.

Clearly, the modern role of the carrier will not be that of the capital ship. It will be the offshore airfield for a large number of planes covering the landing, reinforcement and removal of ground forces in different areas of the world. When we look at our carriers and their role, we compare badly with, for example, the French. The Invincible class carriers are modern—they were commissioned in 1980. Each one is 20,000 tonnes with a complement of 700—excluding any flying staff—nine fixed-wing aircraft and nine Sea King helicopters. The aircraft are there only to protect the carrier so that the helicopters can do their job.

In comparison, the French carrier, the Clemenceau, is 27,000 tonnes—that is not much bigger—and has a complement of 10,000, but that is the French. The number of aircraft flying from the carrier is 37 compared to nine. That is four times the punch that we are putting in. We have two carriers on the way which will deliver a total of 18 Sea Harriers. The French have the Foch and the Clemenceau

which will deliver 74. For commensurate effort, the French punch is, unfortunately, much greater than ours, although at the time it seemed that we had more foresight about the use of such vessels.

The way in which we are equipping our present carriers is outdated. I know that it is not easy in these times because money is not easy to come by; I am certainly not giving any pledges. We may be able to reduce the number of helicopters on our carriers and increase the number of fixed-wing aircraft—I do not know, because I have never been on one of our carriers, but I hope to do so before I leave this place.

To follow what the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North said, we must ensure that we can put at least a brigade force ashore almost anywhere in the world and cover it by the use of carriers and a carrier task group in the way that I do not believe our present force would be able to do.

As always, the Royal Navy has a multiplicity of roles. It is now our nuclear deterrent. It provides capital ships that can roam the world and do as much damage as any other navy, and probably better. We will always need frigates, minesweepers, and so on. However, we must re-evaluate the ability of the Royal Navy to be able to put ashore, cover and support British troops wherever they may be in the world.

7.39 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): It is a great pleasure for me to contribute to the debate, not least because I am beginning my association with the Royal Navy through the armed forces parliamentary scheme at the same time as the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire), who spoke so ably earlier in aid of Rosyth. Through that association, I hope that in future I shall be able to speak with even more experience, especially on the lives and concerns of royal naval officers and ratings.

The debate has concentrated on the wider issues, including where the Royal Navy is heading in volatile times and reduced circumstances. I heartily agree with much that has been said already by my hon. Friends and by Opposition Members. I do not want to repeat or labour the points that they made, but I should like to associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) and for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) and with the thoughtful comments on the role of aircraft carriers made by the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann). I heartily concur with his comments—a study on aircraft carriers by the Navy would be worth while.

Last year's defence White Paper, which as the House will probably know I felt unable to support in the Lobby, identified three key roles for our armed services. My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster paid some attention to those roles, which were: first, to protect the United Kingdom and our dependent territories; secondly, to insure against any major external threats to the United Kingdom or its allies; and, thirdly, to contribute to promoting the United Kingdom's wider security interests through the maintenance of international peace and stability, especially where it affects our national interest or the security of the United Kingdom and its allies.

On the third category, the main threat to Europe and to our allies results from the instability and uncertainties that have arisen in the aftermath of the cold war, rather than from any direct threat to the safety of sovereign territories that belong to the United Kingdom or our allies. Furthermore, it is obvious that a wide variety of commitments has arisen from that third category, Bosnia being the most recent.

It appears that the number of those commitments will continue to rise rather than fall. It is therefore obvious, although not inevitable, that the use of force—whether naval, military or through air power—or the threat of it will, when combined with diplomatic pressures, continue to have an effective part to play in the collective or individual security of the United Kingdom and its allies.

Several of the tasks involved in those three defence roles, such as the rapid reinforcement of a dependency—whether it be the Falklands or another state, for example in the Caribbean—may have to be undertaken alone by the United Kingdom. The effective use of the Royal Navy would be crucial in the fulfilment of that role. Ministers have confirmed that the United Kingdom's ability to project military power across the world, using our sea power, remains a crucial factor in our defence and security policy.

The difficulty is the credibility gap that exists between my hon. Friends' acknowledgement of the commitments that face the Royal Navy and the other two services, and their apparent acceptance of the continued salami-slicing of the defence budget and of enforced reductions in the capability of the Royal Navy to perform those tasks in line with our commitments. The 1992 public expenditure survey round took a further £1 billion from the defence budget and the 1993 PES round appears to want to achieve savings during the next two to three years of £1·4 billion, under the pretext of the "Front Line First" defence costs study.

I accept that the decline in the operational size and activity of the former Soviet Union submarine fleet means that the Royal Navy no longer needs to maintain the same levels of anti-submarine operations in the north Atlantic. It has been alleged that that is why the Government have decided to scrap the Upholder class of submarine. I join my hon. Friends and Opposition Members in asking my hon. Friends the Ministers to reconsider that decision. I also believe that the Upholder class of submarine could be an extremely useful and cheap way to project power, particularly in shallow waters—perhaps after minor adaptations—and we should consider that matter carefully.

I point out to Ministers that the Baltic is another region of possible instability in the not too distant future. The Upholder class of submarine would be ideal for use in the Baltic sea. When my hon. Friend the Minister for Defence Procurement replies to the debate, will he mention the current use of the Upholder class and say whether he has any plans to reconsider its future?

My concern about our commitments is, if anything, made worse by the idea that a further defence costs study is under way, under the pretext that I mentioned earlier. There have been many remarks about having more admirals than ships. Having studied the figures, I confirm not only that that is totally untrue but that it is folly to suggest that scrapping a few of those admirals, as if they were ships, would save much money.

I accept that it is reasonable for the Government to say that privatising some functions that do not need to be carried out by service men or civil servants might save some money and therefore release service men to help with overstretch in other sectors. The greater use of private sector finance in procurement, particularly where it

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involves leasing, might also solve some short-term problems. A further streamlining of management structures and working methods, especially at Navy headquarters, might produce some savings.

I look forward to hearing the Minister's comments on the matter, as I fail to see where the further savings, particularly in the Royal Navy, will come from; it has already instituted its own cost-saving process under the prospect review of naval support structures, which was due to be completed in 1992 but is still being implemented. A further cost reduction exercise will follow the cost reduction exercise that is now in progress. Even with its present force levels, the Royal Navy still faces difficulties in meeting its commitments.

I hope that the Minister will shed some light on another concern. Given that the Royal Air Force has no credible missile system that can be guaranted to bring down an incoming Scud missile, does he believe that the two destroyers or frigates, which under the 1993 defence White Paper will be allocated for the defence—supposedly—of the United Kingdom mainland, will be armed with the sort of missiles that could bring down an incoming Scud? As the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) said, it would be easy for a nutter or zealot to mount a Scud missile unit on a tanker. We have a problem with terrorism, but there is also the problem of people in the near east, the Gulf and elsewhere who are prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to achieve their ends.

The firing system of a Scud missile is very mobile and can easily fit in the hold—or, if properly disguised, on the deck—of a super-tanker. I hope that my hon. Friend can assure me that, given the Navy's skill in bringing down a Silkworm missile while on escort guard duty during the Gulf war, it will be able to do the same should such an emergency arise again. The population of Britain would feel extremely uncomfortable if we had no Patriot-type missiles and no system capable of bringing down missiles in an extraordinary attack which could come out of the blue.

Mr. Colvin: Is my hon. Friend aware that concerns have been expressed about the continued development of what is known as the Patriot 3? The Patriot surface-to-air missiles which were deployed in the Gulf were not 100 per cent. effective, but they had a remarkable political effect on the way in which the war was conducted.

Is not that doubly important because the North Koreans are now developing the equivalent of a Scud which would be capable of firing a nuclear, chemical or biological weapon as far as Tokyo? South Korea is another country that needs an important ground-to-air, point-to-point defence system.

Mr. Hargreaves: My hon. Friend demonstrates better than I could the need for such defences.

If our destroyers must be on standby for effective guard duty of the United Kingdom mainland and that is specified as one of our primary defence roles, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will assure us that they will be suitably equipped for that task.

I should like to make a final point without which the debate would not be complete, concerning the role of the Royal Navy in Bosnia. I earnestly hope that my hon. Friend will assure the House that our naval force in the Adriatic will be suitably protected if force through air power has to be used over Bosnia.

It is known that the former Yugoslav navy—now the Serbian navy—has a number of submarines. I am not sure whether the correct intelligence exists as to how many of them are serviceable; nor do I know, or wish to know, of the deployment of our submarines in defence of our ships which are operating in the area. I hope that when my hon. Friend winds up he will assure the House that we have sufficient operational ships to guarantee their safety.

A tragedy could easily occur by underestimating the number of submarines that the former Yugoslav navy is able to deploy should it be inclined to do so surreptitiously. It may feel that, through a third party or agency, it could in some way flare up the overall situation in the former Yugoslavia to its advantage by such an act. I hope very much that my hon. Friend will be able to reassure hon. Members who have spoken during the debate.

7.52 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): The Minister of State began by saying that this was a time of change for the armed services, and for the Royal Navy in particular. He is absolutely right. This is a time of unprecedented change. We have witnessed a large reduction in the size of the fleet and in the number of service personnel. It is true to say that the Royal Navy today is smaller than at any time since the second world war.

Underlying all the changes in the Navy is the rapidly changing international climate. The end of the cold war generated hope and optimism about the future, and rightly so, but it also created major uncertainties. There are still significant threats and dangers, as the crisis in Bosnia and the Gulf war clearly demonstrated. The debate tonight gives the House the opportunity to scrutinise the Government's record while managing the Royal Navy through that difficult period of change. I must say that the evidence to date is not impressive.

There is a lack of direction and focus to our whole defence policy. That is not just my view—it is the view of the Select Committee on Defence. A number of hon. Members have praised the activity and work of the Select Committee during the past three years, and I want to add my voice to those opinions. The Committee has done an excellent job in drawing attention to some of the problems and deficiencies in the Government's defence policy.

Underlying the Committee's concern—Committee members who are present in the Chamber may correct me if I am wrong—is the view that, until and unless we get to grips with some of the basic issues about the appropriate range of our defence commitments, we will be plagued by a continuing confusion about important procurement and manpower issues.

It is right that we concentrate at least a measure of our concern on the Government's procurement budget; not just as it affects the Navy, although that is particularly important to our proceedings tonight and to my constituents. It is true to say that Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. has built some of the finest ships ever to sail under the white ensign. I think that there is genuine cause for concern when we look at the Government's management of the procurement budget.

Using the GDP deflator, defence spending fell by 2 per cent. between 1980 and 1993-94. Defence procurement

spending during the same period fell in real terms by 10 per cent. The defence budget has fallen fractionally, but the procurement budget has fallen by five times the reduction in the defence budget.

We are all concerned with the resources which are available to finance and support our armed services. There must be a reasoned debate on what we can afford and what the resources will permit us to spend. No one can pretend otherwise. There is a difficult public spending climate at the moment, and my hon. Friends know how that has come about.

If we are to maintain the operational readiness and the fighting capability of our armed services, it is essential that we at least try to ring-fence the procurement budget whenever possible. If we do not allow our services access to the latest combat technology and weapons systems supported by the necessary software and hardware to allow the systems to work effectively, we will deprive our armed services personnel of the cutting edge. Those are crucial tools which they need to do their job effectively.

Hon. Members must recognise that, in the climate of continuing pressure on defence spending, the Government are unwise to focus to the extent that they have on cutting important elements of the procurement budget. My constituency has experienced the sharp end of some of the harsh decisions taken by the Government. When "Options for Change" was published in July 1991, it represented a devastating blow to shipbuilding in my constituency.

There have been discussions today about the Upholder class. I emphasise the value of Upholder as a class and as a weapons system. When Upholder was being built originally, the Navy was expecting 12, and that has not been mentioned tonight. At a stroke, when "Options for Change" was published, that was reduced to four.

The consequences of that decision are that we will have no Upholders serving in the Royal Navy at all. That is a serious loss to the operational capability of the Navy and to support services, especially secret forces which are landed as part of secure operations and intelligence units.

In addition to the eight Upholders which disappeared from the budget, we lost another six SSNs which were planned by the Government. That random and unscheduled cut caused complete devastation to the naval shipbuilding industry, which must operate on a long-lead basis. The industry simply cannot be asked and be expected to cope with a sudden decline in the volume of its anticipated work.

The redundancies have followed as night follows day. In the past three years, almost 8,000 shipbuilding workers in my constituency and many thousands in other constituencies have paid the price of that with the loss of their precious jobs. So tonight we need to keep our focus firmly on the issue of procurement. Without an adequate supply of the right equipment at the right price, the effectiveness of our armed forces will be seriously compromised.

I want to deal with some specific issues that relate to the Navy and to my constituency. First, when can we expect the tenders to be issued for the next round of type 23 frigates? There is a serious delay in the Government's timetable for ordering those important ships. The ships were to have been ordered in 1993. That did not happen. Now it looks as if the ships will not be ordered until some time in 1995.

Anyone who has a knowledge and grasp of shipbuilding knows that such delays cause serious difficulties for shipbuilders and shipbuilding workers. There must be a doubt about whether the new timetable for ordering the type 23s is compatible with the Government's commitment to maintain an adequate frigate force. The delay will also involve serious industrial consequences which will mean additional redundancies among our naval shipbuilders.

Secondly, what are the Government's plans for the batch 2 Trafalgar class? When can we expect orders to be placed for those boats? The whole programme has been the subject of extensive delays all the way down the line. That has meant additional heavy redundancies at VSEL. It is worth pointing out to the Minister that the last nuclear-powered hunter-killer submarine to be ordered by the Government was HMS Triumph, the last of the Trafalgar class vessels. The order for HMS Triumph was placed on 3 January 1986. That is eight years ago. Such a delay in the ordering of a new class of strategic submarine nuclears has been immensely damaging to the naval shipbuilding industry of Britain.

I am sure that there is consensus in the House—I have agreed with virtually all the speeches that I have heard tonight—that it is vital for our strategic long-term defence interests that we maintain an effective SSN-building capability in Britain. That requires not only the building facilities but the crucial design teams. The whole infrastructure that goes into a new generation of ships, which is vital for the defence interests of Britian and our allies, has been compromised by the extensive delay not only in ordering the batch 2 Trafalgars but in the original decision not to proceed with the SSN20 programme. We can argue the toss about whether we need this or that sort of boat or how many boats we need; but we are playing with our fundamental ability as a shipbuilding nation to provide the vessels.

I hope that the Government will act quickly to confirm that they will be ordering the batch 2 Trafalgars in the near future, and that they will stick to a programme that will allow an SSN fleet of at least 12 boats to be maintained; or is it the Government's intention to reduce yet again the number of SSNs that are available to the Royal Navy?

Thirdly, are we any nearer a decision on the results of the study into the afloat support requirements of the Navy? Do the Government intend to order any new auxiliary oiler replenishment vessels? What progress has been made with the new auxiliary oiler class?

Fourthly, what are the Government's plans for the replacement of Fearless and Intrepid? That issue has been raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is fundamentally important to the ability of the armed forces of the United Kingdom not only to contribute to amphibious military operations in the NATO area but, on a wider scale, to support United Nations' operations around the world. We must retain that amphibious capability.

Other hon. Members have spoken about the need for two replacements for Fearless and Intrepid. It is essential that there are two replacements. There is an inherent danger in retaining a one-ship class. When it comes to the amphibious capability of the Navy, it is essential that we retain two of those assault landing ships. Certainly the shipbuilding community of Britain looks to the Government to make it clear tonight that they intend to order two of those boats and that that decision is imminent and will be made this year.

Fifthly, I wish to raise the matter of the new common generation frigate. There has been some anxiety about the timetable that the British Government are operating for the

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award of the prime contractorship in the United Kingdom. An intense competition is taking place between British Aerospace and GEC on the one hand and VSEL and Hunting as an alternative rival bidder for that prime contractorship. We need an imminent decision on that. It is probably the single most important naval procurement decision that remains to be taken this decade. It will affect the structure and shape of the British naval shipbuilding industry well into the next century.

I hope that, underlying that decision, which is eagerly awaited in the shipbuilding community, there is recognition on the part of the Government that whatever decision they take they must act to ensure that the naval shipbuilding industry remains competitive and that there is a variety and multiplicity of providers in that industry. It would be a serious mistake—we have seen it made already in the case of Swan Hunter—for the Government to pursue a procurement policy which operates in an anti-competitive way. It is important that we keep the maximum number of naval shipyards in Britain to provide competition and crucial employment and maintain the skills base that has been built up over generations in the shipbuilding communities.

Another question that the Government and hon. Members must consider tonight is how many new common generation frigates will be ordered. What is the present position on the eventual size of that new fleet? There has been some informed speculation that the numbers will drop from 18 to 12. That would be serious. We must seek to ensure that, certainly in Britain, there is a one-for-one replacement of the type 42 destroyers. That will require a British build programme of at least 12 of those new generation frigates.

The last point that I want to raise is the Malaysian arms deal signed by Lady Thatcher in 1988. There has been a great deal of press speculation recently about the implications of that deal and agreement, and how it has affected British naval shipbuilders. Many Opposition Members look to the Government to come clean on the full extent and implications of that agreement. Is there any truth in the suggestion that GEC and British Aerospace were handed control of decisions about which a British defence contractor was eligible for work under that agreement? That is an important issue. It has affected not only my constituents but the constituents of other hon. Members who represent shipbuilding communities.

As I understand the original agreement between the British and Malaysian Governments, there was a possibility that submarines would be ordered by the Malaysian Government. That has simply not happened. Miraculously, under the terms of the agreement, instead of submarines which could well have been built in my constituency being procured from Britain, a number of frigates were ordered by the Malaysian Government and placed with GEC at Yarrow.

It is important that the House is informed to the fullest extent possible about the accuracy of those allegations and the role of the British Government in subsidising those defence orders. We are not talking about trivial issues. We are talking about fundamental issues of openness in government and the decisions that have affected the shape and size of the British naval shipbuilding industry. I know that many hon. Members will be interested to hear what the Minister has to say about that.

I shall finish my comments on that note because I know that there are still many hon. Members who want to speak. To summarise, this has been a unique debate for me because I have agreed with just about every speech that I have heard. It is good to know, for the sake of the health and quality of our armed forces, that there is a consensus in the House about the need to maintain our armed forces to ensure that they have the right equipment at the right time to do the job that we want.

We are entitled to be immensely proud of the contribution that our armed services have made and continue to make to public life. We owe it to them at least to ensure that they have the right equipment at the right time at the right price.

8.8 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): This is the first occasion on which I have had the pleasure of following the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) in a defence debate. Although I do not wish to follow precisely his remarks about procurement, some of the issues that I wish to raise relate to the procurement policy decision-making process.

When I was preparing my remarks for this annual Navy debate, one word repeatedly came to mind. It was "uncertainty".

That recurring theme manifested itself—whether in respect of Britain's defence requirements and capabilities over the next 20 years or more, or in relation to decisions that have been, or will have to be, made about the Royal Navy and their impact on the south-west region and the Plymouth travel-to-work area, part of which includes my constituency.

We were all excited when the Berlin wall came down, symbolising the end of the cold war. Subsequent events in the former Soviet Union and eastern bloc countries also caught our imagination. Few, if any, could have predicted the sequence of events that followed. Before those events there was a certain predictability—I hesitate to use the work "cosiness" in this context—and, in practice, both the western world and the east knew where they stood.

Since the Berlin wall came down, that predictability has been replaced by uncertainty and, sadly, increasing instability, particularly in parts of Europe and the former Soviet Union. Initially we talked about the peace dividend and the Government produced "Options for Change". I must confess that, as a layman, I find myself repeatedly asking where it will all lead. We now have the study "Front Line First" and are entitled to ask what the United Kingdom's defence objectives and responsibilities for the early part of the 21st century are, what strategy we will pursue and what defence capability we will require. In the context of tonight's debate, we ask those questions in relation to the Royal Navy.

I sometimes wonder whether the Government, as a collective body, rather than the Ministry of Defence, are clear in their own mind about those responsibilities and objectives. We seem to have a series of decisions about requirements, capabilities, sizes and many other issues but, taken together, they hardly add up to a clearly defined and recognisable defence strategy.

As well as having implications for our national defence and security—let alone our international obligations—that worrying position has a direct bearing on the south-west. The south-west region has the highest dependence on defence and defence-related activities of anywhere in the United Kingdom. That is certainly true in the Plymouth travel-to-work area. I shall concentrate on two specific aspects; the surface ship refitting programme for the Devonport dockyard and the Navy's manpower requirements.

HMS Raleigh is located in my constituency. It is the shore base where all the non-officer intake into the Royal Navy, both male and female, undertakes their initial training. Any announcement about the Royal Navy's manpower requirements will have direct consequences for HMS Raleigh and the Torpoint community. HMS Raleigh has the capacity to provide initial training for more than 4,000 non-officer recruits per annum. In the past three years, the numbers passing through HMS Raleigh have been 1,200, 800 and, last year, 800—a total of about 3,000.

All of us understand that manpower requirements of the Royal Navy are changing. However, the figures show that, in a few years' time, the Royal Navy manpower planners could experience serious problems in terms not only of absolute numbers but of ensuring that they have at their disposal both adequate numbers in all the necessary skills available and the right balance of those manpower skills.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if those figures are put alongside the alarming loss of our seafaring traditions as a result of the decline in the numbers of merchant marines, they add up to a serious problem?

Mr. Hicks: I made it clear that I viewed the recent trends with genuine anxiety. In five years or so, the products of the past five years' training will move into senior non-commissioned posts in the Royal Navy. We are not talking about office manpower requirements, when one can advertise, recruit and train in a comparatively short period but about highly skilled young men. Will my hon. Friend the Minister bear that fact in mind, because it worries me? I know that those involved in the training of those young men are equally worried.

The projected work load over the next five years at the Devonport dockyard is another important issue. Since last year's Royal Navy debate the important Trident refit contract decision has been made. Naturally, I was pleased that the contract was awarded to Devonport. At the same time, Ministers announced that, as part of the offset arrangements, Rosyth dockyard would undertake 16 surface ship refits and one carrier refit over the next 10 years. I do not tonight wish to enter into a debate on the merits of that decision, but the economic results of the decision are questionable in terms of providing value to the taxpayer.

My principal worry relates to the position of the Devonport dockyard before the Trident refit work materialises at the turn of the century. I gather that, over and above the Rosyth allocation, 11 frigates and destroyers will require refits between now and the year 2000. Devonport has provisionally been allocated just three of those 11—HMS London later this year, HMS Norfolk in 1995-96 and HMS Marlborough in 1997-98. To put it bluntly, that work load is insufficient to ensure the viability of Devonport over that vital period. It is essential that Devonport is allocated more Ministry of Defence refit work.

If Devonport is not allocated more refit work, further job losses will occur that could have implications for its ability to retain the current skill mix in appropriate quantities to service the strategic deterrent—I do not say that lightly. That is the dilemma facing the dockyard managers at Devonport. The Ministry of Defence can resolve the problem through enhanced surface ship refit allocations. If Ministers do not recognise that, further job losses will occur.

Ministers should also acknowledge that below a critical employment figure, unit labour costs rise and Devonport could then be placed at a disadvantage in terms of competitive tendering.

I am sure that Ministers do not want that unsatisfactory state of affairs to arise, but the remedy lies in the hands of Ministers at the Ministry of Defence.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that the winding-up speeches are to begin at 9.20. In the hour remaining for Back-Bench Members to contribute to the debate, six hon. Gentlemen, who have been in the Chamber for most of the day, are hoping to catch my eye. With a bit of co-operation from hon. Members, they may all be successful.

8.19 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I shall keep my remarks brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to comply with your wishes.

It is a pleasure to follow the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) and the hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks). I shall take up themes on which they both touched, for precisely the same reasons.

Defence procurement matters are extraordinarily important to communities that rely on them for employment. When I was first elected to this place in 1983, the largest single public sector employer in my constituency was British Shipbuilders. Work at the Swan Hunter shipyard was shared between the Walker yard in my constituency and the Wallsend yard in the neighbouring constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers). When the parliamentary boundary commissioner proposed, some 18 months ago, to bring Wallsend and Northumbria wards from north Tyneside to Newcastle, East, I looked forward to representing the whole of the shipbuilding industry on Tyneside. Although the decision has come into effect, one or two other things have happened in the meantime.

The hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East wondered what happens when a dockyard runs out of work. I am here to tell him. Swan Hunter is currently in the hands of the receiver. When the company failed to win the landing platform helicopter contract, some 3,000 people were directly employed at the yard and a further 3,000 workers were employed, through sub-contractors, on shipbuilding but were wholly reliant on Swan Hunter as the main employer.

Since receivership, the number of people still employed at the yard has dropped to just below 1,000, and work is fast running out. It reflects enormous credit on the

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

remaining management at Swan Hunter, and particularly on the remaining 600 manual workers, that they are able to complete, to the highest quality, type 23 frigates, which are sophisticated vessels, for the Ministry of Defence and deliver them on time in those desperate circumstances.

So that the House understands the range and scale of the blow to Tyneside, may I add that our two other major employers, NEI Parsons (Heavy Engineering) and the offshore oil industry—largely William Press, a subsidiary of AMEC, and the sub-contracting work that it facilitates—are also both laying off men with similar skills. Parts of my constituency have male unemployment levels of 90 per cent. In the shipbuilding community as a whole, male unemployment already runs at 40 per cent. A further 600 people will become unemployed this summer unless the Government intervene or a private sector company can buy Swan Hunter and give it shipbuilding work in the near future.

Therefore, what happens when great defence facilities run out of work is that it is a disaster for the local community that relies on those large single centres of employment, and the disaster is not easily resolved. I hope that the Minister will say how pleased the Ministry of Defence is with the quality of work that is still coming out of Swan Hunter and that he hopes that Swan Hunter will make a transition into the private sector and continue to supply warships to the Ministry of Defence.

Conservative Members have stressed the importance of the intervention funding being secured for Swan Hunter. It is not intervention funding in the conventional sense. It is not an unlimited subsidy for merchant work which a future owner can procure for the yard, but a maximum £7 million, which can sit alongside a private sector merchant vessel order that goes into the yard. That will not happen unless the yard also has a base work load, which means a military work load. At one time I had hoped that, with the type of intervention funding that has been secured. Swan Hunter could make a transition to more general reliance on merchant shipbuilding work and more general engineering work so that its over-reliance on warship building could have been diluted. That is now unlikely to happen.

Time is running out for the Swan Hunter yard. The future for the yard will be as a much smaller, leaner and more efficient warship building company. The intervention funding that has been secured may never be used at all. If it is used, it will be as transitional relief to enable the yard to continue warship building, rather than a step away from warship building as part of—dare I say—a defence conversion strategy towards civilian activities. That is an absolute tragedy for the community that I represent. It is also a tragedy for the community which I hope to represent after the next general election, when a large number of former shipyard workers—now unemployed shipyard workers—will be moved into the Newcastle, East and Wallsend constituency, as it will then be called.

The Government have done nothing to help to provide alternative employment or bring new work to the area. I accept that that is not the fault of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. We are asking not for charity for him, but for a fair hearing. We have not had that fair hearing so far.

The decision on the AOR-1 contract cost Tyneside dear. Well over 1,000 people lost their jobs immediately after that procurement was announced. We learned much later from the Public Accounts Committee that the work was carried out elsewhere at an extra cost to the taxpayer of some £58 million. People on Tyneside regard that as unfair. The competition between ourselves and Barrow-in-Furness was not one of two equally placed tenderers. Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. has enormous reserves behind it which it uses astutely enough but which are simply not available to Swan Hunter.

On overseas contracts, the British Government would not even back Swan Hunter in the little contract from Oman for two patrol vessels, which could have led to orders for a further eight vessels. I believe that the Government's influence could have been decisive, but rather than see Swan Hunter get the contract, they let the work go to the French. That contract came at a time when a gesture from the Government would have been seen as an important gesture of confidence in the yard.

The Malaysian contract was a great scandal. The charge against the Government is twofold: if they were playing favourites in an overseas defence order, that is very wrong and unfair to other British companies that would have liked to have tendered for the work on an even playing field. If the British Government used public money to put a concealed subsidy behind the bid of their favoured tenderer, that is not just unfair; it is positively illegal. I hope that sooner or later the facts are ferreted out and are subjected to the fullest possible public scrutiny.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): No.

Mr. Brown: I thought that I heard a Hooray Henry intervention from the playing fields of Eton.

The people of Tyneside are asking for a level playing field. If the Minister can confirm that he is satisfied with the quality of work from Swan Hunter and that he hopes that it can tender for future work from his Department in private sector ownership, I shall be satisfied with his response to the debate tonight.

8.30 pm

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). I can associate myself at least with his earlier remarks, having visited Swan Hunter some three years ago and seen for myself the excellence of the work carried out there.

I should also like to associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) in all he said about Devonport. I played my own modest role in putting pressure on the Government to secure the Trident refit contract for Devonport. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) is no longer in the Chamber. I hope that we are never forced to choose between Devonport and Rosyth; they both have a crucial strategic role to play in the defence of our country.

The debate has done a great deal to reassure me that at least the House understands the dependency of our nation on the sea. Some of our constituents are not as aware of that as they should be.

The United Kingdom still depends fundamentally on sea power. Even after the opening of the channel tunnel, 90 per cent. of our trade will still enter and leave these shores by sea. In war, securing the maritime supply lines will be an essential challenge to the Royal Navy if our civilians are to survive.

The origins of the Royal Navy lie in the protection of the merchant fleet. When Henry VIII had his red, white and blue squadrons, there was no delineation between the merchant and military capacity of the Navy. It gradually separated into the red, white and blue ensigns that we have today designating the different aspects of our fleets. The Royal Navy's principal historic purpose has been to secure our coastal waters and protect our merchant shipping.

Of course, the Navy has acquired many new roles; it has to deal with an unpredictable and dangerous world. We have heard a great deal about that today, not least from my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). We should take careful note of the eighth report of the Defence Select Committee which shows the stresses and strains under which the Royal Navy operates.

The least sophisticated, least stable country can easily gain access to the most sophisticated and reliable weaponry. That is a challenge which we must make sure our Navy can face.

My principal purpose tonight is to raise two concerns which my hon. Friend the Minister did not address in his opening remarks. One has been dealt with in a number of interventions and speeches: the relationship between the Merchant Navy and the Royal Navy. The other is ensuring that the hydrographic service is capable of meeting the challenges of the modern world.

I turn first to the Merchant Navy. We have heard a great deal from the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and my hon. Friends the Members for Upminster, for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) about the crucial role of the Merchant Navy as the fourth arm of the defence of our shores.

If the Royal Navy existed primarily to protect the Merchant Navy in the early days, it is certainly true now that the Merchant Navy has a crucial role in reinforcing the Royal Navy. If the Royal Navy is stretched, as it probably is, that role becomes more important.

I should declare an interest. For a number of years, I have had the privilege of advising the Chamber of Shipping and I have learnt the crucial role that the Merchant Navy can and should play in meeting our defence needs.

Several hon. Members have referred to the Falklands conflict and the role of STUFT—ships taken up from trade. More recently, in the Gulf war, there was heavy reliance on charter. Different conclusions were drawn by the Ministry of Defence from their experiences.

In 1982, Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse said:

"I cannot state too often or too clearly how important has been the Merchant Navy's contribution to our efforts. Without the ships taken up from trade, the operation could not have been undertaken, and I hope this message is clearly understood by the British nation.".

At the end of last year in a television interview, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, commented on the chartering of ships for the Gulf war:

"The criteria, the test is, 'Can you get them when you need them?' If the answer is 'Yes, and unequivocally yes' then this is a sensible way to use your resources."

That is the central question. Can we get them when we need them? Will those chartered reinforcements be available as readily as the Minister believes? I do not believe that they will.

A wide variety of military roles will be required of merchant vessels in a conflict: fleet support, supply tankers, troop carriers, hospital ships, vehicle and tank carriers, stores ships, tugs and salvage vessels. For different reasons, in each of those markets, different conditions will prevail which will make it difficult to be confident that the right mix of vessels will be available.

The crucial reason for that concern lies in the catastrophic decline of the British merchant fleet, both owned and registered. In 1980, some 38 million deadweight tonnes of shipping were owned by British shipping companies. Now the figure is only 13 million tonnes—one third of the level in 1980. The registered fleet stands at only 3·3 million deadweight tonnes, yet the Ministry of Defence insisted in a slightly mealy-mouthed statement nearly two years ago that, in general, there are still enough vessels for defence purposes.

The Government's view is that it is easy to charter, but what if the Governments or the owners of the vessels are opposed to United Kingdom strategic interests? How long will neutral shipowners take to assess the risk to their vessels before being prepared to commit them for use in wartime? Our need is often greatest in the early stages of a conflict. The hon. Member for Swansea, East asked about the costs of doing that.

The vessels that were chartered at the time of the Gulf war cost £180 million—more than twice what it would cost to charter in peacetime. The irony is that rebuilding our merchant fleet, which would be possible using a variety of fiscal and other techniques, would make money for the Treasury instead of costing money.

What do other nations do? More than 100 merchant ships went to the Gulf war for Britain, but only six flew the red duster. France sent 27 merchant ships; 26 of them flew the tricolour. The United States of America sent 165 merchant ships of which 105 flew the stars and stripes.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Is the hon. Gentleman familiar with the contents of the Jones Act which provides the explanation of why many United States merchant ships have to fly the United States flag?

Mr. Luff: There are many aspects of the way in which the United States has sought to address its merchant navy needs. I do not support all of them, but the United States has said that it needs to do better in any future conflict and has dedicated extra resources to building its merchant fleet.

The Employment Select Committee, in its third report last Session, drew particular attention to the problem of manpower. It might be possible to buy in foreign crews, but can we rely on their loyalty in time of conflict? Can we rely on their Governments allowing them to fight for Britain? The Indians would not let their nationals fight in the Falklands war.

The Ministry of Defence insists that adequate numbers are available. Have the Government made sufficient allowance for the various specialities by category of ratings and officers? Half the United Kingdom ratings perform little more than hotel functions on board British merchant vessels. They are valuable and important functions, but they are not necessarily the most important in times of war. Have the Government made a proper assessment of the fitness and qualfications of many of the numbers they claim? Coastal, estuarial and dock workers all make useful contributions, but their experience is unlikely to be relevant to deep sea warfare.

[Mr. Luff]

There is also the issue of relocation to foreign chartered ships. It is not easy to learn how to use new equipment or deal with the foreign language instructions on much of that equipment.

The second and quite separate area that I want to address concerns the hydrographic service. That specialist area of the Royal Navy is sometimes overlooked. It celebrates its 200th anniversary next year, so it is right that we should remember it today. It has functions for the Ministry of Defence in gathering hydrographic, oceanographic and geophysical data. It has particular importance in terms of submarine navigation and for our nuclear deterrent. It also has a crucial role for maritime safety, the protection of the marine environment and maritime trade in all the waters for which the United Kingdom is responsible.

It may be run as an agency on the production and commercial side, but the ships are firmly part of the main fleet of the Royal Navy under the command of the Commander in Chief Fleet. The hydrographic service performs a vital role at times of national emergency. We were rightly reminded earlier of the imminent 50th anniversary of D-day. The brave and courageous surveying of the landing beaches by the hydrographic service enabled D-day to be the success that it was.

There are a number of specific challenges for the hydrographic service. It is a little known fact that only 36·6 per cent. of the United Kingdom continental shelf has been charted. That leaves some two thirds remaining. Many coastal waters have been surveyed only by lead line. The shifting sands in places such as the coast around Dover, where I recently had the privilege of sailing with HMS Beagle, require regular re-survey. There is also the question of changing priorities. The Braer disaster has created a new importance to surveying around the Fair Isle gap.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to address my next point, as it is important. There are new legal requirements. There is some talk of the Germans tabling proposals to amend chapter five of "Safety of Life at Sea" which would impose a massive new burden on our surveying requirements. Perhaps more important, the United Nations law of the sea convention has now acquired its 60th signatory and comes into force on 16 November this year.

Her Majesty's Government are in active consultation over part 11 of that convention, which deals with mineral resources in international waters. I hope that the Government will ratify the treaty before November. If they do, article 76 will have an important impact on our hydrographic service, because it imposes an obligation on our Government to define the continental shelf properly and accurately, and provide a mass of data within 10 years of ratification.

I am told that, in the north-west approaches to our waters, the continental shelf goes out more than 400 miles from the mainland, some way south of Iceland. Charting it is a massive task, to which others will contribute, such as the Natural Environment Research Council, the British Geological Survey, private contractors and private shipowners. But the central effort will be devolved to the hydrographic service. That is of central importance, because articles 77 and 81 of the convention give rights over minerals and drilling on the continental shelf to the country that has exercised its rights under the treaty.

We must ask whether the hydrographic service is well enough equipped to perform that role. It now has only two ocean survey vessels, three coastal survey vessels, one survey motor launch and two naval parties on chartered vessels, apart, of course, from Endurance, the ice patrol ship.

Many of those vessels are relatively old. HMS Beagle, on which I sailed, was commissioned in 1968. New hulls and investment in new technologies are needed urgently, irrespective of ratification of the law of the sea conference. In his recent report, the Hydrographer of the Navy hinted at a number of worrying delays in making the necessary decisions to re-equip the service.

My contention is that the Government are right to be proud of their record on many aspects of the Royal Navy. They are right to be proud of the fact that the Royal Navy has the youngest fleet since world war one. They have two priceless assets—the Merchant Navy and the hydrographic service—to which I believe they are not paying sufficient attention.

8.42 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I fully endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) has just said about the Merchant Navy. I agree strongly with the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), about the third report of the Select Committee on Employment on the future of maritime skills and employment in the United Kingdom. The Committee's recommendations—it is one on which I used to serve—are important. I am delighted that it diversified into the important matter of our maritime marine.

I cannot see—the hon. Gentleman put the question to my hon. Friend on the Front Bench—why there cannot be an exercise in the mobilisation of the merchant fleet in support of military operations. It does not have to be a full mobilisation, but I cannot believe that it would not be possible to sit down and do a desk exercise so that at least one would know what was available. One would warn the industry that it might happen at any time, somebody would blow the whistle and we could see who responded, how quickly, and what it would cost.

I am sure that that exercise is possible. I believe that the only reason why the Government do not want such an exercise is that they know very well what the answer would be. Therefore, there would be pressure on the Treasury, as well as other bodies, to introduce reforms, possibly of a fiscal nature, that would improve the situation and help to restore some of the merchant fleet that we badly need.

I should like to respond, as a member of the Select Committee on Defence, to the compliments that have been showered around on the work that we have done. We are very well chaired—I am glad to see him back in the Chamber—by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), who brings, as one would expect from a direct descendant of the noble admiral, a Nelson touch to the conduct of our affairs. It is the only Committee in this place never to have had a vote. The consensus and unanimity that we find in the debate today percolates to our Committee's deliberations.

As the years go by, our defence debates take place in an atmosphere of ever-increasing uncertainty. That matter has

been picked up by many hon. Members today. The Government's most recent statement on our defence estimates for 1993 is entitled "Defending our Future". One must ask, against whom, what, where and when? The certainty of the old cold war is now gone, and the uncertainty of the new world order makes planning difficult. That means that the two principles of war—flexibility and mobility—become ever more important.

Also important is the cohesion of NATO. That needs to be demonstrated in Bosnia. If, as in Bosnia, NATO is talking tough, we must also be tough and act with the full agreement of all NATO partners. The situation in Bosnia is a test of the credibility of NATO and its relationship with the United Nations. It is the first time that NATO has been into offensive action since the Korean war 40 years ago.

Accepting that NATO remains the basis of our national defence, it is the north Atlantic alliance that, in turn, is its foundation stone.

Underpinning that is the so-called special relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States. I know that that relationship has been severely tested as of late, not least by the decision over the visa for Gerry Adams—it was advised against by the State Department and then overturned by the White House. It is terribly important that the hot line that exists between No. 10 Downing street and the White House is regularly used. On that occasion, I believe that communication broke down. Therefore, I think that the Prime Minister's forthcoming visit to Washington is very important. I very much hope that the bridge of understanding and trust between No. 10 and the White House is rebuilt.

One way to assist that special relationship is through defence industrial co-operation. Joint projects and reciprocal sales between the United Kingdom and the United States—the so-called two-way street—are vital. It is significant that, although the political special relationship may have cooled a bit, there is no doubt that business men still recognise it.

It is a feature of our membership of the European Union that so many American businesses now invest in the United Kingdom. We attract nearly half their investment to the EC. The United States is the biggest recipient of British investment abroad. We have more investment into the United States than any other nation. That two-way street must be improved. That is why I want to say a word this evening about two defence industrial contractors: Vosper Thorneycroft and Westland. I will then say a quick word about Gibraltar.

Vosper Thorneycroft is based in the constituency of the late Stephen Milligan, who was our hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh, which borders my constituency. I always regarded Stephen Milligan as a very good friend, a trusted colleague and splendid Member of the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] The whole House will join me in saying how saddened we are by his tragic death. I know that if he were here today, he would be speaking up for that company and his many constituents who worked there. I am sure that he would be standing, at the Bench just behind me, speaking eloquently, as he always did, without notes, and in an articulate manner. He will be sorely missed by the House.

If he were here today, I am sure that Stephen Milligan would ask my right hon. and learned Friend whether he had seen press reports about the French company CMN, which is reported to be bidding for Swan Hunter. We have heard about the problems of Tyneside, and I acknowledge their existence; but—especially in view of what the hon. Member for Newcastle on Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said about a level playing field—it is worrying that a bid is being made for a British defence company by a French company that receives substantial Government support. That will, if anything, "unlevel" the playing field, and it may also add to the excess shipbuilding capacity that already exists in the United Kingdom. Companies such as Vosper Thorneycroft could experience unfair competition.

We have heard about the shipbuilding intervention fund —the £7 million that Swan Hunter has already received. Vosper Thorneycroft does not receive any such money. What do the Government intend to do? They have already decided to exclude foreign hulls from the tendering process in relation to minehunters; a serious French takeover bid for Swan Hunter could result in the undermining of Vosper Thorneycroft and the torpedoing, as it were, of an important industrial defence company.

We should take due note of the current situation in Gibraltar. This morning, I had a discussion with a representative of the Transport and General Workers Union about Gibraltar, and they drew my attention to the review of the Rock's economy by the Ministry of Defence. Over the past 10 years, that economy has undergone enormous structural change. It used to be 75 per cent. dependent on the MOD; the figure is now down to 15 per cent., and falling.

Some 600 or 700 more jobs are expected to be lost in Gibraltar as a result of the review, and the cutting of further MOD work. There could be as many as 1,000 redundancies. I feel that the time has come for a round table discussion between the MOD, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign Office about how we can provide alternative work and training for redundant workers to overcome the difficulties. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has already been out to the Rock and has talked to people there, but I think that they would like to come here and discuss the matter to ensure that any rescue plan is properly co-ordinated.

Let me ask two questions. First, is it possible for the Rock—as a Crown colony—to be granted assisted-area status? That could well be possible. Secondly, why can it not benefit more from the EC KONVER fund, which is already available to assist in such cases?

I congratulate all our Royal Navy personnel on the superb job that they are doing with UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia, and in the Adriatic. If they are called on to play a part in air strikes against Serbian or other gun or mortar positions, I am sure that the whole House will join me in wishing them well, and a very safe return.

8.52 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I endorse all that my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) has said about the Royal Navy and its personnel, especially given the difficult task that it is performing in the Adriatic.

Opening this important debate, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces referred to the battles of 50 years ago. I was pleased to hear him say that he recognised our responsibility to ensure that such events never occur again. He went on to say how important it was also to recognise the enduring need for sea power.

[Mr. Christopher Gill]

Inevitably, debates on the Navy tend to be dominated by considerations about its hardware. Those concerns, which have been expressed again tonight, are very real, not least in view of the lead time that is now required to provide new ships at sea. It is no longer measured in years; it must almost be measured in decades. There are other considerations in regard to the Royal Navy, however, and tonight I wish to concentrate on the unique value of its contribution to the life of the nation.

Perhaps in slight contrast to the other two services, the Royal Navy constantly carries out useful tasks. Even in peacetime, the Navy is doing something that must be done —something that is useful and repays some of the expense that the taxpayer necessarily incurs in maintaining it.

My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned a number of the tasks for which it is responsible in peacetime, many of which are in aid of the civil powers. He mentioned the assistance given to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, fishery protection, work to control drug and arms running, work associated with accidents and emergencies and evacuation work—which could be military or civilian.

Mention has also been made of patrols in waters of high strategic importance—such as the Armilla patrol, which has operated for the past 14 years—and of the need to protect sovereignty. In that context, the Falkland Islands immediately spring to mind.

Another of the Navy's tasks is supporting the British Antarctic survey, which is particularly significant in the light of the Rio agreements. South Georgia fishing limits will have to be policed by naval forces, because there is no airfield on the island. The list goes on and on: all the Navy's peacetime tasks represent a return for the taxpayer's money. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) mentioned the hydrographic service. That aspect of the Royal Navy's work has an immediate pay-off, generating substantial income.

Traditionally, the Royal Navy has been one of the finest training schools in the world, if not the finest. It continues to train young men in increasingly high-tech skills which will be relevant to the civilian life to which they will eventually return. It also provides training in man management, the taking of responsibility and good citizenship. All that costs an enormous amount but pays handsome dividends—unlike other areas of Government expenditure, which sometimes appear to produce no return at all.

Let me place on record my regret about certain features of naval life today. We no longer have a Royal Naval Reserve Fleet. During the past 12 months, we have agreed to scrap the Royal Naval Auxiliary Reserve. The House must be aware of the decimation of the Royal Naval Reserve and the ending of a long tradition of the Royal Naval Reserve manning and operating its own sea-going tenders. It must also be aware of the closure of Royal Naval Reserve depots around our coastline.

Those facts, taken in conjunction with the reduced numbers of men employed in the fishing industry and the contraction of the merchant marine, which was mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House this evening, and with the increasing use of foreign crews in the ships that remain under the red ensign, mean that the ships and personnel that we have now are all that we are likely to have to fight with in a future conflict.

Given the lead time to build new ships, and given that we have drained every reservoir and every pool of seafaring expertise, it is unlikely that we will be able to mount any additional forces in any foreseeable conflict other than the forces that we have at that time. That places an enormous responsibility on Government and especially on Defence Ministers.

I invite the House to consider the words of President Clinton in his "State of the Union" address on 25 January, three weeks ago, when he said:

> "Last year, I proposed a defense plan that maintains our post-Cold War security at a lower cost. This year, many people urged me to cut our defense spending further to pay for other government programmes. I said no. The budget I send to Congress draws the line against further defense cuts. It protects the readiness and quality of our forces. Ultimately, the best strategy is to do that."

He want on to say:

> "We must not cut defense further."

During the debate, understandably, Bosnia has been mentioned several times. The House is well aware of the substantial contribution that Britain is making in that region and especially, in the context of the debate, the number of naval assets deployed in the Adriatic. That is of enormous value and importance because of what those forces represent in terms of their potential for supporting, for reinforcing, for interdicting from the air if necessary and even ultimately for evacuating our forces on the ground. It is a classic example of the use of sea power. My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) referred to the 500 years of tradition that we have in the use and deployment of sea power, maintaining a presence or even a threat beyond the horizon, which in its turn deters and lends enhanced credibility to the diplomacy that our country conducts.

I now turn to the words of caution that were so thoughtfully expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster when he spoke about the political situation in Russia. I share his worries. As we move towards what may well become a shooting war in Bosnia, I am apprehensive at the prospect of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation being led into a three-dimensional trap. My three-dimensional trap is one of demoralisation, stemming from involvement in a war that we might not be able to win, possibly confronting the prospect of defeat, diplomatically, militarily or both, and that might—we must all fight against this—lead ultimately to the disintegration of NATO, which would be the realisation of Moscow's long-term aim. I invite the House to consider who, even now, remain the world's best chess players.

To understand the danger to NATO and the threat to western democracy, it is necessary to analyse carefully what is happening in Russia today. That, to my mind, is best summed up in the headline that appeared in a brief from the Center for Security Policy in Washington, dated 24 January 1994:

> "Who lost Russia? The same people who are taking it back—the Soviets and their friends."

9.3 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I am sure that all hon. Members present will join me in welcoming the opportunity to discuss the future of the Royal Navy. Since the launch of "Options for Change" in the summer of 1990 and subsequent announcements about the size of our armed forces, we have had few occasions to debate the broad strategic implications of our current maritime policy.

I am glad that so few Members of the Opposition have sufficient interest in the subject to be here this evening, because it has allowed me to squeeze into the debate, but I cannot avoid acknowledging the brief cameo appearance of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), the sole member of the Liberal party who has occasionally turned up—rather like a picnic boat at Henley royal regatta.

The facts and the contents of the debates, and the contributions made to them by Ministers, allied with those Ministers' firm decision in favour of a new helicopter carrier—I trust that a complementary order for new landing platform docks will soon be made as well—and the recent pronouncement, which appears to clarify the Ministry of Defence's policy on the size of the surface fleet, bode well and prove that only a Conservative Government can be entrusted with the nation's defences.

There is, nevertheless, a very real danger of a continuing mismatch between the Royal Navy's resources and its operational commitments. For that reason, it remains necessary for the Government to think clearly and carefully about our foreign policy interests and decide which are crucial and which are merely desirable if current financial pressures prevail. In short, where is the front line? Should it be redrawn to match our resources or should our resources be allowed to increase to man a longer front line fully?

At present, the Royal Navy is valiantly seeking to fulfil our commitments to NATO, in the north Atlantic, in the Mediterranean and the channel; to continue the long-standing Armilla patrol in the Gulf; to maintain a presence in the south Atlantic and the West Indies; and, of late, to provide more ships for patrolling the Adriatic. The Royal Navy is also to be found in the Indian ocean and the far east.

Naval technology and doctrine have certainly changed since Alfred Mahan cautioned fiercely, "Never divide the fleet," but surely it is only common sense that our current commitments should at all times be bolstered by the funds necessary to ensure that a naval presence in a particular geographical area is of sufficient quality, in terms of capabilities and the amount of time spent on station, to achieve military and diplomatic objectives.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has tempered the Ministry's vagueness—some might say, understandable obfuscation—about the size of the surface fleet. Until several months ago, projections of a combined destroyer and frigate force of "about 35" could be interpreted—indeed, were interpreted—as meaning 30. We are now assured that "about 35" means no fewer than 34. This trend provides some hope of a more open debate about the role of the Royal Navy, and the Secretary of State is to be congratulated on that. In future, it might even be possible to have an absolute minimum figure, but problems remain.

The projected figure includes those vessels described as being in "extended readiness", a delicate euphemism for totally unfit for combat. If all those warships that are being broken in, refitted and even awaiting sale are taken into account, it means that, for every one vessel on patrol, there are two or three in port.

The United States navy is the world leader in stealth technology but the Royal Navy may become the world leader in another sense. It will be so overstretched by a multiplicity of global commitments that it will be a ghost-like, ultra-stealthy fleet. It is sobering to re-read what a Conservative defence commentator, Christopher Coker, wrote only six years ago. He reported:

"the 1987 Defence Estimates . . . suggested . . . that the Navy would deploy only 45 operational frigates and destroyers by the mid-1990s, a figure very close to the total of 42 planned in the 1981 Nott review".

Would that we were to have 42 or 45 operational, or even partly operational, surface ships now.

It is perhaps counter-productive to speculate on which royal naval commitments are more dispensable than others. Such an exercise would merely demoralise the dedicated seamen who serve on particular vessels. The Ministry should, however, accept that the Royal Navy is, I fear, overstretched. With that acceptance, my right hon. and learned Friend will be equipped to consider all possible options for improving the situation without compromising the national interest.

It is also vital that my right hon. and learned Friend should make two cast-iron—or perhaps I should say "iron-clad"—commitments, the first being to resolve project definition by assuring the House that the two increasingly outdated amphibious assault ships, HMS Fearless and Intrepid, will be replaced. Combined land-sea amphibious operations are one of our greatest strengths and they enable us to act, independently or in concert, in out-of-area operations in what Senator Nunn of the United States so charmingly dubbed "come-as-you-are parties".

The second commitment involves our submarine fleet. There is an unfortunate fallacy, fashionable in some quarters, that submarine warfare is somehow less important now than it was during the cold war. I suggest that people forget at their peril not only that the Russian fleet is undiminished but that country's construction programme appears to be continuing apace.

The versatility of the modern SSN—the nuclear-powered submarine—is ignored. Too often it is written off as a platform whose sole rationale is as a submarine killer or as an overly aggressive weapon which does not sit well with the multilateral peacekeeping operations in which surface vessels are used to send diplomatic signals.

The fact is that SSNs are versatile boats. They can be used to launch conventional cruise missiles against land targets, to protect our sea lanes, to conduct surveillance and special operations missions and, through improvements in submarine C31—or command control communication intelligence systems—as an integrated part of a surface fleet. The Government should and, I trust, will assure the House that no more cuts in the SSN fleet will be made. They should also reconsider the decision to disband the Upholder class of conventional submarines whose qualities have been mentioned by other hon. Members this evening.

With a guarantee about the size of the surface fleet and a decision to proceed with a helicopter carrier—which will go hand in hand, I trust, with an announcement about LPDs—the Government and the Ministers on the Front Bench have shown that they hold the Royal Navy's best interests close to their hearts and at the forefront of their minds. What we must now do is build on those guarantees and ensure that the Royal Navy can meet all its commitments now and in the foreseeable future.

9.10 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): It is one of the advantages of having a name beginning with W that, from time to time, one is tail-end Charlie in a debate. When

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

you and I first came into the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our naval debates were illumined by hon. and gallant Members who had spent their formative years before the mast. I have not had that privilege, but we have all had the privilege of hearing some exceedingly fine speeches this evening, not least from hon. Members who either, as in the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), are distinguished in their field or who have proved themselves distinguished in their defence of constituency interests, be they naval bases, shipyards or companies which support the Royal Navy.

If one cannot spend time before the mast, one can at least try and do the next best thing. In the House, it is to get oneself on to the parliamentary armed forces scheme. I am just coming to the end of my term. I know that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, particularly, if I may say so, in politics. None the less, I pay a warm-hearted tribute both to the organisers of the scheme and to my generous hosts, the Corps of Royal Marines. I want, in the few minutes that remain, to dwell on the importance to this country of our amphibious capability and of the Royal Marines in particular.

As has so often been remarked in the course of this wide-ranging debate, we are an island nation which depends on overseas trade for its livelihood and on the maintenance of that trade for its survival. We are different from our continental allies in western Europe, and our maritime heritage impels us towards a concentration, if we are wise, on the instruments of maritime power and of air power which is its concomitant.

The Royal Marines are indispensable to us because they enable us to project power ashore from the sea in an exceedingly cost-effective manner. They are only some 6,000 or so in strength and their budget is only some £200 million a year, but every man of the Royal Marines is trained to the highest standards, and there is no dilution of those standards even at this time of acute economic stringency.

Then there is the versatility of the corps, which, during my attachment to it, enabled me to see at first hand something of its operations. I thought that Belize was a typical scenario, being a country that might at some time in the future require amphibious assistance for its defence. In Northern Ireland, 40. Commando is engaged in west Belfast as I speak. This is a highly dangerous environment, notwithstanding the Government's efforts to secure a political settlement which will bring peace. In addition, I saw marines train in northern Norway for arctic warfare. Without that training and without their special expertise the Royal Marines would not have been able to provide the essential ingredient which made possible the recapture of the Falkland Islands in 1982.

I did not see, but read newspaper accounts of, the Royal Marines' intervention in Operation Haven in northern Iraq. We read about the activities of the naval pilots from the commando Sea King squadrons that are providing such valiant service in Bosnia at present. Before the conflict is over, we may need yet again to be able to project military power ashore from the sea. I should be prepared to lay a bet that, if so—whether to reinforce our presence or to execute a satisfactory withdrawal from Bosnia—the Royal Marines will be there.

I should like to make just two observations about the equipment of the Royal Marines. First, there is the crucial importance, for their operations as for the operations of the Army, of a sufficiency of helicopters. It is my earnest hope that in due time, when the Sea King mark IV comes to be replaced, the utility version of the Merlin will be used. It would make very good logistic sense. The commonality would make for economy in the operations of the fleet. I trust too that, if the Royal Air Force acquires some of these aircraft—I hope that it will—they will be marinised and able to inter-operate with the Sea Kings of 845 and 846 naval air squadrons for the Royal Marines.

Secondly, I gather that it is planned that the anti-armour element of 3 Commando Air Squadron—the Lynx/TOW aircraft—will not be replaced with a dedicated anti-tank helicopter flown by the Royal Marines. I am informed that the Royal Marines will have to rely on the Army Air Corps for this role. I believe this to be unwise—first, because there is a likelihood that the aircraft will not be marinised and, therefore, will be unsuitable for operation from carriers; secondly, because it is almost certain that some general will require the Army Air Corps to be elsewhere when the Royal Marines badly need their aeroplanes.

The other equipment issue which I wish to raise concerns ships. We are delighted at the decision of Her Majesty's Government to procure HMS Ocean, the landing platform helicopter, but this vessel is to be constructed only partly to naval standards. Bearing in mind what happened to the Atlantic Conveyor and to Sir Galahad in the Falklands war, I wonder whether that is entirely right.

When I read my contract bulletin from the Ministry of Defence and see that the project definition studies for the two landing platform dock vessels are to be studies for potential construction without the full implementation of naval standards, I wonder about the wisdom of such a potentially cost-saving measure. I know that defensive aids have much improved and that there are electronic and chaff defences which are perhaps more important than ruggedness of construction. Nevertheless, I hope that we shall not spoil the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar.

Finally, I earnestly pray that we shall be able to retain Swan Hunter shipbuilders in operation on the Tyne. To do so is crucial to a properly competitive naval shipbuilding industry. The yard is fully capable of building vessels such as the landing ship logistic which we shall want and the landing platform docks that we shall need. I hope that we shall be able to keep the yard going until it can be rescued by a French buyer, or whoever it may be. I hope that the LSL Sir Bedivere will be refitted by Swan Hunter.

I praise the Royal Marines and Her Majesty's Government for the support that they have given to the Marines, and I thank my hosts, who made my parliamentary attachment so worth while.

9.20 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Single service debates are normally characterised by a relatively small number of people who have a relatively wide range of knowledge. They are normally leaner and fitter than most of the debates and tonight has been no exception.

A large number of specific points were raised and it is almost impossible to cover them all as well as making general remarks. However, to address one comment to the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), many of us had feared the experience of interventions from

him in Royal Air Force debates and it now seems that he has geared up to extend his empire of knowledge. We look forward to his future comments in debates on the Royal Marines and other naval matters.

The hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) raised a specific point regarding Devonport, especially the need to retain a skill mix there for Trident. He was one of a number of hon. Members who raised a specific industrial issue. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) referred to the tragic developments at Swan Hunter. In both those cases we want to see the retention of strategic industrial capacity in the United Kingdom.

Several hon. Members presented a pretty devastating critique of the present position of our merchant fleet, to which I shall return, including the hon. Members for Worcester (Mr. Luff), for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) and for Ludlow (Mr. Gill). The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) reiterated his view that naval resources did not match naval commitments. He said that there was a mismatch and an overstretch. Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier), managed to combine that point in a devastating fashion along with a pledge of undying loyalty to the Tory Government and confidence that they will not do that in the first place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) highlighted the devastating effects of random and unscheduled cuts based on budgetary rather than strategically driven decisions, outlined the effect of those cuts on the shipbuilding industry and asked some penetrating questions about the Malaysian aid deal, to which I hope the Minister will reply in his summation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) raised a range of social issues, especially the disgraceful difference since 1979, under the Government, between the real increase in wages and conditions—particularly wages—among the higher ranks in the Navy and the real decrease of up to 14 per cent. among ordinary ratings. It seems that for the Government and the armed forces, as elsewhere, there are two standards —one for the bosses and one for the poor bloody infantry and the poor bloody ratings.

My hon. Friend also talked of the standard of education in schools attended by sons and daughters of personnel. It was interesting to see how the party of "back to basics" in education did not like the detail with which he had armed himself tonight. Hon. Members said that it was a boring subject. If the education of the sons and daughters of the military of the country is a boring subject, I ask myself why the Tories have been prattling on for the past six months about an education system which they have murdered over the past 14 years. My hon. Friend did a service to the House by raising that issue.

The hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) looked for a balanced fleet and for "a clear strategic view". If he is looking for that, he will, in his own words, "look in vain" to the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann) raised some important questions, to which I shall return, about the role of aircraft carriers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) made perhaps the most impassioned and certainly the most moving appeal tonight. She argued, as she has in the past—tonight she surpassed herself—about the way in which the Government have betrayed their commitment not only to our industrial base but to our strategic requirements and to the manpower and womanpower at the Rosyth base.

I repeat that the Labour party believes, and has believed, in the continued existence of two dockyards capable of refitting nuclear-powered submarines. We believe that that is essential, and we stand by that tonight. It is a great tragedy that, as predicted, the so-called guarantees given by the Secretary of State for Defence some months ago turned out to be as flimsy as we thought they would be——

Mr. Aitken: No.

Dr. Reid: The Minister says no, but we are all learning from experience the difference between a written guarantee and a Rifkind guarantee; the second sort is not worth the paper it is not written on.

The hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) gave his usual polished performance, bringing a great deal of experience, specifically to the criticism of the decision on the Upholder class—I shall return to that subject—and to his comments on the Select Committee's view that our naval forces are insufficient for our commitments. That was also the Committee's view on the infantry, and I suspect that it is increasingly becoming its view across the whole range. If I have missed out any hon. Members who spoke, perhaps I shall mention them during my general comments.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the events of today are moving so quickly that, even as we have been speaking, the situation in Bosnia has been changing, almost by the hour. Immediately before the debate, using a rather spurious answer rather than a full statement, the Government refused to meet a request by someone who is admittedly a United Nations and NATO general, but who also happens to be a British Army officer and a British citizen, for us to assist towards the creation of a more stable environment around Sarajevo by supplying more troops.

The Opposition regret that refusal, and feel that General Sir Michael Rose has been let down, as have the UN forces in Bosnia in general. We appreciate the danger and we take the point about balancing the risks, but apart from the consideration that the request was made by a British general, the fact that we are already one of the largest contributors to the force in Bosnia means that we should be ultra-cautious about the danger of not having sufficient troops on the ground, in the estimation of the UN commander. We are sad, and we believe that the Government have ducked their responsibilities.

Some hon. Members may be aware that since the debate started there has been a relatively surprising political initiative. The Russians have apparently spoken to the Serbs this afternoon and said that they are prepared to put in extra soldiers around Sarajevo. The Serbs appear to be suggesting that on that basis they will withdraw more completely than they had previously been prepared to. It is too early to give a reasoned judgment on that development, but let us all, on both sides of the House, hope that it has the potential to reduce even further the possibility of a terrible overspill into general war, and to de-escalate the situation around Sarajevo.

Mr. Garnier: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the development that he has just mentioned is probably the direct result of the intervention by the British Prime Minister in Moscow this week?

Dr. Reid: That may be the case. I am not in a position to know whether the new policy of "back to Boris" has brought some benefits. If the Prime Minister was involved in the decision in any way, hon. Members on both sides of the House will welcome that. Perhaps he has made no reference to it since coming back from Moscow because there were secret talks—or it may all be nothing to do with him. If he contributed towards what may turn out to be a move towards peace, of course we shall all welcome that, as we would welcome any steps that could be taken to resolve the savage and cruel war in the former Yugoslavia.

I shall briefly add my voice to the accolades that it is customary to give on such occasions to the service men and women in the Royal Navy. This year, in connection with the Navy, the phrase "service men and women" is probably more important than it was in the past.

It has been mentioned that this year is the 50th anniversary of the greatest armada of ships ever assembled by this or any other nation together with its allies. Our thoughts go to those who gave their lives in the service of their country, especially the role that they played on 6 June 1944. That great armada may have diminished somewhat but, as hon. Members have said, not only in the Adriatic but elsewhere, men and women of the British Navy continue to fulfil a role that is not only productive for this country and its national interests but, one hopes, helps to create a more peaceful and stable world.

In discussing the future role of the Royal Navy, I shall start my general remarks by making the observation, which is perhaps a banal one, that the security of the United Kingdom is first and foremost a question of maritime security—that is self-evident for an island such as ours. In defensive terms, our ability to guarantee the security of Britain's sea lines of communication has always been the fundamenental prerequisite of our survival as a nation. Twice in this century alone—we have already referred to one occasion—we faced a hostile enemy determined to blockade and starve Britain into submission, and twice we have prevailed by the narrowest of margins. Defending ourselves from the emergence of a similar threat in the future remains our primary duty.

If the sea is our first line of defence, it is just as important as a means of pursuing our wider security objectives. If we are denied the use of some of the world's oceans for our purposes, we would be powerless to safeguard our interests overseas, resi. acts of aggression against our friends and allies abroad and fulfil our own obligations within the NATO area. Today, as in the past, our vital interest extends far beyond Britain's shores and we must ensure that we retain the ability to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability wherever it is threatened.

Having defined the two main tasks of the Royal Navy —the defensive task of protecting our trade routes and the offensive task of projecting power overseas—it should be clear that the transformation of the strategic environment since 1989, which has been alluded to by several hon. Members, has significant implications for the relative emphasis that each should be accorded within our overall defence strategy. The disintegration of the Warsaw pact and the break-up of the old Soviet fleet means that we need a radical reassessment of our approach to the use of sea power.

As several hon. Members have mentioned during the cold war our priorities were relatively simple to define—to maintain the transatlantic link and to deploy sufficient ground forces in a forward position to act as a deterrent to any intended aggression. The situation has now changed in two fundamental respects: first, the central front no longer exists and the correlation of forces in Europe has changed out of all recognition; secondly, there has been a dramatic decline in the potential threat to shipping in the eastern Atlantic following the rapid decrease in the size and operational readiness of the Russian navy.

I shall be careful how I couch this because caution has correctly emanated from several hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Upminster, for Ludlow and for Harborough. It is essential to guard against complacency and prepare for the possibility of a revived threat. Russia continues to operate a number of modern surface warships and highly capable attack submarines, and an authoritarian regime in Moscow may at some stage in the future attempt to rebuild an ocean-going capability with the intention of posing a challenge to the security of Britain and our allies. Therefore, we are not complacent.

Continued economic stagnation is almost certain to impose resource limitations on what the Russian armed forces are capable of doing in the foreseeable future, regardless of who is in power. Furthermore, as the new military Russian doctrine underlines, the issue of the near abroad is likely to preoccupy Russian military planners for some time. Therefore, although we are not complacent, we recognise the objective economic, political and geographical conditions that constrain even a threatening and ambitious leadership in Russia.

For the Royal Navy, those developments are of the utmost significance. In the absence of an immediate and tangible threat to transatlantic communications, the Royal Navy will be able to spend less time and devote fewer resources to the task of gaining control of the sea and concentrate more on using that control for the purposes of power projection.

Our naval force structure and procurement plans need to be revised in a way that explicitly recognises that change. On paper, the Government appear to agree with us on that matter. On Tuesday, for example, the Secretary of State for Defence told a meeting organised by the Centre for Defence Studies that our maritime power projection capability was a critical component of national defence strategy. He went on to define its core capacity as consisting of three distinct elements: aircraft carriers, nuclear-powered submarines and amphibious forces. It is appropriate, therefore, to consider those elements as a convenient yardstick by which to judge the effectiveness of Government policy.

The refit in 1959 of the old Ark Royal aircraft carrier was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen). The relationship of existing aircraft carriers to the future capability and role of the Royal Navy was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich. In view of the importance accorded to the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers by the Secretary of State, I hope that the Minister, when he sums up, will be able to deny categorically a recent press report that HMS Ark Royal is to be mothballed—although the MOD, using its latest euphemism, would say that it is being placed in a state of "extended readiness". Someone in the MOD must be being paid to do nothing but think up beautiful euphemisms. As has been mentioned, we have not cuts but "downsizing".

I hope that the Minister will deny the report, because there would be a significant diminution in our maritime

intervention capability if extended readiness, mothballing or any other euphemism that the MOD can produce, were to shroud the Ark Royal. We know from our experience of the Falklands war that a force consisting of two carriers affords a degree of air power that is barely adequate to conduct maritime operations in a hostile environment. Without the Ark Royal, it would be impossible to ensure even a two-carrier deployment.

As the Secretary of State said on Tuesday:

"to be an effective tool, a naval force must have a credible capability to act".

Unless the Ark Royal receives its planned refit, such a credible capability will cease to exist. The Secretary of State must understand that.

It is interesting that the Secretary of State specified nuclear-powered submarines in his speech. As we are all aware, last July the Government announced their intention to lease or sell the United Kingdom's fleet of four Upholder class diesel-powered submarines, a matter to which various hon. Members alluded. It must now be obvious to the Government, in view of the comments from hon. Members on both sides of the House, that the wisdom of that decision is questionable.

The smaller draft of Upholder vessels compared with the larger nuclear-powered attack submarines makes them better suited to the type of coastal operations that are vital in amphibious warfare, especially in mine-clearing and special forces operations. The unique inshore capabilities of those vessels are still required. It remains for the Government to explain how the assets will be provided if all four Upholders are sold.

The final element of naval power identified by the Secretary of State—the amphibious capability—is even more interesting. There has been a great deal of comment by hon. Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) and for Barrow and Furness, on amphibiosity and amphibious capability. We know that assault ships Fearless and Intrepid were used during the Falklands war and both would be needed again in any future large-scale operation.

"Extended readiness" is a phrase that we have heard again in relation to one or both of those ships. Will the Minister give a categorical assurance that Intrepid could be made operational in the event of an emergency? Will he confirm that Fearless has been kept operational in much the same way as the second division in the Gulf was kept operational—by cannibalising the first? Will he confirm that Fearless has been kept operational because the Intrepid is being cannibalised for spare parts? Unless he can give us that categorical assurance, many will wonder whether the guarantees that we shall have two amphibious ships at our disposal ring hollow. I fear that the real answer cannot be given tonight and that the term "extended readiness" is little more than an exercise in obfuscation.

It is a matter of great national concern that the Royal Navy's amphibious capability has been allowed to lapse into such a state of disrepair. It is an indictment of the Government's approach to defence policy that they have so far failed to provide the resources and take the decisions needed to rectify that problem.

Last November, the Secretary of State announced to the Select Committee on Defence that he would invite tenders for a further batch of Sandown class minehunters, taking our total force "up to" 25 vessels. First, that was a declaration of intent, and no one should think anything else; it is not a firm order. Secondly, it is vague commitment, with the phrase "up to" 25. Thirdly, even if the orders were placed today, there would be a danger period, spreading to the end of the century, in which mine counter-measures capability would be perilously over-stretched. Can the Minister give us any further concrete news on how that situation now stands?

The merchant marine has been mentioned by almost every hon. Member tonight. I need say no more than that there is unanimity in the House that this country is no longer capable of mustering anything remotely near to the type of back-up that we would need from the commercial sector if there were a national naval emergency. One of the first priorities of a future Labour Government will be to seek ways to identify a core of militarily useful commercial ships and to devise the means by which their continued availability can be assured.

The time for choices is rapidly approaching. We cannot go on indefinitely postponing decisions, pushing back orders and tapering back training. We cannot go on having cuts and cannnibalising one section of the armed forces' equipment to keep another one going.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West quoted Churchill in a moving section of her speech. Churchill also said that one of the facts of life was that when one took the most audacious airman, the most courageous seaman and the most gallant soldier and put them in a room together, the result was the sum total of their fears.

I am afraid that if we put the Ministers for Defence together, we would appear to get the sum total of their fears. They fear, on the one hand, the Treasury and, on the other, making decisions which might alienate some people in the short term, but which would be absolutely essential for the benefit of our armed forces in the long run. Unless they overcome those fears, they will do a disservice to themselves, the House, the Navy and the rest of the armed forces.

9.42 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): I am glad that, in his catalogue of fears which he thinks the ministerial team has, the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) did not include a fear of the Opposition Front Bench. I can certainly assure him that that is not high on our list of priorities.

I am glad to open the winding-up speech by paying the traditional, but nevertheless wholehearted, tribute to the men and women who serve in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. Hon. Members from all parts of the House throughout the debate have expressed consistently high praise for their professionalism, loyalty and dedication to duty. I am glad to add the Government's tribute of appreciation to the senior service.

I express that appreciation tonight with particular feeling because, although there have been some encouraging developments today in Sarajevo about which I shall say something in a moment, it is still possible that Royal Air Force and Royal Navy pilots could have to go into action next week. That is a sombre thought and makes this debate on the Royal Navy all the more timely and appropriate.

There has been an encouraging and important new development to the situation in Sarajevo today. The Russian Government have offered 400 troops to join UNPROFOR. As a consequence of that announcement and

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

of other developments, including the British Government's announcement that we will be redeploying some 300 men to Sarajevo from Vitez, it appears that General Rose is getting more and more of the troops he has requested to help monitor the ceasefire. That ceasefire appears to be making encouraging progress and it is being reported tonight that there has been a significant increase in the withdrawal of Serb artillery units beyond the 20 km line.

It is too early to say that the ultimatum has been complied with, but the early signs are distinctly encouraging. The British Government welcome those developments. We are glad that the Russion Government have been so active in persuading the Serbs to withdraw their heavy weapons. The matters were discussed between President Yeltsin and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. They agreed on common objectives in Bosnia during their talks in Moscow. Both Governments wanted to see heavy weapons withdrawn from Sarajevo. Both Governments wanted to see those weapons brought under United Nations control. Both Governments wanted to see the peace negotiations given new impetus. Those developments appear to be happening.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister suggested that we and our partners should use whatever channels we had to bring our influence to bear on the warring parties. President Yeltsin privately gave the Prime Minister notice that he intended to send a personal emissary, Deputy Minister Churkin, to meet the Serbs, and that Russia might be prepared to deploy additional troops to Sarajevo to control heavy weapons.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence did everything that they could to encourage that. So today's news that the Russians have made some progress is seen as a most welcome development, arising as it did directly from the talks in Moscow. The whole House will congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on what has clearly been a most successful diplomatic initiative.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: My hon. Friend is obviously right, and I am sure that the whole House will join him in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and welcoming the Russian initiative to send assistance to us in Sarajevo. I see on the tapes this evening that there is a planned meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Italy on Sunday. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the meeting will go ahead? We all hope that there will be no need to undertake any further initiative and that what has been agreed today will be effective?

Mr. Aitken: I can, indeed, confirm that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, the United States Defence Secretary and Defence Secretaries of other nations that have aircraft based in Italy which would be involved in securing compliance with United Nations resolutions will meet in Italy on Sunday. It will be a briefing meeting which will allow them to be briefed at first hand by operational commanders of their own contingents.

I shall do my best to answer the points raised in today's Navy debate. Before I leave the subject of Bosnia, I must say to the two Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen that they seemed to be unduly and unfairly churlish about the British contribution in Bosnia. I should point out that we are already providing one of the largest contingents in UNPROFOR.

We are contributing to the United Nations' immediate needs by agreeing to the redeployment of some of our forces, notably two companies of the Coldstream Guards from Vitez to Sarajevo and a mortar locating troop equipped with Cymbeline radar. Those extra special resources for which General Rose has asked are a most effective contribution and response to the United Nations request.

General Rose has been told of this morning's Cabinet decision and I understand that he is very pleased with the British contribution. I only wish that the leader of the Liberal Democrats was in his place tonight. I would like to say to his face that his remarks in the House this afternoon were misplaced, ill advised and utterly wrong.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The Minister is perfectly entitled to his view. As he was so keen to say that to my right hon. Friend's face, did he contact my right hon. Friend's office during the day to give him warning that he would like him to be here?

Mr. Aitken: I intended no discourtesy in parliamentary terms. The leaders of parties can look after themselves and must expect their public statements to be responded to. It was not a personal attack. I was criticising his political position.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Aitken: No, I will not give way.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): It is now a quarter to 10 at night. Would not it have been better if the Prime Minister had come to the Dispatch Box at 3.30 pm and made a statement on Bosnia and Russia?

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman merely reveals the unsuitability of himself and his party for government. Has he never heard of secret diplomacy? Has he never heard of co-ordination of the timing of announcements with allies? Surely he realises that the British and Russian Governments had to co-ordinate. It was right that the Russian Government should make their announcement at the appropriate time.

In the limited time available to me, I shall now return to naval matters. The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), who I see returning to his place—I hope that I did not worry him too much with my earlier criticisms; I thought that he might have taken flight—asked about Upholder submarines. That subject was also mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) and others.

As we announced in the 1993 White Paper, the Upholders are being withdrawn from service in the six months leading up to March 1995. That was an extremely difficult decision for us to take. It was due to the fact that there has been a fall in Soviet—now Russian—navy activity, particularly in the Greenland-Iceland gap, where the Upholders were designed and designated to patrol.

I was confused by the speech of the hon. Member for Swansea, East because, having criticised us for proposing to withdraw the Upholders, in another part of his speech he seemed to refer to the Greenland-Iceland gap and say how good it was that the United States had reduced its activity

in that region. But at the end of his speech, he demanded less anti-submarine activity and greater power projection of maritime forces. I think that there was some confusion —he cannot have it all ways, even if he is a Labour party spokesman.

I agreed with the hon. Member for Swansea, East when he talked about the need for maritime power projection for various purposes, including the defence of what he called microstates. He referred to the landing platform for helicopters, which he mysteriously called a cost-cutting measure—that is not what my hon. Friends the Treasury Ministers called it when the project was approved. LPH achieves mobility, flexibility and the amphibious element that is crucial to future peacekeeping operations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster referred to a rumour. He was right in describing it as a rumour, and I can scotch it once and for all. It was rumoured that, because we introduced the LPH, the carrier would be scrapped as a consequence. We have no such plans or intentions and the rumour is false.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster also mentioned piracy, and I can give him a more emollient reply than he was given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) about the Malacca straits. We believe that all attacks on merchant ships at sea are a matter of great concern. Royal Navy ships will take all appropriate measures to respond to incidents of piracy whenever they are able to do so. The United Kingdom is playing an active role with the Association of South-East Asian Nations and other states in the International Maritime Organisation to combat piracy.

Several hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), referred to the merchant shipping fleet, which has been of concern to us. The last decade has seen a significant decline in the British flag merchant fleet. We at the Ministry of Defence keep a close watch on the numbers of strategic ships to ensure that our plans are capable of being achieved.

Many of the issues raised about increasing the size of the merchant fleet are matters for the Department of Transport, not the Ministry of Defence. A new package of measures to help the British shipping industry and encourage more British shipowners to fly the red ensign was announced by the Department of Transport on 15 December. Those measures include new regulations simplifying the registration of merchant ships, and consultation on the proposal that, except for strategic ships—where there will be a nationality requirement for the master to be British, or to be from British Commonwealth, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation or EC countries—officers of United Kingdom-registered ships can be of any nationality.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) made a moving speech. She has been a doughty fighter for her constituents, for which I respect her. She made an eloquent plea on behalf of Rosyth naval base. The 155 redundancies to which she referred have a simple explanation. It was confirmed in January 1992 that Rosyth naval base would be reduced to a minor war vessel operating base by April 1995. As part of the planned rundown to minor war vessel operating base status, we had, sadly, to announce up to 155 redundancies. There was no deceit about the subject, which was not part of the "Front Line First" study.

The hon. Lady made a powerful caes for the retention of Rosyth naval base, not just in terms of avoiding unemployment among her constituents, but for strategic reasons. I shall consider her speech carefully as part of "Front Line First". There is no great secret or conspiracy —"Front Line First" studies all aspects of defence support activity, of which naval infrastructure is just one of 20.

Studies are being conducted across the naval estate and the study on the rationalisation of facilities at the Rosyth naval base must be seen in that context. No decisions have been taken; nor will they be until after recommendations in the context of the studies as a whole have been presented to Ministers. The hon. Lady asked me six or eight questions about Rosyth naval base. I hope that she will understand that I cannot answer them in the time available, so I shall write to her and answer them.

I pay a warm tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) for the energetic way in which he champions his constituents' interests in difficult times. No other hon. Member writes, telephones or visits my office more often or more effectively. He and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) asked me to pay tribute to the work force at Swan Hunter. I am full of admiration for their professionalism and high standards of workmanship in finishing our type 23 frigates and other MOD work during the past few months of acute disappointment and adversity. Their standards have been impeccable and highly admirable. I confirm that Swan Hunter is welcome to tender for new MOD contracts, although before we can place such a contract we shall need to see new ownership of the yard.

The hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) produced the unusual conspiracy theory that a Devonport dockyard could be taken over by Germans or Arabs. The answer to his question whether that could happen is emphatically no. Appropriate safeguards will be maintained. They will be necessary because the refitting of our nuclear submarines is of the highest importance to our national security interests.

The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann) began his speech by saying that he had no criticism of the Government's policy towards the Royal Navy. That stamps him as an hon. Member with independence of mind.

On the other conspiracy theory stories about Malaysia, various allegations were made, mainly by the hon. Members for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, East who seem to think that some special bias was encouraged by the Ministry of Defence towards frigates from Yarrow and away from frigates from Swan Hunter.

The choice of companies to supply equipment and contractual arrangements are matters for the Malaysian Government. Indeed, all defence purchases under the MOU by Malaysia were made for cash, with the customer making the decisions. Export Credits Guarantee Department facilities were not required and there was no question of taxpayers' money financing a series of successful orders for British industry, worth well over £1 billion.

As for the MOD playing a sinister part in that, all we did was to comment on the companies' technical competence, but we did not make a firm recommendation either way. That is entirely in line with our normal practice on such occasions. The choice of Yarrow for that order rested solely with the customer.

I apologise for being unable to answer all the points raised in this debate.

Dr. Reid: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Aitken: I have been cut short and shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, as he took up two minutes or so of my time, which I could have been using valuably.

May I knock on the head the notion that the Government are drifting and doing nothing on defence procurement? In the nine months since our last Royal Navy debate, we have had a succession of impressive procurement decisions or orders worth well over £1 billion. Those include the important decision to award the landing platform helicopter contract to Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. In January, we announced the decision to purchase 18 new FRS2 Sea Harriers as part of an order worth some £200 million. A few weeks later, I announced the awarding of a contract for the development and production of Sonar 2076, as part of the overall Swiftsure and Trafalgar update programme, worth in excess of £400 million.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced that tenders for four single-role minehunters, with an option for three further vessels, were to be issued, as they were in December 1993 on the basis of the "UK-only build". Responses to that invitation to tender are due in April and we expect to place an order later this year. Meanwhile, the Trident programme continues to make good progress and HMS Vanguard, the first submarine to be accepted by the Royal Navy in 1993, proceeded to sea trials and is progressing well.

During the same period, what on earth have the Opposition been doing? The Liberal party's sovereign policy-making body, the federal conference, passed a resolution for a 50 per cent. defence cut. The Labour party passed a resolution by a two-thirds majority—composite resolution No. 49—the effect of which would be to reduce Britain's defence spending by a third, or £7·5 billion. That is the equivalent of removing the whole spend of the Royal Navy. For good measure, the brothers passed composite resolution 48, instructing the next Labour Government to carry out the immediate scrapping of Trident.

If those resolutions show what the Labour party thinks about the Royal Navy, at next year's conference Labour will probably pass another composite resolution banning the politically incorrect singing of "Rule Britannia".

By contrast, the Government believe in a strong and effective Royal Navy whose capability, versatility, flexibility and fire power make it one of the premier naval forces in the world. We have a core capability provided by our aircraft carriers, our nuclear-powered submarines and our amphibious forces. Questions have been asked about our carriers, but under current plans we will continue to maintain three Invincible aircraft carriers and HMS Intrepid.

I have referred elsewhere to the formidable work which our aircraft carriers have been able to do through fully utilising their wide range of capability while stationed in the Adriatic——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Robert Jackson be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. Richard Tracey be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Kevin Hughes be added to the Select Committee on European Legislation.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Home Improvements (Merseyside)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this house do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): First, may I thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing this debate to take place and for giving me the opportunity to draw the attention of the House to the serious problems being encountered by applicants for home improvement grants on Merseyside?

Let me first describe the genesis of the problem. Hon. Members may recall the massive 1960s and 1970s clearance programmes, when hundreds of thousands of homes were bulldozed, when communities were decimated and the heart was torn out of countless neighbourhoods. Family life was left in tatters as people were uprooted and scattered to overspill estates to which many did not want to go.

As a young city councillor in Liverpool in 1972, I was first elected for the Low Hill ward and fought my first election campaign on a pledge to stop the bulldozers in their tracks. When I became chairman of the city's housing committee in 1978, I was able to announce at my first committee meeting that we were pensioning off the bulldozer and to declare the largest ever housing action area programme in Britain. Thousands of homes in Liverpool were improved and many "Coronation Street" communities were given a new lease of life.

Since then, it has become axiomatic to declare a preference for renewal rather than demolition, so much so that, throughout the five district councils that comprise Merseyside, just 90 properties have been demolished in the past 12 months. Hon. Members in all parts of the House will embrace that principle.

No one expected all sub-standard housing to disappear overnight, but the hope was that homes would gradually be improved and that communities and neighbourhoods would be kept together.

On 29 November last year, a group of councillors and officials from the five district councils on Merseyside travelled to Westminster to bring me and other Merseyside Members of Parliament up to date with how those hopes are turning into fears.

Lest the Minister assume that I am making some narrow point, let me emphasise that the political representation was all-party and was of a very high calibre. The points I am raising tonight reflect that same all-party concern. They also reflect the concern of the local housing association movement. The Minister has had a copy of the representations from the housing associations and the local housing forum representing the five district councils.

Let me summarise the present position. Throughout the north-west, some 10 per cent. of housing stock is deemed to be unfit. On Merseyside the percentage is considerably higher—16·8 per cent. in Liverpool, 20 per cent. in Wirral and 23·5 per cent. in St. Helens. In addition, the local authorities estimate that a further 21·8 per cent. of properties across the country need renovation. Parliament lays a statutory duty on the local authorities to deal with unfit properties. We require them by law either to provide a renovation grant or to demolish an unfit property. Clearly, that requires resources.

Last year, the Government made available £32·5 million. The five local authorities, however, estimate that they need some £132·7 million to meet the duty that the House of Commons places on them. St. Helens requires £10·8 million; Sefton, £4·6 million; Knowsley, £5·3 million; Liverpool, £74 million; and Wirral, some £38 million. In other words, there is a shortfall of more than £100 million, and the local authorities are failing dramatically to discharge their responsibility to provide grants within six months of the application being received.

In fact, the waiting lists are so long that some families on Merseyside have been waiting a staggering eight years since their application for a house improvement grant was lodged. Constituents of mine living in Wavertree and other areas, such as Aigburth, Edge Hill, Kensington Fields and the Allerton road area, have been waiting for intolerably long periods to get grants for basic home improvements. The current average waiting time throughout the country is four years and five months.

My colleague, Councillor Frank Doran, the Kensington councillor and a member of Liverpool city council's housing committee, was told in answer to a question at last month's city council meeting that, since 1990 in Liverpool, 12,360 inquiry forms and 3,559 tests of resources had been issued; 3,377 inquiries had been passed on for initial inspection; 2,153 applications had been determined as complete; and that only 25 initial inspections took place each week on average.

The current renovation grant regime is means-tested. As the Minister well knows, a new £20,000 ceiling applies to all mandatory grant applications submitted after 14 January. The information from the Greater Liverpool area underlines the fact that the majority of grants approved are going to the poorest households, living at or close to income support levels. In every authority, the majority of grants went to people who were unable to make a contribution: in St. Helens, 54 per cent.; Sefton, 73 per cent.; Knowsley, 67 per cent.; Wirral, 60 per cent.; and Liverpool, 75 per cent. Those figures represent people applying for house improvement grants who were unable to make a contribution, such were their incomes.

Now that the £20,000 limit has been imposed, undoubtedly the poorest people living in the worst housing will be the most adversely affected. Last year, 31 per cent. of people in St. Helens, 4 per cent. in Sefton, 3 per cent. in Knowsley, 18 per cent. in Liverpool and 18 per cent. in Wirral, all received grants above the £20,000 limit, such was the extent and cost of the work that needed to be done. Those families, who have to apply for grants higher than the new mandatory limit, will not be able to find the resources to fund the additional work that is required.

That acute situation has been made even worse by the Government's notification of funding levels for housing renewal in the current financial year. Across Merseyside, specified capital grant levels have been cut by 23 per cent. in one authority and, at worst, 40 per cent. in another, with average cuts of 29·4 per cent. across the county. Yet, paradoxically, at the time when those cuts are being made in funds for housing in the area, the European Community has given the area the dubious status of an objective 1 region.

The casual observer might be excused some cynicism in contemplating cuts of nearly a third in the money available for house improvement grants, and cuts of £17 million in Liverpool alone in funds for day-to-day programmes, at the very moment when we are being assured that the area's pressing needs will be recognised and addressed.

[Mr. David Alton]

I am also disappointed that, in a letter sent to me today, the Minister's colleague the Earl of Arran has refused to meet the same delegation that came here to meet the cross-party group of Members of Parliament, and to listen to their arguments. That simply will not do. I am grateful to the Minister for being present this evening; I hope that he will assure me that his door is open, and that he will be prepared to meet the delegation to discuss these serious problems.

Some 12,388 renovation grants are now restricted by lack of finance on Merseyside—879 in St. Helens, 731 in Sefton, 925 in Knowsley, 5,148 in Wirral and 4,705 in Liverpool. That backlog will continue to grow. Homes will again have to be demolished as the spectre of new demolition and new clearance programmes appears on the horizon.

In 1989, the Government recognised the need for a more strategic approach by introducing housing renewal areas; I welcomed that at the time. Eight renewal areas were declared on Merseyside—11 per cent. of the total throughout the country. But, because home improvement grants are demand-led, councils are debarred from directing their limited funds to those areas. The result is "pepperpotting", and a consequential patchwork quilt with dereliction on one side and renovation on the other. In the same street, a beautifully improved home may be cheek by jowl with a derelict eyesore.

In Liverpool alone, there are more than 7,000 empty properties in the private sector, many in need of improvement. The renewal areas, therefore, are an embarrassment. Virtually none of the grants are even going to properties in those areas. The failure to target specific neighbourhoods contrasts sharply with the successful experience of the housing action areas and housing action trusts in the public sector. I hope that the Minister will consider that in the review of procedures that is currently under way.

I was brought up in a home without basic amenities. Over the 21 years in which I have represented people in Liverpool—either as a councillor, or in the 15 years for which I have had the privilege to represent them in the House—I have seen the misery that bad housing can create; but I have also seen the radical improvements in people's lives that home improvements can bring. No end of men with building skills are currently unemployed: we should match their skills with people's needs, and tackle the decay of perfectly good housing before it is too late.

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on securing the debate, and on his commitment to his constituency. I do not entirely agree with all his figures, but I do entirely agree that we must make much better use of the housing stock that we already have—whether it is in the private or the public sector, and whether it is on Merseyside or elsewhere. I also agree that we must seek to improve both private and public housing stock that is in poor condition.

It may be helpful to set the hon. Gentleman's concerns in context. In September last year, the English house condition survey of 1991 was published. That survey represents the most up-to-date information available on unfit dwellings. The introduction of the 1991 data has made it clear that significant changes have taken place in the distribution of unfit dwellings.

The survey showed that, after allowance had been made for the change in definition of the fitness standard, there had been a reduction in the number of unfit dwellings across the country, and that that reduction had not taken place evenly. In the context of this debate, it is worth noting that areas such as Merseyside—which had significant concentrations of unfit dwellings in 1986—showed a much greater improvement in conditions than areas with lower levels of unfitness.

Therefore, although I fully appreciate the hon. Gentleman's worries, I think that one should not lose sight of the fact that there has been a significant improvement in housing in Liverpool between the last survey and the most recent English housing conditions survey.

That improvement in housing conditions was largely due to the effective targeting and investment of resources. Between 1986 and 1991, about £100 million of public money was spent on private sector renewal in Merseyside —not public sector, only private sector renewal—and that has had a direct effect on the reduction in unfitness.

Moreover, people's homes today are generally better equipped, better heated, better insulated and in a better state of repair than ever before. Those improvements resulted partly from building new homes and partly from demolishing the worst homes, but mainly from investment by public and private landlords, and especially by individual home owners in the improvement of their own homes. I am sure that the hon. Member will have seen for himself—as I have—the great improvements that have been made in many parts of Merseyside: for example, in Kirkby and Stockbridge Village in Knowsley, the Vauxhall area of north Liverpool and many of the estate action areas such as Netherley and Belle Vale.

Although those improvements are welcome, I acknowledge that there is more to be done to improve homes that are still in poor condition. I readily acknowledge that, for someone who lives in housing that is in poor condition, it is of little consolation to be told by a Minister that much has been done elsewhere. However, in the private sector, that must, in the first instance, be the responsibility of home owners. It is up to us, in the Government, to ensure that public spending is used to tackle the worst conditions and, in both the private and social rented sectors, resources are being targeted more effectively exactly to do that—to tackle the housing that requires that help most.

It is worth noting that the housing conditions survey shows that many households in the worst owner-occupied stock are not on low incomes, so the new emphasis on housing investment programme strategies will provide the right framework. Private sector renovation is already focusing on the worst housing and on those people most in need and, in the social rented sector, estate action and housing action trusts, such as the one in Liverpool, are tackling the worst social housing problems.

In 1991-92, a total of £17·5 million of capital grant was made available by the Government to the Merseyside authorities towards the costs of renovation grants to improve privately owned properties. In the event, the Merseyside authorities spent £20·6 million. All those figures are large because all the figures in relation to Liverpool and Merseyside are large, but they spent £20·6

million. In 1992-93, we made available £19·3 million and in that year the authorities spent £23·5 million of grant. So, as they had spent more than had been anticipated, the Merseyside authorities were given an extra allocation of grant, totalling £2·65 million. In the current year, the grant allocation was £19·54 million, and the local authorities' estimate of spend is £24 million.

The Government have already met 95 per cent. of the difference by giving extra allocations. The point is that the amounts of money allocated to Liverpool in particular and to Merseyside authorities in general have been substantial. Year on year, the authorities have overrun their allocations, but, even so, they have received extra help in recognition of their needs. Indeed, the resources have enabled 20,000 Merseyside homes to be improved. Let me explain how that worked this year for the city of Liverpool.

Liverpool was given a grant guideline of £9·99 million for 1993-94. Its estimate for the full year's spending sent to the Department on the claim form last October was £13·85 million. On the face of it, that suggests a potential shortfall of £3·86 million. The Government have already responded: in December last year, an extra supplementary credit approval totalling £3·57 million—almost 93 per cent. of that potential shortfall—was made available. That was the largest allocation to any authority in the country.

Many millions of pounds were allocated to meet the local authority's needs and an extra supplementary credit approval was also granted. That is the action of a Government committed to meeting the demand for grant support in Liverpool and across Merseyside and responding to the very needs to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Local authorities are always concerned that resources for next year may not be as great as they were. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and the whole House will be aware that there is pressure on public spending. Clearly, local authority capital spending cannot be immune from such pressure. Nevertheless, £20 million has again been set aside for 1994-95 to add to sums from underspending authorities elsewhere in the country in order to allocate extra money most effectively to those authorities where demand is greatest—undoubtedly those such as Liverpool.

Mr. Alton: As the Minister has challenged some of my figures, may I draw to his attention a letter from John Simm, assistant manager of private sector initiatives of St. Helens borough council? He writes:

"The problems we face have recently become more acute in light of the recent notification of levels of funding for this activity for financial year 1994-95. Across Merseyside Specified Capital Grant levels have been cut at best by 23 per cent. in one authority and at worst by 40 per cent. in another, with average cut of 29·4 per cent. across the region."

Surely the Minister accepts that, given such dramatic reductions in the money available, it is inevitable that many houses will not be improved. That will be a cost on the public sector in future when homes are demolished and people have to be rehoused.

Mr. Baldry: As I have already said, it is clear that, year on year, we are, and have been, investing considerable sums in supporting private sector refurbishment and renovation in Liverpool and all of Merseyside. Notwithstanding the pressures on public spending, we have this year alone set aside a further £20 million which will, of course, be added to the sums from authorities that do not spend their full quota.

That money will be allocated for extra resources to local authorities that have the greatest needs. It is not unreasonable to infer that, as Liverpool has tended to have the largest allocation of such funding for private house renewal investment, it will have a not insignificant share of any further such investment. We are talking about significant sums overall.

We have also recognised some of the funding pressures that arise from the current system of mandatory renovation grants. That current system has been monitored carefully since its introduction in July 1990. We issued a consultation paper last summer on various possible changes to improve the system.

Not surprisingly, because it is a matter of considerable interest, the paper attracted more than 400 responses, and I am well aware of the keen interest of the Merseyside private sector forum and its strongly held views about resources—views which the hon. Member has fairly reflected this evening—about the benefits of a targeted approach and about standards, and the range of suggestions in its response to the consultation exercise. Its views are being carefully considered, and I would expect a further announcement about longer-term changes to the mandatory renovation grant system to be made shortly.

The hon. Member will know that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction announced some short-term changes last November. There were three options to consider: a reduction in the grant limit, changes to the means test and a reduction in the level of Exchequer support.

There was widespread support for a reduction in the grant limit, although there was reluctance to see changes in the means test regulations or a reduction in the level of Exchequer support. That is understandable, and I think that it would probably be the case in any context, but, in the spirit of the consultation exercise, the grant limit for mandatory renovation and disabled facilities grant was reduced from £50,000 to £20,000, which means that the money available can be allocated to more homes for more families; but the level of grant support and the means test were left unchanged.

It is also important to put the amount of money that is being invested in the private sector in Liverpool into the context of the full range of housing activity on Merseyside that the Government are supporting, since it might be thought that the figures that I have mentioned so far are the totality of Government's support for housing on Merseyside; that is not the case.

We are investing in and supporting many housing initiatives in Merseyside. For example, the estate action programme has enabled large sums of money to come to the area. Over the past three years alone, over £100 million has gone into improving nearly 20,000 local authority dwellings, and many more millions from the private sector and from housing associations have contributed to the dramatic improvement of many estates across the area. The hon. Member will be familiar with many of the estates in Liverpool that have benefited.

I am also glad to see that the estate action programme has encouraged many tenants, especially in areas of Liverpool, to get together and work towards managing their own estates. We have already seen the first tenant-management co-operative in the Colwell area of Liverpool, and there are other groups there and in the Wirral that are developing plans for estate management boards.

[Mr. Baldry]

The hon. Member mentioned the HAT—the housing action trust—and he was right to do so because Liverpool has the largest HAT in the country. It has taken over 67 high-rise blocks in the city, a total of 5,337 homes. Several of those blocks are in the hon. Member's constituency. A very large sum of money will be needed to improve the flats and the living conditions in them and to put in place a better management service, and we have made it perfectly clear that large sums of money will be made available.

For example, this year alone, an allocation of £16 million has been made. Most of it is being used to achieve the HAT's immediate priority of catching up on outstanding repairs. That is a £20 million two-year programme to ensure that all the homes are warm, secure and watertight. Such a programme is a considerable commitment by the Government.

We also have the Merseyside development corporation, which has played an important role in supporting the provision of new homes for both rent and sale. It has provided land, cleared and prepared for development, which has enabled opportunities for new-build schemes. In north Liverpool, the continuing redevelopment of the Vauxhall area through private developers, housing associations and housing co-operatives is extremely welcome. The Eldonian housing co-operative development, for example, on the old Tate and Lyle site is not only well but flourishing.

I also emphasise a special allocation for Merseyside, again supported by the Government. In the current year, that special allocation—it is unique in the country because no area other than Merseyside has it—totalled £20 million and it has been used to take on empty local authority stock in poor condition and improve it for rent. In Liverpool, the vacant stock initiative is tackling 1,300 properties by refurbishing or converting vacant houses and flats for sale or for rent through housing associations.

Merseyside has also secured three city challenge areas. It means over £110 million of spending power over a five-year period.

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 18 February 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Petition

National Health Service (Greenwich)

9.33 am

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Madam Speaker, I have a petition in the prescribed form, supported by 16,000 signatures on further petitions, which expresses the widespread concern in Greenwich and Woolwich regarding the impact of the Government's reforms of the national health service and of the reneging on the pledges given when the Greenwich health care trust was established. A pledge was given to develop on the Brook hospital site an elective resource centre, an integral part of which was to be the regional specialty cardio-thoracic service.

The petition reads:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will appeal to the Secretary of State for Health to intervene to stop possible closures of the Brook, Memorial and Greenwich district hospitals and to establish a public inquiry into the state of the national health service in the Greenwich health district.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc,

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Chiropractors Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.35 am

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The central purpose of my Bill is to establish a statutory registration scheme for chiropractors, to regulate the profession and to require all persons calling themselves chiropractors to register with a new statutory council. That new statutory body, the General Chiropractic Council, will have the duty to regulate, promote and develop the profession of chiropractic and to lay down standards of professional conduct and education.

My Bill also provides for the establishment of four statutory committees to advise the general council on matters relating to chiropractic education and training and to ensure that any complaint or allegation made about a registered practitioner's fitness to practise chiropractic is properly investigated and effectively dealt with.

In the current week, as in every other week in the present year, more than 75,000 patients in the United Kingdom will have had chiropractic treatment. Since agreeing, at the urging of the profession, to introduce the Bill, I have been amazed and delighted by the number of friends, members of my family and hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber who have approached me and told me of the treatment that they have received from a chiropractor. No one has had anything but praise for the efficient and effective care that they have received. Chiropractic is already, after osteopathy, the second most widely used complementary therapy in the country.

The statutory scheme set out in the Bill reflects closely that of the Osteopaths Act 1993. As the House will know, that Act was introduced as a private Member's Bill by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss). He has written to me to explain that, due to constituency engagements, he cannot be present today, but I was delighted that he was willing to act as one of my sponsors and I am grateful to him for blazing a trail which I am now able to follow.

Chiropractic comes in the range of therapies and treatments referred to as alternative and complementary medicine. It is a bio-mechanical therapy, based on the premise that the spine carries and protects a large part of the body's central nervous system and consequently has a key role in ensuring that the body functions effectively. If the spine becomes too rigid, or too mobile, the nervous system may be affected and such a condition can certainly cause pain, not merely in the back, but in other parts of the body as well. Chiropractic is a means of diagnosing the presence of such a condition and of making various adjustments or manipulations of the vertebrae to correct it.

One or two of my hon. Friends may conceivably ask why, if things are working so well at the moment, the chiropractic profession is seeking statutory regulation. The answer is straightforward. At present there is nothing to prevent me, or you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or anyone else in the Chamber or elsewhere, from simply fixing a brass plate with the title "chiropractor" to our gatepost and immediately offering to treat anyone who was unwise or

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unfortunate enough to come through the door and take the risk. No minimum standards are required; no training is necessary.

From the little that I have said already about what happens during chiropractic treatment, it must be obvious that there is potential, in untrained hands, to do a great deal of harm. The manipulation of necks and backs could be lethal without the proper degree of skill. Even relatively minor adjustments to limbs, if attempted in ignorance, could result in severe damage.

Equally important, serious underlying conditions—for example, cancer—can present symptoms very similar to back pain and an untrained manipulator might, therefore, persist in treatment that has no prospect of helping the patient. He or she ought to advise the patient to go immediately to his doctor. Regrettably, cases have been reported where what appeared to be a bad back masked much more serious illness, so it is not just a matter of chiropractors treating bad backs.

Fundamental to a chiropractor's skill is the ability to make what is known as differential diagnoses—in layman's language, the ability to diagnose conditions that will not respond to the chiropractor's skills and conditions that should be referred immediately for orthodox medical treatment.

A good, responsible chiropractor will take a careful case history and carry out a thorough physical examination of each patient before commencing treatment. Some chiropractors may also make use of other diagnostic tests such as X-rays or blood and urine analysis, but by far the most important diagnostic tools for all chiropractors are the practitioner's hands.

Virtually every chiropractor treatment is given to relieve joint, bone, muscle or tendon pain in one of the many forms in which it can occur. Almost half of all cases concern problems with the lower back and pelvis, including cases where the source of trouble is in those parts of the body but the pain is felt by the patient elsewhere —in the groin, thighs, legs or feet. About a quarter of treatments are for neck problems, which either cause pain in the back or referred pain in the shoulders, chest, arms or hands. About one in 10 treatments is for headaches and migraines, and chiropractors will also give treatment for thoracic pain and for local injuries to limbs not directly affected by the spine. Those are general figures, which do not reflect the fact that many patients arrive at their chiropractor with a combination of head, neck, thoracic and lumbar pain and perhaps co-existing organic problems.

I have been fortunate, in the past few weeks, since agreeing to take on the Bill, to have been given permission by some chiropractic patients to observe their treatment taking place. I have been struck by the way in which chiropractic not only can be used effectively to treat backs and joints, but can play an important role in helping people suffering from chronic organic disease to remain mobile, and so retain their much-prized independence longer than might otherwise be the case.

Chiropractic is, therefore, a therapy that deals with a large number of people who experience considerable pain and discomfort. The therapeutic techniques that are used could be dangerous in unskilled hands and there is a need to ensure that other serious conditions are not overlooked in the analysis of the patient.

While the profession remained small, it was difficult for an untrained or incompetent practitioner to pass unnoticed. However, as more patients have chosen to have chiropractic treatment, the number of practitioners in the country has grown rapidly. Today there are more than 900 chiropractors in all parts of the United Kingdom and, as the profession expands rapidly, the likelihood increases of someone continuing in incompetent practice for longer, or even of an untrained person setting up in practice.

Virtually every practising chiropractor in the kingdom is already a member of a voluntary registration scheme, but the profession recognises that a voluntary system of control is now inadequate. A voluntary system cannot provide members of the public with the level of assurance that many people would wish to have about their practitioner. If, for example, an incompetent practitioner were struck off a voluntary register, he or she would remain free under the present law to continue in practice, and to continue describing himself or herself, perfectly legally, as a chiropractor, and a patient who was injured in such circumstances by an incompetent practitioner would have no opportunity for redress apart from a civil action through the courts, with all the expense and delay that that would entail.

My Bill would replace the present system of voluntary registration by a single statutory council, to be known as the General Chiropractic Council. As I have mentioned, the statutory organisation will have the duty to develop, promote and regulate the profession of chiropractic and to lay down standards of professional conduct and standards for the education and training of practitioners.

As mentioned previously, the Osteopaths Act 1993 has provided a pattern for other professional groups to follow. My Bill, like that Act, has its antecedents in a report of an expert working party set up under the aegis of the King's Fund to bring forward recommendations for the statutory regulation of the profession. It is a tribute to the chiropractic profession that it was able to secure the agreement of the King's Fund to set up a working party so shortly after the working party on osteopathy had reported, and while the recommendations of that report were still being considered by Parliament in the form of the Bill presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East.

The working party on the chiropractic profession included representatives in the chiropractic profession and the medical profession, as well as members reflecting the interests of patients and of the general public. I know that the chiropractic profession would wish me to take the opportunity to express, on its behalf, its thanks to the King's Fund and to the members of its working party, especially the chairman, the right hon. Sir Thomas Bingham.

Like other similar statutory schemes, the general council's activities would be overseen by the Privy Council. My Bill therefore confers powers, known as default powers, on the Privy Council, which it would be able to exercise in the extremely unlikely event that the general council failed to carry out its statutory responsibilities or functions properly. Those powers will enable the Privy Council to direct the general council as to the proper exercise of its functions under the Act and, if necessary, as a last resort, the Privy Council could step in, take over the responsibilities of the general council and do anything that the general council would have the power to do.

I ought to emphasise that there is no known case of the Privy Council having to exercise its default powers in respect of other similar statutory schemes. However, as a result of the remote possibility that that might happen, the Bill has public expenditure implications. Such public expenditure would be necessary only to cover the costs incurred by the Privy Council if those default powers were triggered. In all other respects, the regulatory system that I propose would be self-financed through the annual registration fees paid by chiropractors.

As with other statutory schemes of that type, the Bill will provide a broad framework in which the statutory scheme will operate. The more detailed, day-to-day aspects of the scheme will be set down in rules made by the general council. Another duty of the Privy Council will be to approve those rules, which will cover the entire range of the general council's responsibilities, as well as the procedural rules of the four statutory committees. Those rules would take the form of statutory instruments, which, in a handful of specific cases, would also be subject to the negative parliamentary procedures.

Arising from the rule-making powers of the general council, it is necessary for me to refer to the position regarding monopolies and competition law, especially in the light of the recent Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on private medical services. If my Bill is enacted, the same position will exist for chiropractors as now exists for private medical services. My Bill contains a provision in clause 33 to ensure that the establishment of a statutory organisation with the power to make rules and give guidance to the profession will not prevent the application of fair trading and competition law.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will be able to require the general council, as he has recently required the British Medical Association, to make any changes that he considers necessary to rules or guidance if such rules or guidance are found in a Monopolies and Mergers Commission report to be against the public interest. That does not change the present position. Voluntary associations of chiropractors are already subject to the monopoly provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973 and the provisions relating to anti-competitive practices in the Competition Act 1980.

Let me say a few words about the general council. It will comprise 20 members made up of three groups. The largest group will be 10 chiropractors elected by fully registered practitioners to represent the profession. Then there will be four educational members, three of whom will be appointed by the education committee of the general council to advise on matters relating to chiropractic education and training, while the fourth education member will be appointed by the Secretary of State to advise on professional education matters.

The last group on the general council will be six lay members. They will not be registered chiropractors and will be appointed by the Privy Council to represent the interests of patients, consumers and the general public. There will be a requirement for one of the lay members to be a registered medical practitioner.

The groups mirror those set out in the Osteopaths Act 1993 and will provide the general council with a broad breadth of experience, thereby ensuring that the profession has a firm and balanced basis from which to develop in the future.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way in a most important speech on a Bill which is enormously welcome. Could he possibly tell the House what the costs are likely to be for establishing the general council and where that money will come from?

Mr. Lidington: My hon. Friend makes an important point. At this stage, it is impossible to predict exactly what the costs will be, but, as I said, they will be borne by the chiropractic profession. The various voluntary associations —there are three in this country—already charge their members an annual subscription. In the case of the largest association, the British Chiropractic Association, the fee is just under £1,000 a year. Although one can never be certain about these things, the charge will be a matter for the profession and the general council when it is established. The anticipated subscription would be the BCA level or more once the statutory scheme comes into being.

I must emphasise that my Bill is not about imposing a statutory scheme on chiropractors. It is about—the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) gives way to this point— enabling the profession to chart its own destiny within a framework laid down in statute.

In the beginning, there will be neither the election machinery nor the electorate of registered practitioners to elect the first group of chiropractic members of the general council and there will need to be some transitional arrangements. The first general council therefore will be appointed in its entirety by the Privy Council, and the first elected chiropractic members of the general council will take up office following elections which will be held three years after the opening of the register.

As I said, there are a number of bodies administering a voluntary registration scheme among British practitioners. Chiropractic in the United Kingdom has developed along three distinctive paths. Each group of practitioners has its own system of voluntary registration, and a fourth separate organisation is based in Scotland for Scottish chiropractors. These groups vary in size and strength.

Not unreasonably, the smaller groups have at times been concerned that they might not be able to retain their individuality in the future. It is therefore a tribute to the profession, and especially to the chiropractic registration steering group, which was founded in 1991 to provide the focus for pursuing the objective of statutory regulation, that the whole profession is working to achieve statutory regulation for all parts of the profession. There is co-operation among the three different strands of British chiropractic to achieve that purpose.

When I have met chiropractors from different branches of the profession and visited their schools, I have been impressed by the diversity among the different groups and the strengths which each of them brings to the chiropractic profession. I emphasise that the general council's statutory duties to develop, regulate and promote the chiropractic profession extend equally to all parts of the profession.

Before I move on to the nuts and bolts of the Bill, I draw the attention of hon. Members to one or two apparently minor yet significant details. First, the Bill includes a number of amendments to the Osteopaths Act 1993. They are what could be described as fine-tuning amendments to enable the osteopath registration scheme to run more smoothly. Secondly, my Bill contains a provision to amend the Video Recordings Act 1984. Given the public

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controversy about the whole topic of video recordings at present, I state firmly that my Bill does not seek to amend the Video Recordings Act or the rules that it embodies. There is no question of opening any loophole that could be exploited by unscrupulous people.

The Video Recordings Act carries an exemption with regard to video recordings for training in or carrying on any medical or related occupation. Clause 39 of the Bill would extend the exemption to registered chiropractors and registered osteopaths whose training videos would then be treated like training videos for members of the orthodox medical profession, who are already granted such an exemption.

I turn to the code of conduct. The principal statutory duty that will be conferred on the general council by my Bill will be a requirement to prepare and publish a code of professional conduct and a standard of proficiency. The code of conduct will set out the standards of conduct and practice expected of a registered chiropractor and will give advice on the practice of chiropractic. When the general council draws up the code, it will have a statutory duty to consult representatives of the profession. Failure by a practitioner to comply with the code will not in itself be a disciplinary offence but will stand to be taken into account in any disciplinary proceedings that might subsequently be initiated against a chiropractor under the fitness-to-practise provisions of the Bill.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend for being patient and for allowing me to intervene again on the important point about disciplinary measures. Can he tell the House what sort of offence would require disciplinary measures? For example, if a chiropractor commits a driving offence, is that considered sufficiently serious, or would the general council be looking at offences such as drink offences and fraud?

Mr. Lidington: I intend to deal later in more detail with the disciplinary and investigative procedures. The key principle is that an action or an offence would be relevant if it were important to a chiropractor's fitness to practise. An error or misdeed on his part which is completely irrelevant to his fitness to practise would be considered by the investigating committee and probably dismissed by that committee as something which should not be considered further under the disciplinary procedure.

I alluded to the standard of proficiency. As the name implies, this will be a benchmark for what the general council considers to be safe and competent practice. The standard of proficiency lies at the heart of the statutory scheme. It will be used to judge whether a qualification should be recognised or remain recognised for the purposes of entitling a practitioner to be registered under the Act. It will serve as a means to enable a practitioner to know whether his or her competencies are up to scratch. It will determine whether an allegation of incompetence or malpractice is well founded. It will be used to highlight possible subjects for post-registration training courses. Under the transitional arrangements that will follow the opening of the register—nicknamed the transitional arrangements—the standard of proficiency will be used to decide whether an applicant should be granted registration on the basis of his or her previous practice. The general council will be obliged to keep the standard of proficiency under review and to update it as and when it considers necessary.

In updating the standard, the general council will be required to publish both the statement setting out the new standard and the accompanying statement explaining how the new standard differs from its predecessor. The power to review and revise the standard of proficiency will give the general council the means by which to develop the profession and to improve the skills and competency of practitioners. To avoid abrupt changes, especially for chiropractic schools and other training institutions, which need time to make any adjustment in their courses, a period of one year will separate the publication of any revised standard from the time when it comes into force.

The statutory registrar will have the duty to establish and maintain the official register of people who are entitled to practise chiropractic in the United Kingdom. He or she will be appointed by the general council. To assist the registrar, the general council will appoint experienced professional, legal and medical assessors. Appeals by practitioners against a decision of the registrar to refuse, for example, to register them or to register them in a particular category will lie first with the general council and thereafter either with the Privy Council or High Court in England and Wales, or the equivalent in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend for again allowing me to intervene as I want to raise an important matter. Will a chiropractor who is registered in this country be able to practise in the European Community? By the same token, will a chiropractor who is registered in another country in the European Community be able to practise in the UK?

Mr. Lidington: The position is slightly complicated. Chiropractic is conducted by non-medically qualified practitioners in a few other EC member states, although it is thought that liberalising forces are at work there. The regulation of the chiropractic profession in the United Kingdom will not automatically give non-medically qualified chiropractors in Britain the right to work in other member states in which the practice of chiropractic is legally restricted to those who are medically qualified. In France, for example, one must be a qualified medical practitioner before one is allowed to work as a chiropractor. The automatic reciprocity that exists in some other professions does not apply.

It will be up to the general council, under its rule-making powers, to decide how it keeps the register —whether it is bound in a great leather ledger, with names filled in by quill pen, or whether the information is kept on a sparkling new video computer database. The general council will also be able to make decisions on such matters as the fee to be charged for entry in the register and additional information that it wants to appear in it. Such information could include other qualifications held by a registered chiropractor or the additional addresses of a registered chiropractor if he operates from more than one premise.

The Bill lays down certain details on all practitioners that must by law appear on the register. Some of those details are obvious. They include the name of the practitioner, the level of registration that he or she holds —full, conditional, or provisional—and the registered

address, which will be the location of the chiropractor's principal practice. The registrar will also be required to place on the register any period during which the chiropractor's registration has been suspended and to show under which provision of the legislation the suspension has been made. While suspended, a chiropractor will cease to be registered and will therefore not be permitted to continue in practice.

The register will be available for public inspection at all reasonable times to provide members of the public with a means of checking the bona fides of people calling themselves chiropractors.

In addition, the Bill makes provision for the general council to publish annually a list of names and to register addresses of everyone who, at the time of publication, is a registered chiropractor. One might call that list the published register, or the popular version. It will be for the general council to determine whether the list should also include additional information derived from the register. A woman chiropractor who wishes to practise under both her maiden name and her married name may have that fact reflected in the published version of the register. Under the Bill, it would be possible for the published copy to be sold or given to members of the public, and supplied to public libraries, GPs' surgeries and other health professionals.

The key difference between the published version of the register and the central statutory register is that the published register will not include details of any practitioner who is currently suspended from practice. That is because the practitioner should not be exposed to a form of double jeopardy. Registration may be suspended for a number of reasons. An investigation may be carried out into an allegation against a practitioner and an interim suspension may be imposed to protect members of the public while that investigation takes place. But the outcome of that investigation might clear the chiropractor's name, in which case the entry made against his or her name in the master register will immediately be removed.

The published register will be published only once each year. It would therefore be possible, if my Bill did not provide otherwise, for a reference to the suspension of a chiropractor whose name had been cleared to appear in the out-of-date published register. The inaccurate public version might still be in circulation when the next edition was published and distributed. There would be a risk, therefore, of an unwarranted doubt being cast on the name of a practitioner. The safeguard of holding back suspended practitioners' names from the published version of the register is included in the Bill; such safeguards are a feature of other similar statutory schemes.

Lady Olga Maitland: When will the register come into force and what will happen to those chiropractors who are registered with the three voluntary organisations that exist? How will they make the transition from the voluntary organisations to the official register, and is there any danger of confusion between the two?

Mr. Lidington: I know that my hon. Friend follows closely such matters as the system of registration. I ask her to remain patient for a little while because I will deal with that subject soon.

The implementation of the register will depend in part, of course, on the progress made on the Bill, but I hope that the general council will be established within 18 months or two years of the Bill's receiving Royal Assent. The statutory register will probably open 18 months or two years after the general council has been set up. That is the rough timetable.

My hon. Friend's intervention was apposite because I was about to deal with the subject of registration. The Bill will require that a person must be registered with the general council to call himself a chiropractor, and to practise as such.

That requirement will be backed up by the creation of a new criminal offence to be introduced once the initial transitional period had elapsed. That would provide that a person who was not a registered chiropractor but who, after enactment, described himself or herself as a chiropractor either expressly or by implication would be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 of the standard scale—that is currently £5,000.

My Bill provides for three different categories of registration—full, conditional and provisional. I should like to deal with each category in turn. Entitlement to full registration will primarily be determined by whether or not a person holds a recognised qualification. That will be a qualification which the general council considers provides evidence of reaching a standard of proficiency for the safe and competent practice of chiropractic. In deciding whether it recognises the qualification, the general council will be required to seek the advice of its education committee.

In cases where it wishes to grant recognition, the general council will also be required to obtain the consent of the Privy Council. I will say more about that process of recognition, and withdrawal of recognition, when I come to discuss the role of the education committee.

In addition to holding a recognised qualification, an applicant for full registration would be required to do a number of other things. He must make an application in the form and manner which is required by the general council, and he must pay any fee which may be described. It is of great importance that the applicant satisfies the registrar that he or she is of good character, and is in good physical and mental health. Most of the details determining whether an applicant satisfies those criteria will probably be set down in the rules made by the general council.

I draw the attention of the House to clause 40 of the Bill, which exempts chiropractors from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. That means that anyone applying for registration will, if asked, be required by law to declare all of his convictions, including those which are otherwise considered to be spent. This is an important provision. The overwhelming majority of chiropractors practise in the private sector, and that position is unlikely to alter markedly even if the Bill succeeds.

Hon. Members will realise that chiropractic is very much a contact form of treatment. Members of the public are entitled to expect a statutory registration scheme to provide them with clear assurances about a practitioner's bona fides.

I have said that entitlement to full registration will be primarily dependent on whether a person holds a recognised qualification. At present, there is no requirement for any person who calls himself a chiropractor to undergo formal training. For that reason, not everybody who is in current practice will necessarily hold a formal qualification. Other chiropractors in Britain may well hold a qualification awarded by a school or an institution in this country or overseas which no longer

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exists. That does not automatically mean that those chiropractors are unsuitable for registration, or that they are unsafe and incompetent.

The Bill provides transitional arrangements, known as grandfather arrangements, to enable those practitioners who have been practising chiropractic lawfully, safely and competently for a number of years to apply for full registration. The grandfather provisions in the Bill are identical to those which are embodied in the Osteopaths Act 1993. The requirement is that a practitioner has, for at least five years, spent a substantial part of his working time in the lawful, safe and competent practice of chiropractic. To ensure that a practitioner's experience is recent, no account is taken of any work which was done more than seven years prior to the date on which the register opens.

Applications for full registration under the grandfather arrangements would be permitted only during a two-year period following the opening of the register. After the two-year transitional period has elapsed, applications for full registration would be accepted only on the basis that the applicant holds a recognised qualification and satisfies all of the other criteria which I mentioned earlier. The grandfather provisions are designed to enable the transition from the present system of voluntary registration to a future statutory one to take place smoothly.

The second category of registration is known as conditional registration. That is a purely transitional arrangement, and applications for conditional registration will be permitted only during the two-year period immediately following the opening of the register. Conditional registration would enable a practitioner who again is without a recognised qualification and who is unlikely to muster the five years' lawful, safe and competent practice necessary to apply for full registration still to have a route open by which to enter the registered profession.

There are two broad groups of chiropractors for whom the provision is designed. The first group consists of practitioners who just fail to reach the five years out of seven criterion. They can apply for conditional registration if they can satisfy the registrar that they have acquired four years' experience of lawful, safe and competent practice within a period of less than six years before the opening of the register.

The second group consists of a small number of practitioners who could fall between two stools. They hold a qualification in chiropractic, but it is a qualification about which the general council and the education committee know little. Again, the institution which awarded the qualification may well no longer exist. A practitioner in that category may be unable to satisfy even the four years out of six criterion which I have just described.

Such a chiropractor could be a woman who qualified in chiropractic some years ago from a school or training institution which may no longer exist. She has taken some years out of the profession to bring up a family, and now wants to return to practise. Such people, and others in comparable positions, will be permitted to apply for conditional registration.

The precise criteria will be that they are unable to satisfy the four years out of six criterion, and that they hold a qualification in chiropractic which, while not a recognised qualification, is not something which has been examined by the education committee of the general council and then refused recognition. It is important to note that I am not seeking to open a back door for applicants who have qualifications which the general council and the education committee have judged to be inadequate.

Any applicant for conditional registration will have to fulfil exactly the same conditions of good health and character as are required for applicants for full registration. In addition, the registrar can require them to take and pass a test of competence to his satisfaction, and require them to enter into a formal undertaking to complete such extra training or acquire such additional experience as he may specify. Applicants will have a maximum of five years after the opening of the register to fulfil the obligations, although the registrar will be able to specify a shorter time scale if he thinks that that is right.

All conditional registrations without exception will lapse automatically at the end of five years, and anyone failing to have a registration made up from conditional to full will automatically cease to be a registered chiropractor.

The final category of registration is provisional and it is a little different. It is intended to allow the general council to require a chiropractor who would otherwise be entitled to full registration to be registered instead for an initial period of one year only with provisional registration.

While registered provisionally, a chiropractor would be allowed to practise only under the supervision of a practitioner who was fully registered under the terms set by the general council. Typically, provisional registration would apply to the first year of practice following the qualification of a student coming straight out of chiropractic college. Obviously, the provision also could be applied to other groups of practitioners. The system of provisional registration is modelled on the system which is already in place among voluntary associations operated by the chiropractic profession in this country. It clearly benefits practitioners and patients alike.

The Bill does not seek to impose automatically a provisional registration scheme, but it allows the general council discretion to introduce a system through rules that it makes in the future. It will have to consult the profession before it makes any such rules. The rules on professional registration would not only require the approval of the Privy Council but would be subject to the negative parliamentary procedure.

The Bill seeks to establish four statutory committees of the general council: the education committee, the investigating committee, the professional conduct committee and the health committee. The education committee will have a general duty to promote high standards of education and training in chiropractic, and to keep the provision of such training under review. Its responsibilities would also cover such things as examinations in chiropractic, tests of competence and post-registration training courses.

The education committee will have the prime responsibility of advising the general council whether a qualification provides evidence of reaching the standard of proficiency required for the safe and competent practice of chiropractic and, consequently, whether that qualification should be formally recognised. In the same way, the committee will also have a responsibility to bring to the attention of the general council any shortcomings in a recognised qualification, especially if they are so serious as to justify action to withdraw recognition.

To help the education committee carry out its statutory duties, the committee will have the power to appoint visitors to go to educational institutions and report back on the adequacy of the training and facilities provided. That provision will be the principal means by which the education committee will be able to acquire first-hand knowledge of the nature and quality of the instruction given.

The Bill also imposes a duty on training institutions which either provide or intend to provide chiropractic education and training to provide the education committee with any information that it might reasonably require in order to carry out its statutory duties. If a training institution fails to comply with such a request, that in itself will be sufficient ground for a recommendation to the general council that recognition be either withheld or withdrawn.

For the sake of completeness, I should perhaps add that a decision to recognise or withdraw recognition from any qualification would require the consent of the Privy Council. To enable the Privy Council to come to a decision on the matter, the general council would be required to provide it with all the information available to the general council and on which the recommendation was based. Where consent is sought for a qualification to be recognised, however, the Privy Council may be content to accept a summary of that information.

Before leaving the subject of education and training, I should mention briefly the existence of different groups of chiropractors in the United Kingdom. The groups have developed along separate and distinct lines over the years. In 1991 they came together to form the chiropractic registration steering group. The differences between the various groups have traditionally been reflected in their different approaches to education and training. One of the fundamental agreements that has been made between members of the steering group is that all United Kingdom schools of chiropractic represented by the various members of the group will achieve a levelling up of standards within five years of legislation to regulate the profession coming into force.

At the heart of the agreement is the intention that the qualifications currently awarded by three main United Kingdom schools of chiropractic—the Anglo-European college in Bournemouth, the McTimoney school and the Witney school—will be granted the status of recognised qualifications. That decision will ultimately be one for the general council and the education committee to take, but I hope that if my Bill is successful the profession will take it as a clear signal that Parliament expects that aspect of the agreement to be honoured.

In the past two weeks I have spent a happy half day in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) at the Anglo-European college. A few days ago I visited the Witney school in Oxford to see how its training system operates. The schools have two different approaches, but during each visit I was struck by the dedication, commitment and professionalism of all who were involved.

I turn now to the committee whose role will be to investigate complaints against practitioners. It takes us back to a point made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam. My Bill establishes an investigative and disciplinary procedure to deal with three sorts of allegation: first, allegations of unacceptable professional conduct; secondly, allegations of professional incompetence; and, thirdly, allegations that a chiropractor has been convicted in the United Kingdom of a criminal offence or is unfit to practise due to his physical or mental condition.

To ensure that the fitness-to-practise scheme has some real teeth, it will be an offence for anyone not to comply with a request from the professional conduct committee, the health committee or the appeal tribunal to attend a hearing to give evidence or produce documents. As with the offence of wrongly claiming to be a chiropractor, that offence would be punishable on summary conviction with a £5,000 fine—level 5 on the standard scale.

Let me summarise how a complaint from an individual would be handled. First, the general council could appoint a screener to decide whether the case even came within the scope of the fitness-to-practise machinery. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam said, a complaint could be made about a chiropractor that had nothing to do with the general council or the registration scheme of the profession. Someone could complain bitterly that his chiropractor was an active member of a particular political party, for instance. It would be the job of the screener to decide whether the nature of the complaint brought it within the statutory scheme. If it did, and only if it did, the investigating committee, which acts as the CID and Crown Prosecution Service of the scheme, would take over the matter and conduct a preliminary investigation.

The investigating committee would then gather information and evidence, look at that evidence and decide whether there was a case to answer. If there was a case to answer, the investigating committee would determine whether the professional conduct committee or the health committee was the appropriate one to deal with that case.

The investigating committee could suspend registration and, therefore, the ability to practise pending or during investigation, if it decided that it was necessary for the protection of the public. The obvious case in which that power would be invoked would be a serious allegation against a chiropractor, for example, of sexual assault on a patient. There would then be an urgent need to be absolutely certain that the public were protected.

The Bill specifies that an interim suspension imposed by the investigating committee would have a maximum duration of only two months. The reason for that is to make sure that the investigating committee gets on with its job and refers cases onwards quickly and efficiently for resolution by either the professional conduct committee or the health committee. Those committees in turn will have similar powers of interim suspension for the same reasons of protection of the public, but no maximum duration is set. So suspension imposed by the investigating committee could be maintained by either the professional conduct committee or the health committee if it thought that that was right.

A practitioner would have a right to appeal against suspension by any of the committees by going to the High Court or its equivalent in Scotland and Northern Ireland. However, there would be no appeal against the interim suspension imposed in the first instance by the investigating committee. I judge that the two-month maximum duration is adequate protection there.

Any allegation of unacceptable professional conduct, professional incompetence or that a chiropractor had been convicted in this country of a criminal offence would be referred to the professional conduct committee. The practitioner would be entitled to know the details of the

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case against him, and would have the right to a hearing and legal representation if he or she so chose. The committee will be barred from taking action when it is proved that the offence is irrelevant to the practitioner's fitness to practise. That deals with the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam about a chiropractor who is convicted for speeding.

If the professional conduct committee finds against a practitioner, it will be given certain disciplinary powers and will be able to strike his or her name off the register. It will also have the power to suspend a practitioner for up to three years, to impose conditions on future registration or simply to admonish the chiropractor.

During the suspension period, the professional conduct committee will be able to extend suspension for a further three years or impose conditions for registration once it has expired. Again, the chiropractor concerned would have the right to a hearing and to legal representation.

The idea is that the power to extend the suspension period would apply to cases which had been heard and determined by the professional conduct committee, which had imposed a suspension but further, and perhaps even more serious allegations, had then come to light. The committee would be able to extend the suspension period, without the case having to begin again at the start of the procedure.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): I do not wish to deflect my hon. Friend from his theme, but he is talking in great detail about the functions of the general council's various committees, and there is a more fundamental concern about financing the council and especially about the initial start-up costs. I understand that no Government money will be available to assist with that. Will he deal with those start-up costs, and does he feel that the general council will be able to rely on using some of its existing rolling stock and funds from existing voluntary organisations?

Mr. Lidington: Unless my hon. Friend the Minister has changed his mind since we last spoke, I understand that no Government money will be available for the establishment of the General Chiropractic Council. It will therefore be up to the profession to finance the start-up costs from its resources. That profession, or part of it, is strongly behind the scheme for statutory registration that is embodied in the Bill and sees it as a way to ensure that patients are adequately protected and that the good name of the British chiropractic profession, which it has built up painstakingly for some years, is also protected. The profession feels that it is able and willing to meet the costs that will be incurred.

The health committee will consider cases in which a chiropractor's physical or mental health gives cause for concern. The chiropractor involved will again have the right to a hearing and to legal representation. The health committee and the professional conduct committee will have different philosophies and remits. The PCC will have powers to punish practitioners for wrongdoing, but the health committee will exist to protect the public against chiropractors who become a potential risk to their patients through ill health.

If the health committee finds a case proven against a practitioner, it must suspend him or her, or impose conditions on registration for a definite period of up to three years. The committee will be able to renew orders of that sort, as long as they are considered necessary for the safety of the public.

At first sight that sentence might seem draconian as it does not allow the practitioner the chance to renew his practice. However, the case may be reviewed and that will provide a sufficient safeguard for both practitioners and the public. Let us consider the example of a chiropractor who suffers a mental breakdown. It is not in his interests or that of his patients that he continues to treat them and he should be suspended. With time or treatment, however, his condition might improve to the point that the health committee, after reviewing the case, would feel able to remove the suspension and allow him to practise again. Initially, the practitioner might be subject to conditions, for example, that he work only under the supervision of another chiropractor or as part of a group practice.

When a chiropractor wishes to contest a decision taken by the health committee, he or she would have the right of appeal to an independent appeals tribunal, consisting of an experienced lawyer, a medical practitioner and a chiropractor. The tribunal's function will be to provide a body independent of the general council to deal with all appeals from the health committee. To provide a double assurance, a further appeal could be made to the Privy Council on points of law.

I apologise for the length of time that I have taken. The Chiropractors Bill, like the Osteopaths Act 1993, is rather a lengthy document for a piece of private Member's legislation and it is important that the House should understand what is proposed.

Before I sit down, I must acknowledge the debt of thanks that I owe to the many people who have offered me help, advice and support in recent months. Members of the chiropractic profession and the steering group, under the chairmanship of Ian Hutchinson, have been enthusiastic, supportive and full of information. The team of officials at the Department of Health who helped with the preparation of the Bill—led by Mr. Kenneth Allan—put up with my questions and responded promptly and efficiently to my requests for information and briefing. It got on with the job of assisting me to draft the Bill with great expedition, and I am grateful.

At the risk of turning this into a bridegroom's speech, may I say that thanks are also due to my supporters on both sides of the House. I have been struck by the extent to which the measure has support across party lines—from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, from the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on behalf of the Opposition Front Bench and from the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne), who is her party's spokesman on health matters and has agreed to act as one of my sponsors. I see that the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) is also in her place. Thanks are due to her, as well as to those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who supported me in introducing the measure.

Although the Bill is quite long and technical, it is designed to deal with a very real problem which is a challenge to our health care. Chiropractic, like other forms of complementary medicine, has come of age and increasingly is seen to offer treatments that are efficacious and valuable to orthodox medicine. We need to ensure that the reputations of good and dedicated practitioners are protected and that patients are safeguarded.

In recent weeks I have met two patients. One was a middle-aged man—a self-employed builder—who told me

that orthodox medicine seemed to have failed him and that he had practically been carried into the chiropractor's consulting room, but had managed to walk out, which not only meant freedom from pain, but the ability to continue as a builder and to earn his livelihood.

The other patient was a lady suffering from a muscle-wasting disease. She knew that there was no miracle cure, but regular chiropractic treatments had improved the quality of her life to an extent that she, her friends and family and originally even her doctor had thought impossible. She enjoyed independence and got more out of life because of that.

When medical matters are debated, both in Parliament and in the media, we tend to focus on the glamorous side such as organ transplants and pioneering surgical techniques. We forget the millions of people who suffer pain—often excruciating pain—from troubles with their backs or joints in other parts of the body. It is in the interests of patients such as those two whose cases I have just mentioned that I have introduced this Bill and why I commend it to the House.

10.39 am

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I shall not detain the House for long because, as the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) said, the Bill has all-party support. I commend him for the length and breadth of his speech. On behalf of my party I am pleased to welcome the Bill. I am also pleased to be a sponsor of the Bill and I wish the hon. Member for Aylesbury every success in steering it through the House.

I have long been a user and advocate of alternative and complementary therapies and I welcome the move represented by the Bill and the Osteopaths Act 1993 to give official recognition to those therapies. According to one document that I have read, chiropractors are the third largest health care providers in the western world. Clearly, they are not a marginal or eccentric form of health care.

The Bill marks an attempt both to take chiropractors seriously and to help build confidence among the public in the profession. I regret, however, that it does not improve access to chiropractors on the national health service. I am sure that many hon. Members' constituents have written to them to complain about their local health authority failing to fund health care services out of the extra-contractual referrals budget. Alternative therapies are one of the many services that have been denied to patients because of the tight rein on ECR budgets. That restriction on the availability of chiropractic and other alternative therapies is despite the fact that treatment in a recent Medical Research Council trial was found to be much more effective than hospital out-patient treatment for lower back pain, especially for patients in chronic or severe pain.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Lynne: I should like to get on with my speech. The hon. Member for Aylesbury has taken so long to explain the Bill and gone into such detail that I shall not take interventions, if hon. Members will forgive me. The Bill has all-party support.

The ability effectively to treat members of the public with back pain will be no mean achievement. According to figures provided by the chiropractic registration steering group, 310,000 people in the United Kingdom are off work each day with back pain. That costs the country more than £3 billion a year in lost production. Disability from lower back pain is increasing faster than any other form of disability.

In other European countries, chiropractic is part of the overall process of treating back pain. In Sweden, for example, many chiropractors work with orthopaedic surgeons in hospitals where it is often found that chiropractic is a preferable and cheaper option to surgery. It is important to remember that. In the United States, more than 45,000 chiropractors are regulated and licensed by the same authorities as GPs and their fees can be paid under Medicare or Medicaid. In many other countries, chiropractors are registered and their training programmes are licensed.

The Bill brings us into line with many of our European partners. At present, anyone can call himself or herself a chiropractor and practise as one. As currently some 900 chiropractors are registered in this country, that should be a cause of great concern. Given the increasing interest in alternative therapies, it is clearly time to take action. For all the reasons that I have listed, the Bill is to be welcomed.

Nevertheless, I should like more consideration to be given to the rights of patients to know what treatment they can expect and how to complain when their expectations are not met. I should also like consideration to be given to establishing an ombudsman for all alternative therapies, although the Institute of Complementary Therapy hopes to be able to carry out that role on a non-statutory basis.

As the Bill is modelled on the example of the Osteopaths Act, it would be useful to have a report on the success of that Act during our discussions in Committee. If, for example, many osteopaths have not registered but are continuing to practise, we may have to consider tightening the rules as I suggested during the debate on the Osteopaths Bill. I am still convinced that displaying a practitioner's registration in his or her place of work would enable potential patients to know immediately whether the practitioner was suitably qualified.

Despite those small reservations, I very much welcome the Bill and wish it every success in its passage through Parliament. I hope that more resources can be found to enable more NHS patients to make use of chiropractic services.

10.45 am

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on introducing the Bill and on the great detail in which he took the House through its various provisions. This is a matter of great concern to many people throughout the country, particularly many of my constituents who have written to me on that subject.

As we all know, many people suffer from back and neck trouble and have occasion to consult either an osteopath or a chiropractor. Many of our hon. Friends also suffer from back problems, particularly those of us fortunate enough to be involved in the backbreaking work of the Standing Committee on the Local Government etc (Scotland) Bill.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury pointed out, chiropractic is the second most widely used branch of complementary medicine and some 25,000 people in this country consult a chiropractor every week. Of most concern to us, however, is the fact that, although the

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overwhelming majority of people who practise chiropractic do an extremely good job, when people consult a chiropractor they cannot be sure that the person treating them is properly competent. That is frightening because treatment is applied manually directly to the spine, which is connected to the central nervous system. I suppose that the equivalent of allowing an untrained person manually to treat the central nervous system would be to let the Labour party loose on the economy.

If treatment goes wrong, the only recourse that a patient has is through the common law. The Bill is important because it seeks to establish statutory regulations that would give patients the assurance that they need that the person treating them is properly qualified. As my hon. Friend said earlier, the current voluntary system cannot provide that degree of assurance.

I understand that many hon. Members, particularly in the present climate, will be somewhat hesitant about introducing an extra system of regulation. The report of the King's Fund deals with that subject. Unfortunately, its chief executive is called Robert Maxwell. It is not his fault but I was alarmed to see that the chief executive of the King's or any other fund should be called Robert Maxwell. He is, however, a far more distinguished, competent and honest person than the former Robert Maxwell, who is so well known to all of us.

The chief executive rightly said that any branch of complementary medicine that met three criteria, which he outlined, should be recognised and regulated by statute. First, the therapeutic practice concerned should rest on solid foundations and science and have examinable knowledge and skills. Secondly, it must be able to demonstrate by objective standards that it can cure or alleviate pain and suffering when practised skilfully, and that it has power to do harm in the wrong hands. Thirdly, there must be significant public demand for it; it must be shown that the public require help in differentiating reliable from unreliable practice and would be best protected by publicly accountable self-regulation by the professional concerned. The chief executive said:

"These criteria do not apply equally to all branches of complementary medicine but they do apply to chiropractic as to osteopathy."

The Bill provides an appropriate level of regulation. My hon. Friend has been careful not to overregulate and introduce an unacceptable amount of bureaucracy, and the Bill ensures that the general council is self-financing. He has sought to introduce a light-touch form of regulation. Essentially, the Bill is not so much about regulating the practice of chiropractic as about dealing with the whole question of the closure of title, the use of the word "chiropractor". That is the essence of the matter. When a patient goes to a person who holds himself out as a chiropractor, the patient should be absolutely sure that he can rely on a certain level of service and specific standards.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on his Bill. I offer him my full support and commend the Bill to the House.

10.51 am

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I welcome the Bill, which is both desirable and necessary, and important for the future of health care. It is desirable because it deals with an important treatment that is increasingly widely used and that can be extremely beneficial, but that could be harmful in the wrong hands. I speak as someone who uses chiropractic. My interest was first aroused simply by reading and when the representatives of the British Chiropractic Association came to the House to give a demonstration to hon. Members, I decided to attend. That extremely interesting demonstration aroused my interest even more, since when I have read a considerable amount on the subject.

The Medical Research Council carried out some famous research—a randomised controlled trial, which lasted at least two years and from which chiropractic emerged with flying colours as an extremely effective way to treat a great many problems. It is a legitimate form of treatment, but until now it has not been properly recognised as fully legitimate. When I developed some problems with my shoulder, I thought, "Here is your chance to show practical as well as theoretical support and to demonstrate that you have confidence rather than just saying so."

I put myself in the hands of a local chiropractor and I was immeasurably impressed by the treatment and the style of treatment. My mother and my son-in-law also have treatment, which means that three generations of my family are benefiting from chiropractic. The treatment is suitable and important for all ages.

I am particularly impressed by the fact that chiropractic is a communicative form of treatment. One is not simply a passive recipient but is involved and informed and leaves the chiropractor knowing a great deal more about one's body and with suggestions about self-help. That is an important feature that is rarely a part of orthodox medicine, which often regards people as passive receivers of treatment. In that respect, chiropractic has lessons for health care in general. The chiropractor seeks to enlist a person's body and physical resources in helping with the treatment.

In my experience, chiropractors are anxious to be part of the general medical or health care team and communicate with general practitioners. Some GPs welcome that communication but others probably put it in the bin. I hope that that latter practice will end. The recognition afforded by registration under the procedures set out in the Bill will help to establish chiropractic not only with the public but with the other health care professionals.

The Bill is necessary as well as desirable because of the passing of the Osteopaths Act 1993. I support that legislation but I recognise that it poses dangers for chiropractic and for people who consult chiropractors. Some people who are unable to call themselves osteopaths and cannot be registered if their qualifications do not warrant it may decide to call themselves chiropractors. The fact that that profession has been regulated makes it even more important to regulate the closely allied profession. It would be an undesirable spin-off from an otherwise good Act if people seeking chiropractic treatment were open to treatment by charlatans who are not properly trained and qualified.

For two reasons, the Bill is urgent and important for the future of health care. The first reason is that, as has been said, an enormous number of people suffer from back pain and from troubles related to the spine and the skeletal framework. People who suffer from such problems often have difficulty because those problems are not always obvious to the layman's eye. They are not always obvious to people such as Secretaries of State for Social Security, who are apt to add to the all-too-common view that suffering from back pain is just a form of malingering.

Those of us who are interested in the Bill know that that is not so, that back pain is extremely disabling and that, rather than being fobbed off with painkillers, people with back pain, which can lead to chronic disability, should have full positive treatment.

Orthodox medicine does not offer much to those who suffer from such problems. That was borne out by the results of the Medical Research Council's randomised controlled trial to which I have referred. Chiropractic is a good form of treatment.

The Bill is important to the future of health care. I see it as the first step towards making chiropractic more generally available. In an otherwise good and informative speech, the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), who introduced the Bill, made a throwaway remark: that most chiropractors practise in the private sector and that is unlikely to change. That suggestion is unwarranted, because it carries with it the implication that the Bill will make chiropractic safe and accessible to those who can pay. I want chiropractic to be safe and accessible to all who need it. Those two are not the same thing.

In my advice sessions—most hon. Members probably find the same—I frequently see people who are suffering from severe back problems, which often arise from occupational injury or occupational distortion. Frequently, it seems patently obvious that the person sitting opposite me would benefit enormously from chiropractic treatment —I feel that even more strongly since I have become a user of chiropractic—but what can be said to them? Often, the people who are suffering have lost the capacity to earn their living, and often the way that they earned their living in the first place is the cause of their incapacity. Why should the House assume that chiropractic should be available only to a person who can pay? Clearly, it would not be proper or possible to make chiropractic available widely on the national health service unless—

Mr. Merchant: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Wise: I think that I saw the hon. Member rise to catch the Speaker's eye. If that is so, he can make his point in his own speech. If he wants to intervene and not make a speech, I will gladly give way.

It would not be proper or possible to make chiropractic widely available to patients free of charge through the NHS unless the profession were regulated in the way proposed in the Bill. I see that as a valuable step on the way to making chiropractic fully recognised and acceptable to people, regardless of their ability to pay. In saying that, I must make it clear that that is not to be misunderstood. I do not want chiropractic, when it becomes available through the NHS, to be subsumed under the auspices of the medical profession. That would not be appropriate. Chiropractic is a fully trained profession in its own right. I believe that its practitioners are amply capable of autonomous practice, provided that they are regulated. If the hon. Member for Aylesbury had said that chiropractors would remain autonomous practitioners, as they are at present, I would have whole-heartedly agreed. Perhaps he had that in mind when he made his rather throwaway remark.

Being an autonomous practitioner should not imply that one will see patients only if they can pay directly. I believe that the Bill opens the door to the full recognition of a valuable profession, able to do untold good to many millions of people. It is a growing profession. People are voting with their feet, even though the treatment is available only privately except on the odd occasion. My local practice is extremely busy. People often make great sacrifices to consult chiropractors because they find the treatment so valuable. I look forward to making it even safer through the proper registration of practitioners. I look forward to the Bill being the first step along the road to making chiropractic accessible to all, regardless of ability to pay.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank the House for indulging me for a few moments. Have you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, received any notice in relation to early-day motions 636, 637 and 638, about the conspiracy at the heart of the North Hertfordshire NHS trust on the privatisation of its pathology services and the involvement of senior regional health authority officials—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Did I understand the hon. Gentleman to ask in his opening remarks whether the Chair had received any information?

Mr. McCartney: I want to know whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have had notice of a statement in respect of the serious issues raised in those early-day motions, in particular the involvement of a senior regional health authority official in secretly promoting the privatisation of pathology services—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not really a point of order for the Chair.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There cannot be a further point of order to a point of order that never was.

11.5 am

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on his good fortune in the ballot for private Members' Bills, his choice of Bill and his impressive presentation of it today. As he may know, I was personally committed to introducing it, were I to have been so fortunate. I am grateful for his invitation to be a sponsor.

Chiropractic was founded in the belief that a great many every-day disorders are caused by spinal defects impeding the work of our immune system. My personal experience, and that of many of my constituents and those of many hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, shows that a growing number of people are fully convinced of the benefits of chiropractic care. I am absolutely delighted that, at last, the prospect of the proper regulation, registration and, above all, recognition of chiropractors is now in sight. My hon. Friend's Bill, when it passes into legislation, will represent a fitting celebration of the centenary of chiropractic next year.

I am privileged to have located in my constituency, as my hon. Friend has already informed the House, the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic. It is one of three chiropractic colleges in the country and the only one to offer a university-validated five-year BSc honours degree course—a course that has been designated by the Department for Education to receive mandatory grants. I know that my hon. Friend has already told the House that he was impressed by what he saw at the college when he

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visited it last week. As a result of his Bill, today's graduates, their predecessors and successors will have their long and thorough training and education vindicated and recognised.

As you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bournemouth is a well-deserved favourite venue for the three political parties, which have their annual conferences at the Bournemouth international centre. When hon. Members visit Bournemouth to take part in those conferences, I very much hope that they will use that opportunity to visit the college in Parkwood road in Boscombe. I know that they will be welcome to see the impressive work and education that is undertaken there.

My hon. Friend's Bill is long overdue. As he has reminded us, the path to its introduction was well paved by the Osteopaths Act 1993, which was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) last year. If no hon. Member had selected the Bill this year, chiropractic would have remained in the limbo land of non-recognition for another year and perhaps more years to come. That still applies to all the other leading complementary treatments, such as acupuncture, homeopathy, herbalism, aromatherapy and reflexology—all of which have important contributions to make to the health services.

To its credit, the British Medical Association recognised the position in a report published last year, which called for the compulsory registration of all the leading complementary medicines. That represented a welcome about-face from the BMA's 1986 report, which described such medicines as

"a reversion to primitive beliefs."

That, of course, was a veiled recognition that many of them are far older and more established than many current, conventional remedies.

The BMA was only responding to a growing number of our constituents who—as the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) said—have voted with their feet. Unfortunately, in some cases they have voted with their pockets as well, in finding relief and recovery when orthodox medicines have failed. The BMA was also responding to a growing number of its own members—general practitioners—who are referring patients to registered complementary practitioners such as chiropractors, employing such practitioners and, indeed, becoming registered complementary practitioners themselves. If they are fundholders, they are providing their patients with a free NHS service, contrary to the impression given by the hon. Members for Preston and for Rochdale (Ms Lynne).

Each of those professions, however, waits its turn in the queue for private Members' legislation, hoping for a Bill like this, or like last year's Osteopaths Bill. The process could—indeed, will—take years, which is entirely unacceptable. The Government should tolerate the current position no longer. A way forward has been provided by the enactment of the Osteopaths Bill and it will be confirmed by the passage of this Bill, which will emphasise the need to reform the Act that governs the professions supplementary to medicine.

Physiotherapists, for example, now suggest that the present Council for the Professions Supplementary to Medicine is not working well. They consider it unfair that complementary medicines such as osteopathy and chiropractic should now achieve clearer recognition and more straightforward self-governance than they themselves enjoy. Such long-overdue reforms, however, can be undertaken only by the Government, in Government time.

Any legislation amending the Professions Supplementary to Medicines Act 1960 can surely embrace the BMA's call for regulation of all the leading complementary medicines. My hon. Friend the Minister can invite the Research Council for Complementary Medicine to make appropriate recommendations to him; alternatively, he can announce a Government inquiry into the most popular complementary medicines to subject them to scientific validation, with the ultimate aim of integrating orthodox with complementary medicines. Such integration has already taken place in the Netherlands. To do nothing, however, is no longer an option. I look forward to my hon. Friend the Minister's response.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury has made an excellent case for the benefits for patients that would undoubtedly result from the passage of his Bill. As he has said, it will effectively outlaw quacks who can set themselves up in a practice with a chiropractic nameplate, with no qualifications or competence and providing no realistic opportunity of redress if anything goes wrong.

I shall never forget a constituent who came to my surgery several years ago because of permanent disabilities arising from his so-called treatment—for which, of course, he was obliged to pay—by someone who was neither qualified nor competent. His was a very sad situation. Let me emphasise that that practitioner was unqualified and clearly incompetent. My hon. Friend's Bill will effectively end such problems by ending the irresponsible use of the term "chiropractor".

I hope that the Bill will encourage health authorities, hospital staff and yet more general practices to work more closely with the chiropractic profession. Chiropractic, osteopathy and other such complementary therapies require neither the expensive equipment used in NHS treatments nor the increasingly expensive use of drugs. Their statutory recognition will lead to enormous savings in our health services.

I believe that more widespread use of complementary treatments will also lead to greater accuracy in the diagnosis of disorders that still baffle the NHS, such as allergies and myalgic encephalomyelitis, or ME. I hope that the Bill will encourage companies to become more aware of the opportunities for them to refer employees to chiropractic. My hon. Friend the Minister expects to receive in the summer a report from his Department's clinical standards advisory committee inquiry into back pain. It will probably confirm that tens of thousands of people are off work with back pain every day, costing billions of pounds in lost production each year.

I hope that the Bill will encourage more private insurers to cover chiropractic treatment, because they will judge it more cost-effective than orthodox medical treatment. I understand that more than 30 private United Kingdom health insurance companies now reimburse the cost of such treatment.

Let me end by placing my hon. Friend's initiative within the wider context of the position of the chiropractic profession in Europe, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) inquired. Unfortunately, enormous differences remain in Europe between the practice and controls of complementary medicines, which range from the very liberal to the very restrictive. Equally wide is the variation in the

availability of access for patients to such medicines through national health services. There is no single market for health for European Union citizens. Surely, as citizens, we should be entitled to benefit from the same standard of complementary medicine—as well as orthodox medicine—in every member state.

It was for those reasons that, three weeks ago at the last session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, I tabled a motion for a resolution, which will now go before the appropriate committee for a report and a recommendation. It calls for a new European convention to provide every citizen with the right to benefit from complementary medicines and for a common approach to the recognition and registration of practitioners. Such a convention will, of course, require member Governments such as ours to implement its terms and conditions in national laws. There will then be no need for the piecemeal approach, in this country and throughout Europe, which has made my hon. Friend's Bill so necessary.

In the meantime, I wish my hon. Friend's Bill every success. I hope that it will have an unopposed and unimpeded passage through both Houses.

11.19 am

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I am delighted to be able to participate in this debate because I was so impressed by the competent and effective way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) introduced the Bill this morning. I congratulate him on his wisdom in selecting this topic, which had become overdue for consideration. Unlike him, I rise without particular expertise in the topic—certainly not the expertise that my hon. Friend displayed. Until last summer, I knew little more than the fact that there was a difference between chiropractic and chiropody. I had no idea what techniques the practitioners carried out and I merely include chiropractic in the category of alternative medicine.

I am glad to say that I was enlightened by a constituent, Clare Metcalfe, who runs the Beckenham and Bromley chiropractic clinic. In the summer, she had the wisdom to invite me to her clinic to see the work that she does and to learn a little about the art. I was extremely impressed, not least by the scientific approach behind this form of medicine. I was also impressed by the high professional standards which were clearly evident at the clinic and by the arguments for registration which Clare Metcalfe and the vast majority of her professional colleagues are strongly behind.

I started with a degree of suspicion about alternative medicine—a suspicion that is shared by many people. It probably comes from the prejudices that are inculcated in a modern scientific education which tends to exclude anything that is not orthodox. However, it is important always to retain an open mind and the more I look at the various practices of alternative medicine that are available, the more I see that there are options which are away from the orthodox path but clearly carry much merit. I very much accept the redefinition of chiropractic as a complementary form of medicine rather than an alternative, the stress being on the fact that it runs in parallel to traditional medicine rather than against it. Treatment can easily be carried out in harmony with existing orthodox medical practice.

I have learnt that there are about 900 chiropractors in this country and that they treat about 75,000 patients a week. Chiropractic is a much larger area of complementary medicine than I had previously realised. I should like to correct the hon. Members for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) and for Preston (Mrs. Wise), who were not prepared to allow me to intervene. I intended to do so in a gentle manner merely to point out that it is possible to have treatment under the NHS system at present.

The hon. Member for Rochdale gave the impression that the Bill would do nothing to encourage treatment under the NHS. I beg to differ. Introducing a formal system of registration will automatically increase the status and prestige of this form of medicine and, in doing so, will encourage GPs to exercise their right to refer. That is significant because one of the barriers to the expansion and growth of respectability of chiropractic has been that many GPs have not been prepared to refer patients and in some cases they have not been prepared to acknowledge the benefits of chiropractic. The Bill will help to involve the NHS more.

The hon. Member for Preston was simply wrong when she stated as a matter of fact that people have to pay for chiropractic. That is not the case. The practice I visited was receiving increasing numbers of referrals directly from GPs. GPs with fundholding budgets are able to use the staff element of the budget to pay directly for the treatment so the patient is treated on the NHS and does not have to pay. Non-fundholding GPs are able, with the agreement of the family health services authority, to transfer the cost of treatment to the NHS. I do not know whether any hospitals are using chiropractic. However, it is possible for hospitals to include chiropractic as long as a local decision has been made to that effect.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): In support of my hon. Friend's argument and to give clear evidence to back up what he says, may I point out to him that my medium-sized surgery in Uppingham provides physiotherapy, chiropractic and even acupuncture on the NHS? It is not yet a fundholding surgery, although I hope that it will be in due course. I also hope that acupuncture will in due course be the subject of a Bill similar to this one.

Mr. Merchant: I am delighted to hear my hon. Friend's information on that point. It is further evidence that chiropractic is increasingly being accepted within the NHS system. The driving force will be the demand and the recognition of the demand for these forms of complementary medicine. The Bill has an important part to play in that it increasingly puts chiropractic on a formal basis.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) may know that three studies have recently been carried out which have a bearing on the Bill and on this form of medicine. The first is the Medical Research Council's study, to which the hon. Member for Preston referred. It was reported in the 1990 *British Medical Journal*. A team of epidemiologists and a rheumatologist studied 741 patients between the ages of 18 and 65. They compared the treatment received in hospital through traditional medicine with the treatment received from chiropractors. The study revealed that only one of the 11 hospital centres could perform better than the chiropractors. There was an insignificant difference between the performance of two of the hospitals and the chiropractors. The chiropractors were "significantly more effective" than

[Mr. Merchant]

eight of the hospitals. That demonstrates clearly to me that traditional medicine has recognised the benefits of chiropractic.

The second formal study to which I shall refer, which is not a medical one, is the King's Fund study which looked at chiropractic. The researchers formed the view that registration along the lines proposed in the Bill would distinctly enhance the practice. The third study is a Department of Health-funded study by the medical care research unit at the university of Sheffield. It is looking at the impact on the NHS of the provision of chiropractic as an alternative. It is looking at, for example, the impact on GP prescribing, on the drugs budget, on hospital referrals, on patient satisfaction and on repeat attendances. The study may well demonstrate that chiropractic has a great deal to offer in terms not only of health but of the efficient use of resources within the health service system.

Why is legislation required? Is legislation automatically needed just because one recognises that a part of complementary medicine is useful? The Bill is supported by chiropractors themselves. They recognise that the registration system proposed in the Bill will bring protection to patients and to chiropractors. I shall deal with the two points separately, although they are linked to some extent.

The potential patient needs to know that, if he visits a chiropractor, he can be assured of a basic level of competence. As we have heard this morning, although the vast majority of chiropractors live up to that standard, there is nothing preventing someone from starting a practice and advertising it although he has no competence at all. The Bill will assure a basic level of competence for the patient.

The Bill will also enable patients to know that the chiropractors whom they visit have been trained to a certain standard and can provide care of a certain minimum quality. It would mean that the chiropractors' training was recognised and approved and would not therefore take the would-be chiropractor in a totally different direction from mainstream practice.

In addition, patients need to know that they can trust a chiropractor. The Bill would ensure a proper system of registration which would bring with it a proper system of discipline, thus ensuring that there were no people practising who should not be doing so.

What about chiropractors themselves? The most important thing is that the Bill would give them a clear status and protection against their reputation being somehow impaired by people who set themselves up as chiropractors without having the right to do so. Let me cite an example. Under the existing law, in the very unlikely event of my losing my seat, I could decide to make as little money by setting myself up as a chiropractor. Without any legal hindrance, I could have a little brass plate made and stuck on the front of my house and describe myself as a chiropractor. I could invite people into my front room and treat them.

In losing my seat, I might have become mentally deranged and I might start behaving rather peculiarly with my patients and doing all sorts of strange things to them which could harm them medically, apart from having little to do with the art of chiropractic. Even worse, I might develop a very unhealthy interest in massaging the backs of young ladies and might invite them into my front room solely for that purpose while posing as a practitioner of alternative medicine. As long as I broke no other law, I could not be struck off because there would be no register from which to strike my name.

The system of registration would involve a system of committees observing practitioners and thus a system of proper discipline. The public would be safeguarded, and future and existing chiropractors could be assured that anyone coming into their sphere of expertise would have been properly trained according to the standards set by chiropractors themselves. Insurance would be properly taken care of by the profession's official body and, as I said earlier, treatment would be more widely available under the NHS.

Mr. Elletson: The doctor who runs the Blackpool chiropractic centre in my constituency is an American. He is also a general medical practitioner who specialises in chiropractic. When he arrived in this country he was astonished to find that, unlike America, where very strict regulations govern chiropractic, there is nothing here to protect the public from charlatans. Why does my hon. Friend believe that that is so? The Bill is trying to ensure that we are protected from charlatans. It would mean that Britain would no longer be out on a limb and so unusual in having no regulation governing this practice.

Mr. Merchant: I agree with my hon. Friend. We need to protect the public and the profession against the small number of quacks who are always liable to be attracted to something from which they might be able to make money without performing a service. The same is true of many other areas of activity.

I am in no sense a regulator; I do not wish to introduce rules, regulations or legislation unless absolutely necessary, but in medicine, when we are dealing with people who are vulnerable, especially when they are ill and need treatment, the public are very much at the mercy of people who set themselves up as being able to help in some way. Unless there is a formal system to prevent that, the public are in potential danger. The Bill deals neatly with that problem.

The system of registration is well tried and tested and strikes me as a sensible way of tackling the problem. It does so with sensitivity because it does not seek to intervene in the medical aspect or determine exactly what chiropractic is or should be. Instead, it allows the profession to decide that, as it should. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) said, the Bill seeks merely to define and limit the use of the word "chiropractor". In the proposed legislation, the so-called "grandfather clauses" would also protect the practitioners who have had some training but who do not immediately fall within its strict requirements. It offers a gentle way in which to proceed which would nevertheless achieve the objective without discriminating against genuine chiropractors who have been practising but have not gone through the mainstream system.

The education committee will ensure that training is promoted and that standards are kept at a high level. The investigating committee will in various ways protect against unacceptable professional conduct and professional incompetence and will prevent chiropractors who have been convicted of criminal offences continuing to practise.

It will also regulate those who are unfit because of a medical or mental condition. High standards will be ensured for practitioners and the public.

The Bill will give official respectability to a profession which is already a great success and which is recognised as such by the general public. It will provide faith in a relatively newly accepted form of medicine. In particular, it will enable chiropractic to grow within a formal framework which will nevertheless not place draconian restrictions on it. It will protect without limiting, which is the essence of good regulation. For those reasons, I have no hesitation in supporting this excellent Bill, and I wish it a swift passage through Parliament.

11.37 am

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) is not in the Chamber at the moment because I wish to put on record my congratulations to him on his masterly delivery of his brief and on his stylish presentation.

The Bill is long overdue. Last year, I had the honour to serve on the Committee that debated the Osteopaths Act 1993 and I was well aware that this Bill, which was waiting in the wings, would have its day. That day has now come. It is right that the Bill should not have been confused or merged with the Osteopaths Act for the sake of convenience, as some people suggested. Osteopathy and chiropractic are different disciplines, although they operate within the same sphere. Chiropractic, however, stands on its own merits.

I welcome the fact that the legislation will give doctors confidence which they might not otherwise have had to refer their patients to chiropractors because they will know that the practitioners are registered and have achieved the highest professional standards. Such a development is welcomed by the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Surgeons. In turn, patients will be protected in the knowledge that their practitioner has been trained to high standards. As has been explained, a practitioner could also be subject to professional discipline should things go wrong.

Chiropractic is a growing profession. As has already been said, there are 900 chiropractors on voluntary lists, which are maintained by three organisations, and it is estimated that each week 75,000 patients consult chiropractors. The history of chiropractic goes back a long way. It began in the past century in Iowa in the United States and celebrates its centenary next year. There are more chiropractors in the United States than there are osteopaths—the reverse of Britain. None the less, a *Which?* survey in 1992 showed that in Britain chiropractic was the second most frequently used complementary therapy. I emphasise that it is complementary, not alternative, therapy. It offers the patient an additional option of treatment for certain conditions by which they have been afflicted.

The cause that drives patients to a chiropractic is a pain which is almost impossible to describe. It is widespread, it is a misery and it can be utterly crippling. It is extremely difficult to cure back pain. It is like trying to cure a leak in a roof. Moreover, the victims of back pain suffer because it is not glamorous. Unlike a leg in plaster, one cannot see it. Back pain does not kill and it is not a terminal illness, but it can be such hell that there have been recorded incidents of patients being driven to suicide through suffering pain.

I congratulate the Government on recognising the importance of back pain. Indeed, the White Paper "The Health of the Nation" stated that back pain had a strong claim for priority action. The successful treatment of back pain by chiropractors has been recorded. In 1989, a MORI poll showed that 93 per cent. of users were satisfied with their chiropractic treatment.

There is more to the treatment than simply relieving people of the miserable pain. Relieving people of that pain means that we can get them back to work. Days off work as a result of crippling back pain are astronomical. One can find all sorts of different estimates, but it is reckoned that 310,000 people are off work every day with some kind of back problem. If one uses a pocket calculator and multiplies those figures, we may conclude that millions of working days are lost annually through back pain. It has been estimated that the country has suffered a loss of more than £3 billion every year in lost production.

To put it another way, it is estimated that four out of five people experience back pain at some time in their lives. I shall add my mercifully short-lived experience—it lasted only 10 days. I have never known such pain. I was fortunate that it resolved itself, but I have an inkling of what other people go through.

The people most likely to be at risk from back pain tend to be athletes, who, by the nature of their activities, push their bodies hard; nurses, who have the task of lifting heavy patients; and housewives—I am proud to be a housewife on top of my other duties—who experience the hard work of lifting equipment in the house and heaving children on the hip, which is certainly not good for us.

We also drive ourselves to becoming victims of back pain through poor posture, by falling, by driving cars with badly designed seats in our car-crazed society and by sitting long hours in front of a computer terminal or a typewriter, which can cause spine, neck and shoulder problems. Severe problems may be caused by sciatica, arthritis and rheumatism. The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) pointed out that those conditions do not respond well to rest and pain killers and we must use alternative help—hence the important role of chiropractic.

Complementary medicine is not new and some unlikely names have resorted to it. I can go no higher than Her Majesty the Queen, whose support for homeopathy is well known. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales supports osteopaths, but the chiropractic profession is not to be outdone, because Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales is its patron.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) described the work of the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic. That college has world recognition and has made a large contribution to research. It provides advice on how to avoid pain by standing correctly with evenly distributed bodyweight, how to ensure that our necks and backs are in straight lines—even as I speak, I am trying to practise what I preach—and how to sit straight in chairs with the base of the spine well-supported. Considering that we spend so many hours in the Chamber, I am glad to see that the green Benches are designed to give us more support, although it is sometimes a little hard. The college also advises car manufacturers on driving positions which avoid having to stretch the neck

[Lady Olga Maitland]

and on car seats which support the lumbar regions, the spine and the thighs. It advises patients to sleep with one pillow only and always to have a good, hard mattress.

The wonderful news about chiropractic is that it has come in from the cold. For years, chiropractic treatment has been ostracised by conventional medicine, but attitudes have moved on. In 1986, the British Medical Association dismissed complementary medicine with olympian disdain, despite the fact that in 1981 the British Chiropractic Association approached the Medical Research Council to evaluate chiropractic for low back pain.

Mr. Elletson: I am sure that we were all interested in what my hon. Friend was saying about posture and I compliment her on her posture, which is especially elegant. I was very disturbed by what she had to say about the possible threats to her posture caused by the heavy equipment that she was accustomed to lift around her house in her capacity as a housewife, and I am sure that my hon. Friends and I would want to assure her that any time that she wants help to lift heavy equipment we would be delighted to oblige.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind offer and naturally I will take up his assistance any time—it is more likely to be in the House of Commons when lifting typewriters.

I shall return to discussing the valuable work conducted by the Medical Research Council in evaluating the efficacy of chiropractic. It studied 741 patients with back pain, who were randomly selected and allocated to chiropractors or to the usual hospital out-patient treatment centres in 11 localities across the country. The patients were asked to respond to a questionnaire about their pain and disability. The results showed that chiropractic was considerably more effective than orthodox hospital out-patient treatment. Patients said that they experienced

"large benefits in relief of pain and increased activity."

That contributed to the improvement in the patient's quality of life. The MRC report said:

"There may be substantial economic benefits arising from the introduction of chiropractic into the NHS."

Although that could add about £4 million at 1989 prices if it were extended in a full breadth, it should be pointed out that if it provided for

"the 72,000 referrals per annum who would be suitable for chiropractic treatment . . . it would be offset by savings of around £13 million"

a year

"in lost output and £2·5 million in social security payments".

I trust that the Minister will tell us of his hopes to expand the availability of chiropractic treatment in the health service, although it has already been pointed out that GP fundholders take advantage of their budgets to send patients for chiropractic treatment. It could be that the passionate remarks made by the hon. Member for Preston about the lack of NHS treatment for her constituents are a result of the fact that in her constituency there are no GP fundholders. The reasons could be political rather than medical. A total saving to the country of nearly £16 million a year is worth making; hence there is a powerful case for chiropractic being medically and economically sound.

The success of the treatment is not lost on a whole range of people apart from the royal family. I can give the example of a leading actress, Helena Bonham-Carter, who is a devotee of chiropractic after having been relieved of the back pain that plagued her in her early twenties.

The Medical Research Council, in the conclusion of its report, said:

"The results of the trial leave little doubt that chiropractic is more effective than conventional hospital treatment."

It is gratifying that the *British Medical Journal* published a research paper which said that chiropractic works so well that it should be considered widely in the national health service. In a letter to *The Times* in July 1993, Dr. Fleur Fisher, the head of ethics, science and information at the British Medical Association, supported the regulation of complementary therapies and said:

"There is no war against therapies that may indeed be complementary. Our report recommended that closer collaboration between the medical profession and practitioners of non-conventional medicine should be encouraged in research."

About two thirds of family health service authorities, general practice fundholders and district health authorities think that complementary medicine, and within that chiropractic, has a valued place.

I want to make a proud boast. One of the largest chiropratic practitioners in the country is in my constituency, in Sutton. The practice is headed by Dr. Brian Hammond in the Brighton road, in a building that is a familiar landmark to my local community. Out of 166,000 people in Sutton, the practice has now treated 16,000 patients; that is one in 11. The practice sees about 500 people a week, 65 per cent. of whom come to the practice directly as the first port of call and 35 per cent. of whom come as general practitioner referrals. Five years ago, the picture was quite different; in those days, 80 per cent. made their own way to the chiropractor and only 20 per cent. were referred by their GP. Ten years ago, the picture was even worse; about 95 per cent. had to use their initiative and make their way there, with five per cent. only being sent by their GP. It is remarkable to see the rapid acceleration and acceptance of the chiropratic profession within the health profession.

Dr. Hammond made his contribution to chiropractic medicine by selecting for his PhD thesis the examination of methods of identifying people who might develop back pain in the future. In other words, he was looking at preventative medicine. Time prevents me from discussing that further, but it must be said that Dr. Hammond is a key figure in this field. I believe that he is one of the examiners at the college in Bournemouth.

It is significant that, although chiropractic treatment is largely paid for by patients, it should be taken on board that the cost is manageable. Certainly, in Sutton, patients pay on average about £20-plus—I have to say that the plus is for value added tax. Herein lies the rub. Practitioners are treated as small business men and are therefore required to pay VAT on the services that they offer, which puts up the price. There is welcome news in that, once the statutory register is open, I understand that Customs and Excise will recognise chiropractic practitioners as health professionals and therefore VAT need not be charged. That means that chiropractors will catch up with dietitians, chiropodists, occupational therapists, orthoptists, physiotherapists and radiographers.

Dr. Hammond, in common with all his colleagues, is delighted that the regulation of chiropractic as a profession will outlaw rogue practitioners. He wants to see the highest standards maintained because he is deeply aware of the dangers of rogue quacks, which are fairly obvious.

Patients put their trust in chiropractors and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) described so vividly, that trust can be totally abused. With chiropractors having no recognised training and simply putting up name plates, they can abuse that confidence and dangerously mis-diagnose patients. They could overlook a serious condition and, indeed, fail to send patients to a GP. It has already been recognised that severe back pain can often mask other serious conditions, even cancer.

Proper and conscientious chiropractors with six years of training behind them carry out their work in a detailed and careful way. They carry out many tests, including X-rays and blood and urine tests, which quickly identify any serious medical mischief that needs to be tended to. However, it is unlikely that practitioners with only brass name plates to their names will go to that trouble.

The Bill is especially welcome. As the report of the King's Fund recognised, the demand for the services of chiropractors is set to double over the next five years. I congratulate Sir Thomas Bingham, who is now Master of the Rolls, on chairing such a distinguished team. I also welcome the presence in the Gallery today of Mr. Simon Fielding, who is an observer—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must not refer to people in the Gallery.

Lady Olga Maitland: I stand corrected. I am delighted that those who are observing the proceedings today will see that their own work has been fully recognised. Chiropractic will now catch up and be statutorily regulated, as it is in 17 countries, including most of Europe. It is entirely appropriate that Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which were almost alone among English-speaking countries in not recognising chiropractic, are now following other countries. I wish my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury every good speed in piloting the Bill though its remaining stages.

11.58 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I start by adding my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on both his success in the ballot and his excellent choice of Bill. May I say straight away that the Government fully support the Bill and hope that it will receive the support of the House.

Chiropractic is an important topic because it would appear that almost since the birth of time physicians have used manipulative techniques in the treatment of patients. The earliest recordings are contained in Chinese writings dating back to 2700 BC. Hippocrates and Galen both wrote on the benefits of manipulating the spine. Throughout medieval times and into living memory, local "bonesetters", as they were sometimes called, practised techniques that were to become the early precursors of modern chiropractic and osteopathy.

Chiropractic was developed in the United States in the latter years of the last century. The first person to benefit from chiropractic treatment as we know it today was said to be Harvey Lillard, who had become deaf following an injury to his spine. On 18 September 1895, his spine was manipulated by Daniel David Palmer, the father of modern chiropractic, and his hearing was restored. I trust that my hon. Friend's Bill will be successful in reaching the statute book in time for the profession's centenary celebrations next year.

Chiropractic arrived in Britain in the early years of this century. In 1925, the first voluntary professional association for chiropractors, the British Chiropractic Association, was founded. It was not until 1965, however, that, after several unsuccessful attempts to set up training institutions in this country, the first permanent school, the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic, which is now in Bournemouth and to which several hon. Members have referred, was established. Prior to that, chiropractors wishing to practise or to learn generally had to travel to the United States to receive formal training. In 1988, the college's degree course was validated and approved by the Council for National Academic Awards, becoming the first degree course in complementary medicine to be recognised in this country.

For many years, the Anglo-European college provided the only training in chiropractic in the United Kingdom. In 1972, however, in response to popular demand, John McTimoney, a former jeweller and silversmith who had benefited from chiropractic treatment, opened a school in Oxford. Although he received his training from a graduate of the original Palmer school, Dr. Mary Walker, he developed a technique that differed from those being taught and used by other chiropractors at that time.

In 1984, a further school, the Witney School of Chiropractic, was founded in Oxford by Hugh Corley. He had trained at the McTimoney school under McTimoney, under whose guidance he went on to refine and develop a further variation of manipulation, now known as the McTimoney-Corley technique. Both the McTimoney and Witney schools are working towards securing validation of their respective courses. Holders of diplomas from those schools also participate in systems of voluntary registration. McTimoney chiropractors are registered with the Institute of Pure Chiropractic and McTimoney-Corley chiropractors belong to the British Association of Applied Chiropractic.

The profession has continued to grow and develop. There are now more than 900 chiropractors working in the United Kingdom, twice the number who were practising five years ago, with the number of practitioners likely to double again before the next centur. It is estimated that about 75,000 men and women each week from all walks of life and across a wide section of the population consult a chiropractor. That figure is perhaps three times higher than the figure given by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) in his otherwise accurate and interesting speech.

That makes chiropractic the most widely used complementary therapy after osteopathy. I now declare an interest, in that I am a long-term sufferer of back pain. There have been a number of attempts to sort me out over the years, and I remember when I was about eight it was decided that one of my legs was shorter than the other. I was given built-up shoes, which gave me nothing except an inferiority complex.

I discovered the chiropractic profession through my good friend Stanley Grundy at the National Back Pain Association, who arranged for me to travel to Sutton to be treated at the excellent practice which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

Olga Maitland). I failed to ask my hon. Friend's permission or approval before I made what was a partly medical, partly ministerial visit to her constituency, and I apologise.

The visit was worthwhile because it gave me an insight into the subtlety and the efficacy of chiropractic, and into the excellence of the profession. Most people like me consult a chiropractor because of lower back pain, but, as has been said, chiropractic treatment can be also used to treat head injuries, neck and upper body pain, rheumatism and sports injuries.

In 1990 the *British Medical Journal* published the results of the first clinical trials of chiropractic in this country. The trials compared chiropractic treatment with hospital out-patient management of lower pain back in 741 patients across 11 centres. As the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) pointed out, the results showed that only one hospital department appeared to get better results than chiropractic. Improvements persisted over time, and chiropractic patients also benefited from a reduced chance of needing further treatment.

I am not aware of another discipline within complementary medicine which has taken the bold step of allowing its practice and treatment skills to be tested in this way against mainstream medicine. In 1990, a poll conducted by *The Times* and MORI suggested that 93 per cent. of those consulting a chiropractor were satisfied with the treatment they had received, and I would include myself in that.

The value of such treatment has also been recognised within industry. It is perhaps not widely known that the Taunton Cider Company has, for the past 10 years, engaged chiropractors to treat its work force. Similarly, the Saccenda factory in Northamptonshire took part in a small pilot project to provide chiropractic treatment for its employees.

Those employers, as well as others such as St. Ivel, British Cellophane and the South West electricity board, believe that making chiropractic treatment available to their work forces clearly provides a cost-effective way of ameliorating the effects of industrial injuries, and reduces the time and the production lost through sickness. Many would say that that also reflects good industrial relations, and makes an important contribution towards meeting "The Health of the Nation" targets by improving the overall health of the work force.

Chiropractic has similarly continued to grow in stature in the eyes of the medical profession. Lord Walton said in another place:

"Some 20 to 25 years ago it was regarded as improper for a doctor to associate with complementary practitioners".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 31 January 1992; Vol. 534, c. 1593.]

He went on to say that at that time a doctor referring a patient to a non-medically qualified practitioner would have fallen foul of the recommendations of the General Medical Council on professional conduct and discipline.

Today, however, the medical profession regards chiropractic as complementary to the treatment provided by medical practitioners and a treatment that enhances the range of possible treatments available to patients. Cross-referrals between GPs and chiropractors are becoming more common. These days it would not be unusual for a chiropractor to treat a patient who is concurrently receiving medication from his or her general practitioner.

As many will know, "chiropractic" literally means "treatment by hand". It involves assesing the patient's condition and making a manipulation or adjustment to correct it. Chiropractors will not provide treatment where there are signs of other complications such as inflammatory disease, infection or indications of a tumour in the spine. In the same way, chiropractors will not use some of the more vigorous techniques if there is evidence of osteoporosis, damage to ligaments or recent fractures to bones. Chiropractors also take particular care if the patient has a history of circulatory problems, including aneurisms.

Before commencing treatment, a chiropractor will take a detailed life history from the patient, making observations on such matters as lifestyle, posture and gait. Some chiropractors may also make use of X-rays, but the principal assessment and treatment tool for all chiropractors is their hands. Should the chiropractor come across something that suggests that chiropractic treatment would be inappropriate, or discovers evidence of a more serious underlying health problem, he or she will refer the patient to a medical practitioner.

Once all the stages that I have described have been completed, treatment may begin. Within the range available to a chiropractor are such techniques as mobilisation, which involves moving joints to their full extent, manipulation or adjustments that return misplaced or badly aligned joints to their correct position. Those techniques all require absolute precision and the highest level of skill.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury has said and other hon. Members have reiterated, at present anyone can call himself or herself a chiropractor and set up in practice. There is no obligation for practitioners to undergo any formal training or to comply with any standards of professional competence or ethical practice. Although the current voluntary regulation schemes have been well supported and, to their credit, reasonably successful, they cannot enforce standards of competence or conduct because at the end of the day a practitioner can simply decide to opt out of membership.

Therefore, the public have no guarantee that people calling themselves chiropractors are properly qualified or competent in either the practice of chiropractic or the skills of differential diagnosis, which is knowing when chiropractic treatment is inappropriate and medical attention is more properly and perhaps more urgently required. My hon. Friend's Bill will enable such doubts to be eradicated.

The Bill is the first to be introduced with the aim of securing statutory regulation for the chiropractic profession. Statutory regulation is a goal for which the profession has been striving for some years. In the past, however, such efforts have been pursued in a somewhat piecemeal fashion by one part or other of the profession acting independently. For example, in 1975 the British Chiropractic Association applied unsuccessfully to be included as one of the professions regulated under the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960. It would therefore be fair to say that chiropractors, as represented by the present association, have not always seen eye to eye on the way forward for the profession.

A significant breakthrough occurred in 1991, when representatives from all the chiropractic associations came together to form the chiropractic registration steering group. That organisation, which is now a limited company,

represents the unified voice of the chiropractic profession and exists for the single purpose of paving the way for the statutory regulation of the profession.

The profession can be justly proud of the chiropractic registration steering group and its achievements. Many people would agree that the profession would not be where it is today if it were not for the determination and commitment of members of the group. It has moved rapidly and with authority to achieve consensus within the profession. Education and training is the most significant area in which it has made inroads. It has agreed that, within five years of legislation regulating the profession coming into force, all chiropractic education and training institutions in the United Kingdom represented by members of the steering group will have levelled-up standards, for the benefit of patients and the profession alike. That is not to say that chiropractors registered within one of the registering bodies are not properly trained, but is an acknowledgement of the fact that the profession has developed in the United Kingdom along distinct and separate lines and that it now wishes to pull together in the same direction.

Nor does the agreement mean that the McTimoney and McTimoney-Corley schools will lose their individualism. The Bill is not an attempt to dictate the curricula to be taught. Diversity of approach stimulates innovation. For instance, medical schools differ considerably in their emphasis over elements of the curriculum and the way in which they are taught, but they all produce safe and competent doctors. It is therefore essential that the diversity that already exists within the chiropractic profession continues to flourish under the proposed statutory scheme.

I underscore the importance of the chiropractic profession continuing to build on and exploit the unity that it has achieved through the steering group. My hon. Friend's Bill is the means that could cement that unity and lead the profession on into the future. I therefore take this opportunity to urge all chiropractors to support the contribution that their organisation is making to the work of the steering group.

The Bill will preserve patients' freedom to choose the type of chiropractor they consult, while meeting the concerns that the profession rightly has to ensure that there are adequate safeguards. Under the terms of the Bill a single statutory body, the General Chiropractic Council, will be established to develop, promote and regulate the chiropractic profession and set standards for educational and professional competence. The general council will be the vanguard of the profession and will play a key role, especially during the scheme's formative years, to help to raise the profile of chiropractic as it is practised in all its various forms in the United Kingdom.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury said, the initial chiropractic members of the general council will be appointed by the Privy Council, after consultation with those organisations that administer the present voluntary registration schemes.

I understand that when the King's Fund working party made recommendations on membership of the first general council, consideration was given to granting each of the existing voluntary registration groups a proportion of the seats on a pro-rata basis.

The working party's final recommendation, however, was that the Privy Council should appoint the first chiropractic members after consulting with those bodies that operate the voluntary registration schemes, not as representatives of a particular organisation but on the basis of their individual ability and merit. Those members will, therefore, be selected to represent the different branches of chiropractic in the United Kingdom and for their ability to help to secure the highest standards of clinical practice and bring out the very best ideas from all quarters of the profession.

That members will be neither delegates or representatives of a particular organisation nor beholden to any sectoral interests will be of key interest in enabling the profession to move forward to the next stage of its history. So it is worth making the point again that members will be selected on the basis of their individual ability and merit to be ambassadors for the whole profession.

At about this time last year, the House had the privilege to debate a Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss). His Bill successfully went on to complete all its stages and became the Osteopaths Act 1993. It has provided a model not only for the chiropractic profession but for all the professions of non-conventional medicine to follow. I had the honour, as did the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo), to contribute to the debate and support that Bill. It builds on the stepping stones to statutory regulation described in 1985 by my noble Friend Lord Glenarthur, the then Under-Secretary of State in what was in those days the Department of Health and Social Security. Those set out the criteria which the Government expected professions of non-conventional medicine to fulfil before they could be considered for statutory regulation.

The same principles apply today and it may help the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson), who asked about complementary medicine in general, if I set out those principles this afternoon. First, the therapy should be founded on a systematic body of knowledge. Secondly, there should be in place a recognised system of voluntary registration that embraces an appropriate and enforceable code of conduct. Thirdly, the move to statutory regulation should be supported by members of the profession—I have already touched on the need for unity within the chiropractic profession. Fourthly, the profession should secure the support and acceptance of the medical profession. Finally, the profession should go on to test the will of Parliament by means of legislation.

Like the osteopathic profession, the chiropractic profession has been working at and meeting those criteria for a number of years. In December 1991, the chiropractic profession trod the pathway laid by osteopathy by securing the agreement of the King's Fund to set up a working party on chiropractic to consider the case for statutory regulation. Like the working party on osteopathy, that working party was chaired by the right hon. Sir Thomas Bingham, Master of the Rolls. The working party published its report in May last year and recommended the establishment of a statutory scheme that mirrored the provisions of the Osteopaths Act.

I should like to express the Government's thanks to the working party, the right hon. Sir Thomas Bingham and other members, and to the King's Fund. Without doubt they made a significant and central contribution to the chiropractor's pursuit of statutory regulation.

Having satisfied the criteria that I have described, the Government believe that the most suitable way for a

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

profession to pursue its quest for statutory regulation is by way of a private Member's Bill. I know that some hon. Members hold the view that a Bill as detailed and complex as this one should be a Government Bill. I assure the House that, as with the Osteopaths Bill, we gave this matter careful consideration. The fears of some hon. Members about supporting a private Member's Bill of such length and complexity as that of the one for osteopaths proved to be unfounded. I hope that such fears in connection with this Bill will also be unfounded.

We concurred with the view, held over many years by successive Ministers, that professional regulation, particularly the regulation of a non-orthodox medical profession, should be pursued by the private Member's route. That frees Parliament from traditional party influences, allowing it to make up its own mind on this important issue according to the merits of the case. As I have said, the shining example of the Osteopaths Act clearly demonstrates that that approach can be successful. I hope that my hon. Friend's Bill will build on that example and will give further encouragement to those practitioners in complementary medicine who wish to pursue this aim.

I shall now deal briefly with the contents of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury has outlined its purpose and content and its major provisions. The regulatory system proposed for chiropractors is, of course, closely modelled on those that exist for other major professions, including all the key health care professions. In particular, it follows the pattern of statutory regulation enshrined in the Osteopaths Act, reinforcing that as the model for other groups.

In common with the Osteopaths Act, my hon. Friend's Bill explicitly designates professional incompetence as a basis for disciplinary investigation. I know that other professions have been encouraged to investigate ways and means of introducing that concept for their members. The solutions reached may be different from the different professions, but osteopaths and chiropractors can take pride in the fact that they propose to include this provision from the outset of their statutory scheme for the benefit of their patients.

Similarly, the Bill contains a provision for the future introduction of compulsory refresher training as a condition of continuing registration. That is in line with current thinking in a number of health care professions, and follows the precedent set in the Osteopaths Act. That provision will help to reassure the public that the practitioners whom they consult are keeping up to date with knowledge and developments in their fields.

Perhaps one of the most important elements of the Bill is its provision to protect the title "chiropractor" or any variations of the term, and to make it a criminal offence for other than a registered practitioner to call himself by that name. I know that that provision interests many related professions. I confirm that it is not intended to prevent other professionals such as physiotherapists from using chiropractic techniques in the course of their practice or from telling their patients that they are using such techniques. The offence provides specifically for closure of title, not closure of function. I hope that my remarks will reassure those who are concerned about that. Other professions are anxious to secure closure of their professional title. Our advice to them is to follow the examples of osteopaths and chiropractors and to seek that goal through private Member's legislation. I see, for example, that podiatrists have followed that advice and are seeking to secure closure of their title through the Bill that was introduced by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris).

As careful readers of the Bill will have noted, it also contains a panoply of appeal rights—for example, at various stages of the proposed fitness-to-practise procedures—against a decision of the general council to remove a name from the register that has been fraudulently or incorrectly made, and as part of the registration process. The Government's view is that those are desirable and necessary to fulfil our human rights obligations. The Bill also reflects our European obligations in respect of the recognition of professional qualifications.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury has already remarked, added protection for the public is provided through the exemption of registered chiropractors from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. That will bring chiropractors into line with other health care professionals and will mean that applicants for registration will, if asked, be required to declare all their criminal convictions, including spent convictions. The General Chiropractic Council will also have the power, through rules approved by the Privy Council, to ensure that practising chiropractors hold professional indemnity insurance. The scope of these rule-making powers will be sufficiently wide to enable the general council to check that that requirement is being complied with and initiate disciplinary proceedings against a practitioner where it is not.

There is nothing in the Bill to affect the rights of members of the public to consult chiropractors direct, nor chiropractors' professional freedom to treat their patients. With all its statutory powers, the General Chiropractic Council will not be able to interfere with the free market that currently exists in terms of the scale of fees that chiropractors may charge. As my hon. Friend has already remarked, should the need ever arise, powers of intervention are provided against any anti-competitive practices that the general council might contemplate. My hon. Friend has already drawn attention to the fact that it is anticipated that the Bill will have only minor implications for public expenditure, which would arise only in the unlikely event of the Privy Council having to exercise its default powers over the General Chiropractic Council. I can confirm that assessment from the Government's viewpoint.

The House will be reassured to know that on no known occasion has the Privy Council had to exercise similarly held powers in respect of other statutory schemes. I am sure that the chiropractic profession has no desire to achieve a first in that respect. The passage of the Bill is not in any way related to the availability or otherwise of chiropractic on the NHS. Having heard of the many benefits that chiropractic can offer, I suspect that many people—as we have heard from some hon. Members today—may feel that the treatment should be provided more widely on the NHS.

The simple fact is that chiropractic can already be obtained on the NHS. The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) said that she felt that nothing in the Bill widened that availability. She is mistaken. One of the principal effects of the closure of title and the regulation of the chiropractic profession is precisely to give medical

practitioners and the public greater confidence that, when referred to a chiropractor for treatment, they will go to a professional person who has the backing of a statutory body, has the necessary training and, perhaps more importantly, is subject to the disciplinary proceedings that that body may bring against that practitioner if there is any form of indiscipline or abuse.

That is an important point. Many members of the medical profession take a deeply conservative view of medical treatments, as is demonstrated by the contrast between the rates of introduction of new pharmaceutical products here and in other parts of Europe. Many of those people will need the reassurance of knowing that, if they refer patients, they can be certain that they are referring them to practitioners who will be thoroughly competent and held to account for their actions.

I hope that I have gone some way to convincing the hon. Lady that the Bill takes a major step forward in making chiropractic more generally available on the NHS. That will require the co-operation of the medical profession and, indeed, of NHS managers.

As I said, chiropractic can be obtained on the NHS. General practice fundholders can use the staff element of their budgets to employ chiropractors; non-fundholders may also employ them, although many will do so only if their local family health service authorities can reimburse the costs of the therapists' salaries from their cash-limited funds for GP staff and premises. The message is, however, that it is up to any GP fundholder or district health authority to conclude that the treatment should be made available to patients. The Bill will make many of them much more confident about referring patients.

In the hospital sector and elsewhere in the NHS, the only constraint on the provision of chiropractic—or any other service deemed to be of benefit to patients—is the requirement for the local health authority to consider its provision necessary to meet the reasonable demands of the public. Chiropractic is therefore no different from any other forms of treatment. It is up to the profession to convince those who make decisions—whether they are health service managers or practitioners and others in the medical world—that chiropractic will indeed be of value to patients. Whether it should be commissioned is a matter for local decision making, and must remain so; people will have to assess locally the extent to which it is beneficial.

Audit studies are already being carried out in several parts of the country by district health authorities such as the Dorset, Bath and Wiltshire health commissions. I do not know the reason for the concentration on the south-west; others may be able to enlighten me. I note that there seems to be a concentration of hon. Members from that area in the Chamber today. The commissions are examining the feasibility of purchasing chiropractic for their local populations.

This country has only about 900 chiropractors. If the greater part of the NHS considered purchasing chiropractic, initially there would not be enough practitioners to go round; if the Bill succeeds, however—as I hope it will—there is every likelihood that statutory regulations will have the additional effect of stimulating the continued growth of the profession, and spurring on many more people to consider chiropractic as a career. Statutory regulation can also be expected to encourage closer working relationships between doctors and the profession.

I am sure that the House will forgive me if I briefly mention the general subject of alternative and complementary medicine, and especially the benefits to the NHS that many of its supporters—we have several in the House today—believe that it could bring. I appreciate that this is a subject on which people hold strong views which arise from a genuine concern that NHS patients should receive the very best treatment. One of the criticisms often levelled at orthodox medicine is that it fails to recognise the individuality of the patient and instead focuses on his or her particular problems in a somewhat impersonal way. There may be some important lessons to learn here about the way in which patients wish to be treated.

Some take the rather extreme view that orthodox medicine all too often resorts simply to pumping patients full of drugs or to lopping off those bits that no longer function properly. Many supporters of alternative and complementary medicine feel that there is another and better way in which to approach sickness and illness. They believe that if the range and availability of such treatments on the NHS were increased, the NHS would save money on the ever-spiralling cost of drugs and prescriptions, the need for unnecessary surgery and other invasive procedures would be reduced and there would be an improvement in the overall quality of life for patients. Those are laudable intentions.

Research suggests that people consult alternative and complementary practitioners in addition to receiving orthodox treatment on the NHS. We are keen to explore the question and to find out whether alternative and complementary medicine available in one part of the NHS impacts on other parts and, if so, in what ways. We have, therefore, commissioned the medical care research unit at Sheffield university to carry out research into the impact within general practice that complementary therapists such as osteopaths, chiropractors, acupuncturists and herbalists have on hospital referrals, prescribing and drug costs and patient satisfaction. The project began last December and will take two years to complete.

I hope that I have established to a small degree our credentials on alternative medicine. One of my parents was once president of the General Council and Register of Osteopaths and the other ran the homeopathic hospital in Tunbridge Wells, so I am not entirely divorced from these matters despite being connected with the Department of Health.

How are the Government able to support the chiropractors' quest for statutory regulation when we are pursuing deregulation elsewhere? The aim of the Government's deregulation initiative is to reduce the burden of existing regulations and to ensure that unnecessary new regulation is avoided. Our aim is to deliver better goal-based regulation in proportion to the risk involved, especially where there is a need to protect members of the public. The Bill is not an attempt, as my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury assured us, to impose a heavy-handed regulation that dictates everything from the size of the treatment table to the content of the practitioners' training. Instead, it is about entrusting to the professionals the means to regulate more effectively and enabling them, within a statutory framework, to chart their own destiny. The Bill will also provide adequate assurances to the public about the education, training and competence of chiropractors.

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

In the past two years, two groups of alternative complementary medical practitioners have sought statutory regulation. That may conjure up in the minds of hon. Members a picture of a queue of those professions standing in the wings, waiting for their turn on the parliamentary stage. Although I have no crystal ball in which to gaze, I suspect that it may be some time before the next profession is in a position to pursue similar legislation. That does not mean that other health care professions may not consider modernising their statutory schemes, but I do not foresee a completely new group coming into view on the horizon, possibly for some years to come.

That raises the question whether the Government should be considering statutorily regulating other groups. I know that that is the view held by some hon. Members, including, I believe, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East. We believe that, in the context of the health care professions, statutory regulation should not impose restrictions but provide freedoms. For example, the osteopathic profession can regard having achieved statutory regulation as a prize or reward for a job well done. It is something for which it has striven for more than 60 years, and it builds on a very successful system of voluntary registration and regulation.

Mr. David Atkinson: I hear what my hon. Friend says, but does he agree that after 30 years the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960 deserves a review, especially in view of the concerns being expressed by physiotherapists to which I referred earlier?

Mr. Sackville: I believe that it would be most appropriate for professions to consider private Members' legislation, such as that which we are discussing today, as a means of achieving protection of title, if that is what they wish. My hon. Friend will remember that that was the case with the Bill relating to podiatrists which was introduced by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe. Any review of the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960 would raise many wider issues and could be undertaken sensibly only in the light of a thorough evaluation of how it would fit in with the Government's health service reforms and the effects of changes in community care.

As I said, osteopaths are now statutorily regulated, not because they are hot-headed individuals who are wielding a dangerous or violent form of treatment that needs to be controlled, but merely in order to enable them to regulate and develop their profession more effectively. Such a framework will provide safeguards for the public by assuring continuity in the quality and standard of treatment that they can expect to receive.

Statutory registration, based on the principle that an individual practitioner has demonstrated that he or she has undergone acceptable courses of training and achieved the required standard of competence, provides that assurance. It also provides an effective system of redress in the event that something goes wrong. As I said to the hon. Member for Rochdale, they are two vital contributions to building the confidence of the medical profession and the public in a profession or form of treatment which has up to now been considered to be outside the mainstream of the medical profession.

In that context, we therefore view statutory regulation as the logical next step to a system of voluntary registration supported by the majority of practitioners of any particular profession. It is precisely for the reasons that I have just described that chiropractors wish to follow the osteopaths and secure statutory regulation for the profession.

Imposing statutory regulation on a profession that neither desires it nor is capable of administering it would be unwieldy, expensive and difficult to police. It would also take away from the profession the right and ability to control its own destiny. Such a situation is clearly far removed from the system of statutory regulation enshrined in the Osetopaths Act 1993 and in the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury. Those measures are founded firmly on the principles of professional self-regulation.

We believe that a system which embraces high standards of education, of training and of clinical practice, alongside the development of an enforceable code of practice that provides proper safeguards for patients, is the hallmark of a responsible profession. We have therefore welcomed the progress which many of the alternative and complementary professions have made along the path of voluntary self-regulation, but we remain firmly of the opinion that the question of statutory regulation must remain one for the professions themselves to consider whether to pursue.

The examples of the osteopaths and the chiropractors may lead other groups to consider the question afresh and perhaps with greater urgency. I also suggest that if purchasers of health care services, such as district health authorities and GP fundholders, take the view that to be assured of the quality of service that they are buying they would purchase alternative and complementary therapies only from those groups which are statutorily regulated, it would add further impetus for such groups to consider the matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury has already said that his Bill contains a handful of fine-tuning amendments of the Osteopaths Act. That Act was a mould-breaking piece of legislation and introduced a number of innovatory ideas for the regulation of health care professions. The powers of the fitness-to-practise committees, for example, to take immediate action to protect members of the public are perhaps the most comprehensive in any statutory scheme. The Chiropractors Bill, which effectively reproduces the provisions of the Osteopaths Act, has provided an almost unprecedented opportunity to reconsider the detail underpinning both the statutory schemes.

I am sure that many hon. Members who have sponsored private Members' Bills would have welcomed the opportunity to twiddle with their piece of legislation once it had reached the statute book. Some hon. Members may well think that probably a number of Ministers would also welcome such an opportunity. Whatever they may think, all I can say is that I cannot possibly comment. It is a tribute to the robustness of the Osteopaths Act and to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East that there are so few amendments to be made, many of which are simple, drafting amendments to fine-tune the scheme and to make a first class piece of legislation even better.

May I conclude—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"]—by reminding the House of what the Bill is all about. It is principally about the back pain that many people suffer all over the world, but is probably aggravated by the way in which many of us sit around—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear,

hear!"}—like today, and remain for long periods in a sedentary position. For that reason, an increasing number of people in the country would probably benefit from an enlargement and a development of the profession of chiropractic.

I therefore strongly commend my hon. Friend's Bill to the House, and I commend all his supporters and sponsors who are here to cheer him on today. I sincerely believe that the Bill's provisions will apply to all members of the profession in a way which is valuable to them.

The provisions embrace chiropractic in the different forms in which it is practised today. Indeed, my hon. Friend's Bill is a very British solution to a very British problem.

Although the general council's responsibilities on the regulation, development and promotion of the profession will gradually subsume many of the functions of the voluntary registration systems, the variety of techniques and styles that constitute chiropractic in the United Kingdom can continue to flourish within an overall regulatory framework. That will enable today's patients and the generations of patients to come to choose the form of chiropractic treatment best suited to their individual and particular needs, in the certain knowledge that they will receive the greatest and highest quality of care from appropriately trained practitioners. For those reasons, I congratulate my hon. Friend on his Bill and warmly commend it to the House.

12.55 pm

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): As the Bill has all-party support, I think that it was unnecessary for the Minister to read his speech twice. I congratulate the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on the Bill and on his comprehensive explanation of the clauses. Indeed, I felt at times that I was experiencing déjà vu, and when I checked *Hansard*, I found that I was hearing again the debate on the then Osteopaths Bill. Lessons were learnt in debates in the Committee of that Bill and I commend the hon. Member for Aylesbury for taking those arguments on board.

The Bill is about the regulation of a therapy and treatment that is being used by hundreds of thousands of people. The efficacy of that treatment is clearly demonstrated and the Bill proposes to include regulations for the protection not only of the public, so that they can be sure that they are consulting someone who is properly qualified, but of chiropractors.

There has been much discussion about the availability on the national health service of what are commonly called complementary therapies. We should put aside the idea that the medicine offered in the national health service is all conventional or orthodox and is the only type of medicine that works and is acceptable. They are complementary therapies that should be part of the NHS because they work; they are appropriate treatments, and the NHS is about offering to the public a comprehensive service of medical treatment that is free at the point of need. The surveys mentioned have shown that 70 per cent. of family health service authorities and 65 per cent. of district health authorities are in favour of all the complementary therapy services being made available freely at the point of contact. That is entirely different from referral on contact.

The national health service should offer such services. More than 900 practitioners give 75,000 consultations a week, and 310,000 people in the United Kingdom are off work each day because of lower back pain. The complaint costs the country more than £3 billion in lost production every year. In addition, there is the cost to the health service of providing treatments that are sometimes inappropriate and often expensive and that often cause unnecessary and undesirable side effects.

Disability from lower back pain in Britain is increasing faster than any other form of disability—the incidence has doubled in the past 10 years. Today's debate is not just about regulation, important though that is, but about what is available on the national health service and whether it is free and not subject to contract exchanges.

The British Medical Association has made its position clear. It states:

> "It is difficult at present for individuals to be certain that the therapist whom they are consulting is competent to practise. Similarly, it is not easy for doctors to ensure that the therapists to whom they transfer care of patients are competent. The present situation, in which anyone is free to practise, irrespective of their training or experience, is unacceptable. Where individuals undergo courses of training designed to equip them for the practice of particular therapies, these should conform to minimum standards appropriate to the responsibilities and demands of that therapy."

The Bill is an attempt to introduce such provisions into chiropractic.

Unfortunately, the Bill does not make such provisions freely available within the national health service. The Government are silent on the provision of money for the training of chiropractors and the Bill does not make that money available. If one wishes to be a chiropractor, one has to become one at one's own expense. The Bill is silent, and the Government have been silent, on the further research needed to ensure that the practice is available within the national health service. The Bill is silent on the need to ensure that we understand the potential of chiropractors in the NHS at both primary and secondary level.

The Labour party has consulted widely on making complementary therapies available in the NHS. The Royal College of General Practitioners welcomed our report and said:

> "A wide choice of therapeutic approaches is a necessary part of good practice,"

and therefore should be available inside the national health service. My hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) referred to her experiences with a complementary therapist—a chiropractor. She mentioned, as have many other hon. Members, the involvement and partnership between patient and therapist—a relationship that should exist in all forms of medicine. Unfortunately, it does not always do so. The NHS could be greatly strengthened by the integration at all levels of complementary therapies available as part of a comprehensive health system.

The Bill is widely supported and will pass into Committee. A number of hours have already been spent debating it and all who have spoken have been in favour of its proposals. I sincerely hope that the House will accept the Bill and proceed swiftly to ensure its passage. I hope that it quickly returns to the Floor of the House to be given our final approval before gaining Royal Assent.

1.4 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mrs. Wise: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has not been in the Chamber and the Bill has received whole-hearted support from all quarters. I feel that his speech will do a disservice to the Bill and prevent the Second Reading debate on the Nursery Education (Assessment of Need) Bill from starting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Jessel: I greatly resent that point of order. This morning, I attended the funeral of someone who did a lot of good work for people in my constituency. I wrote to notify Madam Speaker that I intended to seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mentioned the funeral, and that I had a particular interest in this matter not only because I have been a patient of a chiropractor for many years but because the national headquarters of the National Back Pain Association is at Teddington in my constituency. I have raised the subject of back pain, which is linked with the question of chiropractic, in the House on many occasions.

In view of that constituency interest, it is entirely proper for me to seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and disregard the strictures of the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise), who perhaps was not aware of all that, but who should have found out before she jumped in as she did. To say that in some sense what I am about to say will detract from the Bill merely because I did not have the privilege, which I would have liked, of being present throughout the debate is to anticipate that I might attack the Bill, which I will not seek in any way to do.

The Bill has my warm support. I most strongly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on having introduced it. I am sure that it will do good and I hope that it will have a smooth passage through the House, as the Osteopaths Bill did last year. I only regret that I did not hear my hon. Friend's speech or that of my hon. Friend the Minister, to whom I apologise for not having arrived earlier.

The chiropractor to whom I go is in Sutton—my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) has just left the Chamber, but I know that she spoke earlier. My chiropractor is Dr. Brian Hammond. He is a fine chiropractor to whom I was introduced by the National Back Pain Association and its founder, Mr. Stanley Grundy CBE, who is well known to my hon. Friend the Minister. Mr. Grundy founded the National Back Pain Association over 20 years ago. That association has done a great deal to promote research and to focus attention on back pain and the work of chiropractic and related professions. My hon. Friend the Minister was kind enough to visit the headquarters of the association at Teddington. I know that, like me, he suffers from back pain.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) was absolutely right when she drew the attention of hon. Members to the fact that every working day 310,000 people are off work because of back pain and that the cost to the nation is about £3 billion a year. About 60 million working days are lost a year. That is an enormous loss of days. Indeed, it is greater than the number of days lost through strikes—not merely nowadays when there are hardly any strikes, but at the peak of striking, such as in the winter of discontent in the late 1970s when people seemed to go on strike every time the bell struck. An immense number of days were lost through strikes but it was no greater than the number of days lost through back pain.

Back pain is a major social evil which afflicts large numbers of people, but unfortunately it is not a glamour cause from a charitable point of view. If one is running a charity dealing with a disease from which people might die, such as cancer or heart disease, a charity for the welfare of children, such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children or Save the Children fund, or a general charity to help old people, those tend to evoke more sympathy. It is easier to attract media attention to such a charity.

Back pain, unfortunately, has a seaside postcard image and people think wrongly that there is something comical about it. There is nothing funny about it at all. It can hurt like hell, waste a huge amount of time and get comparatively little sympathy in relation to the amount of pain which it generates. Any Bill which, as this Bill does, tends to uplift the status of the profession of those who cure and prevent back pain and who care for those with it, and which upholds the professional status of those who cultivate their knowledge and their skill to deal with back pain, ought to be most warmly supported. I hope that, at every stage in the House and in the other place, the Bill will have a fair passage.

The Bill is about the profession of chiropractors, and their professional status, examinations, internal discipline and the upholding of their standards. That almost sounds as if those things are an end in themselves but, with respect, I say that they are not. They are only a means to an end, because the protection of standards is a means to the end of seeing that people are successfully treated for back trouble.

I should like to utter a warning at this point. I believe that professional status is double-edged, and we ought not to assume that professional status invariably promotes the upholding of standards. Sometimes a body that has professional status can tend to rest too much on its laurels. It is essential that professional status is used as a springboard for chiropractors to reach even higher standards, and not as some kind of cushion.

British professionalism in all of the main professions has basically high ideals, and is intended to uphold standards. It is intended to ensure that anyone who is not qualified in that profession is not allowed to practise. It is intended also to impose internal discipline on the members to uphold the profession, to confer a kind of brotherhood within that profession and to exclude anybody who is not up to it. That is the upside of British professionalism.

There is also a downside. I regret to say that I have found in my dealings with members of British professions —whether they have been solicitors, barristers, doctors, dentists, accountants or teachers—that their professional qualifications do not guarantee that people will be good at their jobs. Professional qualifications are a necessary condition, but they are not sufficient to ensure that people will be good at their jobs. If people are to be good at their jobs, professional qualifications are not enough. They need application, dedication, flair, zest, insight and other qualities as well as having letters after their name and having passed examinations or other forms of test.

I have found that in any profession some people are very good indeed, others are not so good and others are hardly any good at all at their jobs, even though they are professionally qualified and can put letters after their name. I hope that chiropractors will bear that in mind after the Bill has been passed and will not harp excessively on technical qualifications. I hope that they will do their utmost to make absolutely certain that personal qualities as well as professional competence are cultivated to ensure that members of the newly established profession do a good job. It is not enough merely to rely on professional qualifications.

I shall now refer to the role of the chiropractic profession in connection with the National Back Pain Association. The association was founded by Mr. Stanley Grundy CBE in the 1960s. He has pledged and instilled support for the association. It has done a great deal of good, so much so that in the White Paper "The Health of the Nation", published in 1992, the Secretary of State singled out five key areas for priority action, namely, coronary heart disease and strokes, cancer, mental illness, AIDS and accidents, but also said that rehabilitation, the health of elderly people, asthma and drug misuse—and back pain —had a strong claim to key area status next time around.

The inclusion of back pain in that list in the White Paper followed a meeting between Mr. Grundy, Lord Joseph, myself and the Secretary of State for Health in the last Parliament, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave). The purpose of that meeting was to stress the great importance of back pain. We asked the Government to accept—as they had already done, but we wanted to re-emphasise it—the great importance of back pain. That was done by the subsequent inclusion of back pain in the list in "The Health of the Nation".

I wish that I had been here earlier to put the point to the Minister. I do not know whether, by leave of the House, he will be able to answer my question. If he is given leave and if he has time, will he tell me what action will be taken in respect of the next five areas of health need, including back pain, especially included as next steps in the White Paper? If he cannot tell me, perhaps he would be kind enough to follow up the matter in a letter to me.

The National Back Pain Association promotes research into treatment of back pain, whether by chiropractors, doctors or osteopaths. It establishes branches throughout the country to promote interest in back pain, to provide facilities in which people can exercise and to spread information. It publishes educational material such as a useful manual for nurses on the correct way to lift patients. Most unfortunately, nurses are especially prone to back pain because they have to lift patients. Sometimes patients have suffered strokes and cannot move—they and other patients have to be turned in bed. So the incidence of back pain among nurses is high. Many osteopaths and chiropractors have to treat nurses who unfortunately suffer from back pain because of an accident of that type as a result of their duties.

I am glad to hear that chiropractic is available within the national health service, whether through GP fundholders or through district health authorities. I hope that it will be available in hospitals.

What worries me is that there are not nearly enough chiropractors. Will my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury be kind enough to tell us how many qualified chiropractors there are in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lidington: There are about 900 practising chiropractors.

Mr. Jessel: That is not nearly enough in view of the fact that the hon. Member for Bristol, South, who has left the Chamber, said that the 310,000 working days are lost every day through back pain, at a cost to the nation of £3 billion. We certainly need many more than 900.

I want the Government, by liaising with the chiropractic profession and colleges, to find out what can be done to increase the number. I realise that that cannot be done too quickly because people must be fully trained so that standards can be upheld.

Mr. Sackville: I can reassure my hon. Friend that we believe that the enactment of the Bill—we hope that it will become an Act—will stimulate the profession considerably, not least because the medical profession and health authorities will have the confidence to refer more patients to chiropractors. They will know that they are referring them to a trained practitioner who is backed by an organisation which has validated that training and has disciplinary powers that enable it to hold the practitioner to account if he or she is not providing suitable treatment. The Bill will greatly stimulate chiropractic as a profession within the national health service.

Mr. Jessel: I am delighted to hear that. I find it most encouraging and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister intends to ensure that that happens and that he will promote chiropractic in every possible way, while ensuring that the required standards are maintained. I hope that hon. Members will not cease to remind the Minister of what he has just said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) has done much for the cause of chiropractic and we are all aware of the splendid job that he has done. I have had the pleasure of joining him once or twice on delegations. He has been unceasing in his determination to promote the chiropractor's cause. I have often heard him refer to that and to the chiropractic college in Bournemouth.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will constantly remind the Government of the need to encourage the chiropractic profession to increase its numbers. To be candid—I do not want to be rude to anyone—900 chiropractors is a hopelessly inadequate figure compared to the need for the excellent services that they have to offer. As their professional status is about to be enhanced, provided that the Bill is enacted, their services will be greatly appreciated by the public as more and more doctors refer patients to them. The liaison between the medical and chiropractic professions will also increase and, as a result, back pain —that terrible scourge—will tend to diminish and the health and happiness of the nation will improve. I therefore hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury will have every possible success with the Bill.

1.24 pm

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): This important debate has far-reaching implications for both chiropractors and patients. First, may I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister for being absent during his speech? I hope that he will understand that it is half-term and I therefore had the complex task of organising my children for another couple of hours so that I could participate in the debate.

[Mrs. Angela Knight]

From what I have heard in the debate so far, I seem to be one of the few people who has not yet visited a chiropractor. Fortunately, I have not yet suffered from the back pain described by my hon. Friends the Members for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) and for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). As I am tall and have small children I shall probably suffer from back pain in the near future, in which case I may have an opportunity to tell the House of my personal experience of the chiropractic profession.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on his clear description of this important subject. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on his speech, in which he showed his knowledge of other complementary therapies. Again, my knowledge of that subject is lamentable. Since the Bill was published, I, and I suspect many other hon. Members, have been inundated with letters from both the profession and constituents expressing interest in the subject.

I received a letter from a doctor of chiropractic who practises near my constituency but also sees many people who live within the area that I represent. He told me:

"The purpose of this registration would be to ensure that no unqualified persons assume the role of a Chiropractor, which could lead to injury or harm being done. Chiropractic is the 3rd largest branch of medicine in the world, with over 60,000 practising doctors . . . As a Chiropractor my practice is limited primarily to Orthopaedics, although I am trained in general medicine . . . I have developed a good working relationship with . . . local GPs and Orthopaedic Surgeons. This allows patients to be treated more effectively ensuring proper treatment and very often cutting down on the time factor."

When we are dealing with people whose exposure to pain is long and debilitating, those final points are extremely valid.

The practitioner also makes a point that was refered to earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson). He said:

"In America the rules regarding Chiropractors along with other professionals are very strict, unfortunately there is no corresponding legislation in England to protect the general public from unqualified persons calling themselves Chiropractors."

The letter clearly defines the fact that the profession wants to be properly regulated as that will benefit both the profession and patients.

The King's Fund working party on the subject consulted widely with the medical professions, chiropractic organisations and individuals involved. All those involved, directly or indirectly, with chiropractic are overwhelmingly in favour of regulation. That is one of the fundamental reasons why the profession should be allowed the regulation that it seeks. My hon. Friends may find it strange that I should say that, as I am a member of the Committee currently scrutinising the deregulation Bill, but I support this Bill from the profession's and the patients' point of view.

An aspect that has been brought to my attention by constituents who have written and spoken to me on the subject is that they have often gone to a chiropractor after going to their doctor. They have tried other forms of medicine before going to a chiropractor. It seems extraordinary that people do not know whether chiropractors have gone through an appropriate training. A doctor usually has a brass plate on his gate or the side of his house saying that he has gone through a long and complex training. The same brass plate on the chiropractor's gate or on the wall of his house may well say that he has gone through that long and involved training or it may just say that he has decided to set up in practice.

There is a need to protect the profession and the patient by regulating the profession in the way that it wishes. The present situation causes me great distress and concern, and I have no doubt that it is a source of considerable anger to the profession when it sees the unqualified chiropractor in the same queue as the one who is qualified.

I have gone into the subject with my constituents who have sought the help of chiropractors for the relief of pain and I should like to examine two or three matters in the Bill that will play an important part in future and may need detailed attention. My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury clearly explained the various kinds of registration and the categories that will apply when the Bill becomes law and when those who are currently practising as chiropractors will be asked to register.

I understand my hon. Friend to say that entitlement to registration will be determined primarily on whether a person holds a recognised qualification. There will be a considerable debate about the interpretation of the phrase "recognised qualification". My hon. Friend commented on that matter but there are a variety of recognised qualifications that are not arrived at via college-based qualifications. There is a need to look at that loose phrase "recognised qualification" to ensure that those who are practising justly and rightly as qualified chiropractors can continue to do so. We must determine in more precise detail exactly what is meant by the phrase.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury said that there will be transitional arrangements to enable practitioners who may not hold such recognised qualifications but who have practised chiropractic lawfully, safely and competently for some years to be registered. That may address some of the issues, but not all. Those three words "lawfully, safely and competently" could beneficially be extended to many other professions. The advertising profession uses the words "legal, decent, honest and truthful". Perhaps we all have something to learn from the definitions of such phrases.

Those who have not gone through some of the more formal training processes will need, during the registration transitional period, to have formal training, to a common standard, that will enable their skills to be honed and extended to those of the best chiropractors. That may provide the education committee that the Bill will set up with its greatest responsibility and involvement. No doubt it will review existing standards of education and training in the profession and will have particular responsibility for ensuring that the qualifications entitling a practitioner to be registered are recognised and are of the same standard.

Some of my constituents have told me that there is currently some difference between the three training schools and that that results in a difference in the chiropractic treatments that they receive for back neck or other complaints. It would be beneficial to the profession and to patients to bring the training in those schools to a common standard. I trust that an agreement will be achieved between those schools and any future schools of chiropractic training that may be set up, so that we know that the chiropractic profession has the same common standard between the various schools and the training that

individuals receive, like that which exists in the medical profession and the various schools of medicine in this country.

As with any profession, there must also be a way to maintain the standards of professional conduct and competence. It must be relatively simple and a method that protects both the practitioner and the patient. In so many instances, one reads of medical cases where grave concerns have been raised, yet the process and procedure whereby those concerns with the GP have been expressed and aired have meant that many years have passed before the problems have been fully investigated. I am aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury has recognised some of those problems and that the Bill attempts to deal with them, and I am grateful for that.

My hon. Friend said that unacceptable professional conduct and professional incompetence are two reasons why someone practising as a chiropractor may, in future, be deemed to be unfit. I ask him to look a little further at whether someone should be totally struck off a register in the same way that a doctor can be, and to the speed and time delays that so often take place in medical investigations. I hope that those problems will not continue in the medical profession and that they will not begin in the chiropractic profession.

Having said that, I should not like to give the impression that I am critical in any way of the chiropractic profession. I am well aware of the immense good that it does, but there is obviously a need to ensure not only that confidence is maintained in the profession but that it is increased as it is more widely used.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East touched on the European dimension. I suspect that it will affect us more closely and perhaps more quickly than might otherwise have been the case because the single market and the movement of people from this country to practise their profession—whatever it might be—in other European countries, and vice versa, make common standards necessary throughout the Community. Perhaps I should address my remarks to him. Many people are concerned that any qualification, whatever it might be, obtained in the United Kingdom might have within it a different set of information and standards from a similar qualification that has been studied for and achieved in another European country.

It is evident that we must ensure that a common standard exists across all countries for all professions, but with the medical professions—in my ignorance I consider chiropractic to be a medical profession, although perhaps complimentary—there is a need for a common standard to ensure that the same knowledge and techniques are the result of the same qualification, whether it be obtained in Britain, Germany, France, Italy or elsewhere in the European Community. That sureness is of particular importance with the chiropractic profession.

My hon. Friends and Opposition Members spoke of the need and desire for chiropractic treatment to be available within the NHS. That subject has caused great interest in my constituency, which has a number of GP fundholders. From that local experience, I am well aware that GP fundholders are able to use part of their budget to employ complementary therapists, such as chiropractors. That tendency will grow, not just because of the increase in the number of GP fundholders but because of GPs' increasing awareness of the efficacy of chiropratic and the professionalism of chiropractors.

I do not think it unfair to say that, 15 years ago, chiropractic would have been considered a fringe element of medicine. Like many similar treatments, however, it has become a major item in the body of medical treatment. Many more GPs are now aware of it and, because they will be able to recognise the need to ensure that it is available to patients, patients' reliance on it will increase.

Ultimately, however, the choice of treatment will be primarily a matter for clinicians. I do not feel that I can comment on that aspect but I believe that, as we proceed with our health service reforms, and as district health authorities become aware of chiropractic and other complementary treatments, such treatments will be far more readily available in all our constituencies. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) mentioned the need for more chiropractors. Once the profession is regulated, it will grow and become far more able to operate on a wider basis. I look forward to that very much.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury has recognised a clear need for future health care, as did those promoting the Osteopaths Bill last year. I suspect that, in the years to come, other complementary health professions will be regulated, as our knowledge and appreciation of treatments other than the aspirin type become greater. I hope that my hon. Friend's Bill will speedily become law; it has undoubtedly got off to an excellent start by receiving all-party support. I trust that that will continue in Committee and I look forward to continuing to support the Bill's passage towards enactment.

1.42 pm

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I sense that I am "tail-end Charlie" in this constructive debate, but I am sensitive to the wish of Opposition Members to move on to other business. I assure them, and the rest of the House, that I have no intention of detaining them for more than a couple of minutes.

I want to deal with a few points that have not been emphasised sufficiently today; I feel that the Minister and the medical profession should consider them in more detail. The Bill will register chiropractors. Only last year, a Bill was introduced to register osteopaths. That is progress, but it is very slow progress. The legislatory framework for complementary medicine is lagging far behind the consumer's wish to take advantage of a treatment that has proved useful in dealing with conditions that GPs are often unable to remedy.

It was osteopathy last year; it is chiropractic this year. Why not do the same with acupuncture? It seems that we are prepared to approach the question of setting a sensible regime for complementary medicine only in a piecemeal fashion. Homeopathy, too, should be governed by a suitable regime. I am convinced that, in the months ahead, the House will face problems in regard to the labelling of homeopathic medicines. We could debate that subject much more constructively if it were subject to proper regulation.

Although many GPs practising in towns and villages are happy to refer their patients to those who practise complementary medicine, it seems that those who speak for them, especially the British Medical Association, are far too slow and far too unwilling to admit the benefits that complementary medicine can provide. I issue a plea, through the Chair, that the BMA and its ilk should

[Mr. Alan Duncan]

recognise the advantages of complementary medicine and should jolly well get on with it. They should continue to work more closely with those who are doing their best to heal patients with whom GPs have not succeeded.

I point out to Opposition Members that, in some cases, complementary medicine is available free through the NHS. I should like the provision of complementary medicine to be widened. The old adage that the doctor tells one to take two aspirins and then to come back in the morning is all too frequently true. Such treatment could better be replaced by the acupuncturist's pin or by the osteopath's manipulation. An emerging theme is that, in many cases, back-cracking is a lot better than pill-popping. If we can turn away from taking drugs, chemicals and pills, we shall all be the better for it. I commend the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) and I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Nursery Education (Assessment of Need) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.45 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

As the long title says, the Bill would

"Require local authorities to have regard to the need for securing that provision is made for pupils who have not attained the age of five years by the provision of nursery education as in section 8(2)(b) of the Education Act 1944."

Some hon. Members may wonder what the Bill is for if that provision is included in the 1944 Act. The reason is that, possibly by accident, that section is no longer in the Act. The purpose of the Bill is simply to reinsert that provision into statute.

I hope that, as was the case with the Chiropractors Bill, this Bill will meet with universal approval. I have yet to hear of an hon. Member who disapproves of it; indeed, I have yet to hear of anyone in the country who disapproves of it. I hope, therefore, that it will receive a passage through Parliament as agreeable as that given to the Chiropractors Bill.

The Bill, I point out to the Minister, is entirely compatible with everything that has been said by the Secretary of State for Education and with everything that has been said and written, almost weekly, by the Prime Minister. Without such a provision, how can one sensibly go forward to expand any form of under-five provision in any local authority? How can we go forward without considering the needs and without seeing how the available resources can best be distributed? I realise, of course, that the resources are by no means unlimited. I shall not go into the matter today, but I hope that we shall have further discussion about what the resources should be.

The number one point is the assessment of need. Nursery education is favoured by all parents, whether they wish to use the facilities or not. Nobody, as far as I am aware, opposes such provision. Nursery education is a basic need in the community and, if I may say so, "society". I am sure, therefore, that nobody here will do anything to prevent the Bill from being given a Second Reading this afternoon. If anyone does, I shall have to ask why.

Why are people so keen on nursery education? I have here a formulation, which is not well known but cannot be bettered. It states:

"It is now considered that the self-contained nursery school, which forms a transition from home to school, is the most suitable type of provision for children under 5. Such schools are needed in all districts, as even when children come from good homes they can derive much benefit, both educational and physical, from attendance at a nursery school. Moreover, they are of great value to mothers who go out to work, and also to those who need relief from the burden of household duties combined with the care of a young family . . . There is no doubt of the importance of training children in good habits at the most impressionable age and of the indirect value of the nursery school in influencing the parents of the children. There is equally no doubt of the incalculable value of the schools in securing medical and nursing care, and the remedial treatment of defects which may be difficult to eradicate if they are left untreated until the child enters school in the ordinary way at the age of 5."

From what we know of all that has been written on the subject, we can all agree that that is a pretty good summing up of the universal approval of nursery education. I was quoting from Command 6458 of July 1943, the great

Butler and Ede White Paper which preceded the Education Act 1944. In these modern times, it is worth noting that it consisted of 36 pages of A5 and cost 6d, which is rather less than 3p. It was good value for money.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I have read many of the reports issued by the Office for Standards in Education and I have noticed that they comment specifically on what proportion of children have access to proper pre-school provision. Clearly, my hon. Friend's quotation from the past is matched by the present concern of a Government organisation.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon Friend for underlining the universal agreement about the need for nursery education.

My next quotation is taken from the *Hansard* report of the House of Commons, meeting in another place, on 19 January 1944, 50 years ago last month. In moving the Second Reading of the then Education Bill, none other than R. A. Butler said:

"the country seems to have a special bent for nursery schools. These are not only social centres of training and up-bringing for the children, but have a real educational value and are often centres of adult education for the parents themselves. Therefore, I hope that we shall see, arising from this Bill, a healthy development of nursery schools, and/or classes where they are more expedient, and that we shall find that they buttress and support home life and make no attempt at supplanting it."—[*Official Report*, 19 January 1944; Vol. 130, c. 212.]

As my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) said, almost every report since then has emphasised the need for nursery education, for example, the Plowden report and Lady Thatcher's White Paper, which was scuppered by the energy crisis—we had to do something about that crisis, I suppose.

More recently, an independent commission on education said in its report last year:

"High-quality publicly-funded education provision should be available for all 3-and-4 year-olds."

I shall not go into the details of general provision for the under-fives but everyone agrees that nursery school has an important part to play.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that 90 per cent. of three and four-year-old children in England currently attend some form of pre-school education?

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Lady is right, but I do not want to go too far down that road because it is outside the scope of the Bill. There is discussion in all quarters—educational as well as Government quarters, for all I know—about the benefits of different forms of pre-school education. Nursery education as such is defined by qualifications of teachers, the number of available rooms, the facilities in a nursery school, the ratio of teachers qualified in the subject and the amount of nursery assistance. It was understood in the 1944 Bill and has been ever since. Although the hon. Lady's statistics are right, I do not want to get drawn into the overall proportions, because the Bill in 1944 and the Bill before us are about nursery education, which nobody denies is necessary and helpful.

Lady Olga Maitland *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: I hesitate to give way again to the hon. Lady, but I shall for the last time on that particular point if she wishes.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene again. Further to the principle of nursery education, does he accept that the needs of tiny three or four-year-old children are diverse? Surely it must be appropriate that parents have the choice of appropriate pre-school education for their child. Formal nursery education is not always appropriate for every child.

Mr. Spearing: I am not sure that I claimed that it was. I do not think that anybody, even the most enthusiastic supporter of what the hon. Lady tends to deem as over-rigid education—although it is not in my experience—would make it compulsory through a local education authority. The decision is open to parents. As the hon. Lady knows full well because of the statistics, many more parents wish their children to go to such nursery schools, but for one reason or another they are not able to send them. That is a fact that she would not deny.

I shall return to the Bill. The Education Act 1944 did not require local education authorities to make nursery education compulsory. It is important that the terms of nursery provision, as contained in section 8(2) of the 1944 Act, are on the record. As enacted, it read:

"In fulfilling their duties under this section, a local education authority shall, in particular, have regard—

(a) to the need for securing that primary and secondary education are provided in separate schools;"—

there were some all-age schools at that time—

"(b) to the need for securing that provision is made for pupils who have not attained the age of five years by the provision of nursery schools or, where the authority considers the provision of such schools to be inexpedient, by the provision of nursery classes in other schools".

Perhaps by accident or an oversight, due to some disagreements about funding in 1980—I happened to be in the Chamber when the discussion took place—the former Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mark Carlisle, now Lord Carlisle, introduced a new clause which allowed local education authorities to spend money on nursery education. There had been an argument over whether sections 8(2) (a) and (2) (b) allowed them to spend money. Many hon. Members said they did not.

In giving the local authorities that power to spend money on nursery education, I think that, by an oversight, section 8(2)(b) was repealed, and the need for securing that provision does not exist any more. I do not think that we need to go too deeply into the reasons for that; it would take a long time to detect what went on. I was in the Chamber at the time and have read the debate in *Hansard* and I do not think that any indication was given that, by accepting the new power to spend money and making it specific, the House repealed the section which I want to reinstate.

So what should be done? As I have said, I do not want to delay the House much longer, but I see no reason why anybody should wish to oppose what was in the 1944 Act. If we are to have nursery education as part of the under-fives provision and as part of a mix, whatever that mix may be, however the resources are used and however it is funded—there are disagreements about that, so I hope that I carry the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) with me in all that I am saying—it is right and proper that there should be a duty on a local education authority to provide such comprehensive provision and choice for parents. Such a provision should be on the statute book and at the moment it is not.

[Mr. Spearing]

The section was in force from 1944 until 1980. It was important because it focused on the local community, local society and local need. The White Paper which I quoted and the Bill that followed it were the result of the enormous nationwide consensus that existed, not only among political parties but among the Churches, educationists and teacher organisations. In those formative years, everyone made their suggestions and they were broadly incorporated in the epoch-making 1944 Act by R. A. Butler.

The Education Act 1944 was passed 50 years ago last month. It was unopposed on Second Reading and on Third Reading. The provision on nursery education was never questioned. It was passed by a House that contained a majority of 250 notional Conservative Members—there was a national Government. That makes the subject even more important because the consensus existed 50 years ago, as I hope it does today, among hon. Members who were elected in 1935. Those people thought that the legislation was right then, and there was no discussion about it, except for legal reasons, for about 30 years, so who can oppose it today?

2 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): It may be for the convenience of the House if I speak now rather than later in the debate. I apologise to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for missing his first few sentences. He is a near neighbour of mine and we have had occasion to do battle together in the past. I pay tribute to his persistence on this issue and others and I congratulate him on his fortune in drawing this slot in the annual ballot.

There is no difference between much of what the hon. Member for Newham, South said and what the Government say about the importance of nursery education. If time allows, I shall go into greater detail about the provision of nursery education by local authorities of different persuasions. Let there be no disagreement between us that for many children nursery education represents an important start to their full education, which they enter from the age of five.

It might, however, be of use to the House if I concentrate immediately on the legal impact of the Bill. It would restore a provision, section 8(2)(b), which, as the hon. Gentleman made clear, was originally part of the Education Act 1944 and was amended in 1980. The section should be understood in the context of the statutory duties that the legislation imposed on local education authorities.

I shall paraphrase a little to save some time. Section 8(1) of the 1944 Act states:

"It shall be the duty of every local education authority to secure that there shall be available for their area sufficient schools—

(a) for providing primary education, that is to say, full-time education suitable to the requirements of junior pupils; and

(b) for providing secondary education".

Section 8(2)(b), to which the Bill refers, mentions:

"the need for securing that provision is made for pupils who have not attained the age of five years by the provision of nursery schools or, where the authority consider the provision of such schools to be inexpedient, by the provision of nursery classes in other schools".

According to the original form of words used in the 1944 Act, the local education authority was required to "have regard . . . to the need for securing that provision is made for pupils who have not attained the age of five years".

It does not state that local education authorities must make provision; it merely states that authorities should take such needs into consideration.

That was an imprecise duty and was impossible to enforce. That was the view taken not long after the 1944 Act came into force. Over the years, the view that provision for nursery education was a discretionary power for local authorities became quite widely held, and they took that view themselves. More importantly, everyone acted as though that were the case.

Mr. Spearing: I do not think that I disagree with anything said by the Minister, but even if the authorities did not have the power, they had the duty to have regard and they had a legal duty to undertake some sort of assessment. That is what my Bill, if passed, would do, and that may sit well with current legislation.

Mr. Squire: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I shall seek to respond to that precise point and the impact of his Bill.

Section 8(2)(b) no longer exists. As the hon. Gentleman made clear, it was repealed by the Education Act 1980. The reason for that move was quite clear——

Mr. Spearing: Not to the House.

Mr. Squire: Well—when introducing the amendment that effected the move, the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mark Carlisle, said:

"I do not believe that it is wise to leave the law unclear on this matter. It is necessary to make it clear, and in the amendments I am attempting to bring the law into line with what it was always thought to be."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1980; Vol. 978, c. 1279.]

Section 8(2)(b) was repealed by section 38(6) and schedule 7 of the Education Act 1980. Section 24(1) and (2) made new statutory provisions for under-fives. It stated:

"(1) A local education authority shall have the power to establish nursery schools, to maintain such schools established by them or a former authority and to assist any such school which is not so established.

(2) A local education authority shall not by virtue of section 8(1)(a) of the Education Act 1944 be under any duty in respect of junior pupils who have not attained the age of five years but this subsection shall not affect the power of an authority under section 9(1) of that Act to establish, maintain or assist a school at which education is provided both for such pupils and older pupils, including a school at which there is a nursery class for such junior pupils as aforesaid."

It is important to quote those lines as the 1980 Act is the trigger for the hon. Gentleman's Bill.

The form of words covering local education authorities' responsibilities for under-fives is no longer ambiguous. The practical effect of the original section of the 1944 Act and section 24 of the 1980 Act is exactly the same. Therefore, if enacted, the hon. Member's Bill would achieve precisely nothing. Worse than that, we would be returning to an imprecise form of words that would flatter to deceive. The Bill is, therefore, unnecessary and adds nothing to the current duties of local authorities.

I am conscious that other hon. Members wish to speak, not least the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), so I shall curtail some of the comments that I would otherwise have made. However, I must clarify where the Government stand. We have made it clear that we should like to see a widening of nursery and other pre-school provision as resources become available. Our longer-term ambition is availability for all those who want it. Much has already

been achieved and my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) made passing reference to that a moment ago. Over half of all three and four-year-olds now attend maintained nursery and primary schools, and more than 90 per cent. receive some form of pre-school provision.

We intend to explore ways of adding still further, as resources allow, to the choice that parents have among the range of provision—public, private and voluntary. As well as encouraging that choice and diversity in response to children's needs and parents' preferences and circumstances, the Government will continue to promote quality and cost-effectiveness.

Mr. Spearing: It would be helpful to take up the Minister's point. He claims that the Bill will do nothing. Of course, section 24 of the Education Act 1980, which provides specific power in this area, is fuzzy. Does he agree that if the Bill is enacted—I do not see any reason why it should not be—it will provide a duty and an obligation on the local education authority to make the assessment of need even if other people fulfil it? Therefore, it will make a difference because section 24 provides only a power to spend—it does not provide a duty to survey and assess the need of nursery education in respect of all the other points to which the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) referred.

Mr. Squire: I can only reiterate my earlier words that in practical terms—I am sure that, like me, the hon. Gentleman is most concerned about that—and in the form of the words that would be reintroduced, I have been advised that there would be no gain from this proposal and we would have the loss of going back to a less precise form of wording than was introduced by the 1980 Act, to which both the hon. Gentleman and I have made copious references.

I shall continue my comments on Government policy and review. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that there are no preconceptions about the results of our current study. In other words, nothing is ruled out and, indeed, nothing is ruled in at the moment. Nor is there a set timetable and, therefore, in fairness I do not expect to produce solutions overnight. However, when we are ready to make an announcement, we shall do so in the normal way and allow the House an appropriate opportunity to debate the issues.

I shall say a few words about other types of provision, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam made passing reference earlier. We do not see playgroups as a poor substitute for nursery schools or classes. A playgroup is a distinct form of provision with its own ethos and strengths, geared towards meeting an identifiable parental need. Most playgroups take their educational role seriously and now provide a rich source of experience, preparing children for primary schooling and the national curriculum. We recognise that some playgroups may not come up to scratch but many, if not most, are excellent.

As a means of delivering pre-school education, playgroups have shown that they can achieve results. In recognition of that, the Department has substantially increased its grant for the training activities of the Pre-School Playgroups Association to £887,000 in the current year. The Department of Health and the Ministry of Defence also make grants to the association.

So that the House may have some idea of the scope of the activities, at the latest date for which I have information, some 770,000 under-fives are in playgroups. I am sure that hon. Members would agree that that is a significant proportion of under-fives. As I said, overwhelmingly they are enjoying a good provision that prepares them for schooling.

I shall say a few words about the role of local education authorities. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, South would agree that, whatever our differences on the wording of his Bill, it is right that local education authorities should have a power and not a duty to provide for the needs of under-fives. We believe that a policy of local determination of under-fives services is necessary if we are to ensure that local authorities and other providers are able to respond to the specific needs of their areas. It is better for that to remain a local decision, rather than it becoming a duty imposed by the Government. That is the thinking behind the LEA funding arrangements.

The present arrangement assumes—I know the hon. Member for Newham, South knows this from our discussions when I was wearing another ministerial hat—that the under-five population is one of several client groups and the arrangement distributes formula funding according to the total size of that population in each LEA.

Funding LEAs by reference to the policies of each individual authority on the discretionary provision that they make for under-fives—some hon. Members have urged that in the Chamber and in correspondence with me—would be at odds with the present system, which is based on the concept of the objective calculation of the need to spend to provide a standard level of service. The settlement for 1994-95 allows for local authorities in England to spend £17,087 million on education—an increase of 2·4 per cent. on this year's figure, once changes in function are taken into account. Of course, spending priorities are for each authority to determine.

It is important to put on the record that it is sometimes suggested that the provision of nursery education in this country in some ways lacks in comparison with that of other countries. Those who make that comment rather overlook the fact that no other European country has a longer period of statutory education than the United Kingdom. The 11 years which all our pupils are expected to enjoy, or for which they are expected to be at school, is longer than almost any other country. I am advised that it is equalled only by the Netherlands.

It is important to bear in mind when making any international comparisons that most other countries commence mandatory statutory schooling at the age of six, or seven in a number of cases, whereas our children start their formal education at the age of five.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): Does the Under-Secretary agree that statistics show that, in respect of nursery education for three and four-year-olds, this country comes bottom of the league of European countries with the exception of Portugal?

Mr. Squire: I am suggesting that simple comparisons based only on nursery education and taking no account of the age at which statutory education starts are, frankly and with due respect to the hon. Gentleman, a little facile.

We must look at the range of provision. In one or two of the EC countries which the hon. Gentleman and I would identify as natural competitors, a significant proportion of

[Mr. Squire]

nursery funding comes via voluntary or private means, and not from the state sector. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam made it clear that more than 90 per cent. of three and four-year-olds attend either education or group day care. That is an impressive figure against the background of compulsory full-time education from the age of five.

Lady Olga Maitland: My hon. Friend refers to comparisons with nursery education in Europe. Does he agree that European countries do not have statutory obligations for the provision of nursery education? Is not it the case that, in Germany, 71 per cent. of children attend nursery education that is privately funded?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend makes more accurately than I did the point that I was making. We all use international comparisons but it is difficult—particularly in this sector—to be sure that we use the same basis.

For the record—the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) raised the issue—apart from the 90 per cent. of three and four-year-olds that I have mentioned, the figures break down as follows: 26 per cent. of three and four-year-olds are admitted to maintained nursery schools and classes. I pay tribute to the percentage in Newham, which has arguably one of the highest attendance rates in the country with 64 per cent. Of that 26 per cent., 4 per cent. are in nursery schools and 22 per cent. are in nursery classes; 24 per cent. are admitted to infant classes in maintained primary schools—mainly four-year-olds in reception classes—and 4 per cent. are admitted to special or independent schools. So, including pupils in independent and special schools, the overall school participation rate is 55 per cent.

In addition—I am quoting the 1992 figures—41 per cent. of three and four-year-olds attend playgroups. Some of those may go on to under-five schooling during the year and may also be counted in the above figures. About 5 per cent. receive other group day care. Most playgroups are affiliated to the Pre-School Playgroups Association and cater for some 770,000 children or 21 per cent. of all under-fives. More importantly perhaps in this discussion, such playgroups involve some 250,000 parents in running them. So the playgroups pass on parenting skills. As for four-year-olds, 84 per cent., excluding rising-fives, are admitted to maintained nursery and primary schools. Such schools also admitted some 201,000 rising-fives.

I am conscious that the time is making me hurry more than I should. The figures show that a significant range of options is open to under-fives. That emphasises the improvement that has taken place during the time that the Government have been in office.

Mr. Don Foster: Does the Minister accept that his announcement of all those statistics somewhat belies his opening remarks, in which he said that he fully supported the need for the expansion of nursery education in Britain and that the Government were exploring ways of expanding it, as resources allowed? He said that nothing was ruled out and nothing was ruled in, that there was no fixed timetable and that he made no promises. Do not his subsequent remarks show that all those opening words were nothing but hollow promises?

Mr. Squire: I shall avoid phrases such as "hollow promises" in connection with the hon. Gentleman's party and try to keep the debate on a level keel. If, having heard what I said, and repeated, the hon. Gentleman comes to that conclusion, I cannot help him. I have made it clear today that we are committed to an expansion of provision, certainly including nursery education. The form and timing of that expansion is still to be determined and will be brought before the House in the usual and proper way. I may say gently to the hon. Gentleman that it is perfectly possible to support nursery education and still see the advantage of other forms of pre-five provision, which would be lost if we moved to a position in which the only provision available was nursery education funded and provided by the state.

I am conscious that the clock is our worst enemy today. I hope that I have explained why I believe that the Bill is unnecessary and would add nothing to the present requirements under the law. I also hope that I have given good intent as to what the Government will in due course announce over the range of provision for pre-fives.

2.22 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I was surprised that the Minister rejected the modest proposal made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). My hon. Friend made an eloquent case for reintroducing part of the Education Act 1944 to make education authorities at least consider the need for nursery education in their areas. They would have to assess the needs and draw up a plan which might be implemented over a five or 10-year period. In drawing up the plan, local authorities might find that some parents wanted a nursery place for their child but others were happy with playgroup provision. The proposal does not exclude playgroups. One of the purposes of a sensible policy on pre-school education is to introduce quality criteria, which will enable all sectors to be involved in provision.

I imagine that the Minister already knows that the Pre-School Playgroups Association would be happy to have facilities similar to those available in nursery schools and units. The lack of such facilities is one of its major problems when trying to deliver quality education to the children who attend its groups.

The association is also concerned about training. The Minister should not claim responsibility and praise for the additional money for training people involved in the pre-school playgroup movement, when no similar concerted effort has been made to ensure that the same happens in nursery schools and nursery education.

The plain fact is that only two out of the 40 best providers of nursery education are Conservative-controlled authorities—one is Liberal Democrat-controlled and in a few authorities there is no overall control, but 34 are Labour-controlled. None of the 25 worst providers is Labour-controlled. Why? Because Labour authorities accept the commitment for providing for three and four-year-olds implicit in the standard spending assessments, but unfortunately far too many Conservative-controlled authorities do not.

In the debate about nursery schools, units and playgroups we should concentrate on the delivery of a quality service. The best research on the subject was the Ypsilanti project at the Perry school in Michigan. For 27 years, it studied the lives of 130 people, comparing those

who had received a good-quality nursery education with those who had not. That study shows that every dollar invested in good-quality nursery education has saved the taxpayer seven dollars during that 27-year period, because the people who experienced such education were far less likely to become involved in crime, more likely to get good qualifications, had fewer special education problems in school and got better-paid jobs and paid more taxes in later life. That is why the Government should be committed to such a programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: If the demands of time had not been what they are I would have mentioned research. I do not expect the hon. Member to accept this from the Dispatch Box, but I assure him that conclusive research on the subject is very elusive. We shall return to it in future debates, but I would not want him to think that my silence represented 100 per cent. assent with his words.

Mr. Griffiths: I realise that some of the evidence is contradictory, but the Ypsilanti project was the most thorough study of nursery education anywhere in the world. Many other elements play a part, such as the low pupil:teacher ratios, a curriculum appropriate to the child's development and parental involvement. That is why we should consider that research carefully.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way at such a crucial time. He mentioned the analysis, based on research in America, which suggests that some children are less likely to turn to crime. Does he not agree that children should learn to distinguish right from wrong and that that is something that they need to learn throughout their lives? It is totally spurious to say that everything results from their nursery education.

Mr. Griffiths: It is not totally spurious. Good-quality nursery education is important because it helps young people to develop social skills and awareness and so they are less likely to become involved in crime at a later date.

Obviously, other factors are involved but that one is important. I hope that the Government will support the Bill and allow it to go to Committee so that it can be amended to take account of the specific purpose of those who have presented it.

2.29 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I welcome the chance briefly to contribute to this debate. In this International Year of the Child it is appropriate that we should focus on children, their development and nursery education.

I welcome the Government's wide-ranging initiatives in putting an enormous amount of money, commitment and emotional concern into ensuring that our children have the best possible start in their careers. I am somewhat puzzled, however, by the decision of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) to introduce this Bill because there is clearly some confusion within his party about its commitment to universal education.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 25 February.

Remaining Private Members' Bills

RACE RELATIONS (REMEDIES) BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Vaz.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

PROTECTION OF DOGS BILL

Order read for resuming debate on Second Reading [4 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Debate to be resumed what day?

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): With the authority of the Member concerned, Sir, Friday next.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 25 February.

HEDGEROWS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Cox: With the authority of the Member concerned, Sir, 18 March.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 18 March.

HORSES (PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR FOR YOUNG RIDERS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 4 March.

Icknield High School

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

2.32 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am grateful for an opportunity to bring to the attention of the House a matter of great importance to my constituents and also to my hon. Friend the Minister, whom I am pleased to see on the Front Bench this afternoon. It concerns a capital grant applied for by the Icknield high school in my constituency and rejected by my hon. Friend and his colleagues.

As my hon. Friend will know, my constituency has two grant-maintained schools—Icknield high school and Lea Manor school. I hope that Cardinal Newman school will soon join them because it has applied for grant-maintained status but is still awaiting a reply from my hon. Friend. Although the result of the ballot has been favourable, my hon. Friend is now looking into the matter. Perhaps the Minister would comment on what progress, if any, has been made on that matter.

Icknield high school is the largest of its type in Bedfordshire, with which you are well acquainted, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has some 1,300 pupils at the moment, and the number is rising. There is a waiting list—which is not unusual for the school—for September, and the school is already oversubscribed by 120 pupils. That is because the school has excellent academic and sporting results. I hesitate to say that it is the best school in my constituency but it is certainly in the top category of the many excellent schools in my area.

The school has an extremely high standard of discipline, of which it is justly proud. The uniform is widely worn by the pupils and accepted by parents. I have no hesitation in representing with pride to the House and the Minister the interests of the school because of its excellent achievements since its formation in 1949. I pay a special tribute to the staff, and especially to the head teacher, Mr. Keith Ford, and his deputy, Mr. Colin Cabon, who have worked hard since the school obtained grant-maintained status in April 1993. I also pay tribute to the governors under their chairman, Councillor Pauline Dunington, who have made certain that the school stays at the top of the league.

It is with some sadness that I bring to the Minister's attention the fact that the capital grant application that the school was invited to submit for the 1994-95 financial year, has been turned down. As long ago as 1991 the local education authority—at that time the governing authority for the school—said in a report that there was a backlog of repairs which might cost about £5 million. One of the reports stated that the authority judged that the buildings had reached the end of their useful working life and were in need of major repairs. At that time the authority even discussed complete replacement of the school.

Since the school became grant maintained, it has been visited by representatives of various bodies and, in particular, by Mr. Adrian Pritchard, who was the director of the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust and is obviously well known to my hon. Friend the Minister. He described the school as having

"the second worst grant-maintained school buildings in the country."

That was confirmed to a certain extent by Sir Robert Belchin, the chairman of that august body, who insisted on putting Icknield school "high on his agenda". I understand that those were his words.

For those reasons there was great disappointment when the Department refused the capital bid and raised doubt about whether it would be possible to submit design bids for 1995-96, although I think that that matter has now been cleared up and that a capital bid would be welcome. Private consultants who looked at the buildings said, perhaps contrary to some people's opinions, that they could be saved, provided there was sufficient and urgent investment in the structure and services surrounding them.

The number of pupils at the school has increased dramatically in recent years. The roll predicted for 1996 is up to nearly 1,400, and the prediction for the year 2000 is 1,560. That shows the school's popularity and the difficulties that it will face if it increases its roll or even if it tries to stand still, given the conditions of the buildings in which the staff and pupils have to work.

Although the governors are trying where they can to reduce the current number of pupils in line with the age of the buildings, they are finding it extremely difficult because, as the Minister will understand, this popular school is being asked by parents well outside its catchment area whether places are available.

As I have said, the school was opened in 1949 and at that time consisted of separate boys' and girls' schools. It was suggested that it should double as an emergency military hospital. I hope that the Minister will visit the school. If he does, he will notice the familiar signs of a hospital because he will see bare brick walls, an asbestos roof—about which I shall say more shortly—concrete floors, fibreboard ceilings and virtually no insulation. Needless to say, the life of the staff and pupils is still a happy one, but they are working under severe difficulties.

Additions were made to the school in the 1950s and 1960s, but the buildings were never upgraded to the standard that one would expect, certainly of the 1990s. No major investment has been made at the school since 1968-70 apart from repair to part of the building which, unfortunately, was damaged by fire some years ago. Obviously, because of its age, the building has deteriorated over the years. Large amounts of money have been spent on repairs, but never sufficient to stop the general deterioration in the condition of the buildings. It is distressing that almost every day the health and safety legislation is being broken because pupils attend the school.

Throughout this time the school has remained cheerful. Since becoming grant maintained, it has had a vigorous self help scheme, which has involved voluntary help in redecoration. It is delighted with its GM status, but some of its problems are beyond the wit, and indeed the ability, of amateurs who are trying on a do-it-yourself basis to patch up the building and make it presentable, rather than tackling the fabric of the building.

The school was a candidate for a bid, and it was advised by the Department to apply. It was advised at that time —possibly this was its mistake—to apply for a single bid, which would have covered all its various problems: health and safety; science teaching; overcrowding; and, of course, the ever-growing number of pupils. It realised that the bid had to be put in, because if it was to meet the health

and safety standards, as demanded by local authorities and legislation, some improvement would have to be made, and fairly quickly.

The complete bid was on a basis of phasing over some two years. The cost, as my hon. Friend will know, was some £1·6 million. Unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful. The failure of the bid is probably the most worrying thing for my constituents and the school. I cannot emphasise enough to my hon. Friend that the school now faces a health and safety crisis. If something is not done extremely quickly, in the summer term of this academic year, it may have to send pupils home, because it is not up to the standard demanded by current legislation or the local authority.

The school faces a further serious problem, relevant to the fact that it is now grant maintained, in that it is extremely difficult to find an insurance company that will provide cover. My hon. Friend will know—I perhaps guess at this—that the school could not carry on as a legal entity unless it was fully covered by insurance. Unless some of those improvements are made, it will find it extremely difficult—nay impossible—to find an insurance company that will give it the cover that it and the legislation demands.

My hon. Friend will forgive me for talking of matters of construction rather than of education, because I am perfectly happy—as are the parents—with the education that pupils get at that school. My point is about the fabric. The first priority to avoid the closure of the canteen—for action during, if not before, the Easter holidays of this year—is on three bases. First, the kitchens must be brought up to requirements. If they are not, they will close and some 600 school meals will not be served. That will obviously be a problem and will cause severe embarrassment to myself, the governors and staff.

Secondly, the cold water system and incoming mains are incredibly old. There is some hint, but no more than that, of the possibility of zinc poisoning. It is not for me to put any fears in the minds of parents about the health of their children, but that has been pointed out in some plans. The cold water system and incoming mains must be improved.

Thirdly, an immediate concern is the domestic hot-water system itself, which, I believe, has never reached the required hot-water standard—whatever that is. The boilers have been bastardised—I hope that you will forgive the expression, Mr. Deputy Speaker—by the use of "two into three": that is a construction term, meaning taking from one and giving to the other two. The boilers are now incredibly lame, and—dare I say—would not be fitting for this place, let alone for one of my constituency's flagship schools.

The total cost of those three items is £187,000. I know that an emergency fund exists, and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider urgently the possibility of using at least that amount for the school.

The second priority is action that will be required by September 1994, because of the impending cold weather. There are safety hazards in the boiler room. The caretaker is a very honourable fellow, who spends a good deal of his time manually raising the temperature of the water to the required levels—which may not be the highest levels—at some risk to his own safety. A good deal of mechanical and electrical work is needed in that boiler room. I do not wish to give the House the impression that I have any great mechanical knowledge—perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister has: he is nodding—but the school assures me that this is very important. I do not want levity to lessen the impact of what I am saying.

The other part of this second priority is the need to improve the laboratory services and fittings, which are old and inadequate for the modern needs of school children. The Government are rightly anxious to encourage science teaching in our schools, for it is from them that young scientists will emerge; at present, however, the facilities are not up to the standards that my hon. Friend the Minister would expect.

The third priority—which must be dealt with in the longer term, but which is nevertheless necessary—is a phased replacement of the asbestos roof and the installation of fire breaks. I do not need to go into the details; my hon. Friend will understand that the roof must be replaced as soon as possible—as soon as money is available for the purpose.

My hon. Friend may be somewhat surprised that I should ask for an increase in some form of public expenditure. He and I came to the House together in 1979. Although we sat on the same Benches, we had different opinions on various matters; but the fact that he is now on the Front Bench and I am still on the Back Benches may give some idea of his abilities. I now ask him to overcome any prejudice that he may feel about my public-expenditure policy: after all, every hon. Member is allowed a little discretion on occasion.

Disturbingly, the school's reaction to the rejection of the bid was somewhat contrary to information that my hon. Friend may have been given. Was the bid looked at properly? The school received letters—not least a letter from 10 Downing street, and also a letter from the head of the grant-maintained schools services division. One letter stated:

"Ministers' assessments of your proposals for 1994-95 took account of scrutiny by members of the capital team, by Ofsted"—

that is the Office for Standards in Education—

"and by our professional advisers in Architects and Buildings Branch."

The letter from 10 Downing street said the same: the bid had been carefully looked at, and that

"included assessments by architects at the Department for Education and by the Office for Standards in Education".

According to what I have been told, no official came from the Department—or, indeed, from Ofsted—to look at the buildings. The report seems to be based purely on the capital bid put forward by the school, admirable though it was. It is beyond me how it can be said that scrutiny took place when no one physically went to examine the position.

My hon. Friend should look into that matter. Ofsted has now arrived on a preliminary basis and will look at the school over the next few weeks. However, it had not arrived when the report landed on my hon. Friend's desk. The fact that there had been no official visit by Ofsted goes some way towards explaining the school's dismay at the Department's reaction.

There is an immediate and extremely urgent need for the grant. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to give the school some comfort in his response this afternoon. I cannot stress too much to him the urgency of the situation and the fact that a crisis will occur if priority one works are not carried out. It is not right that the school should have no other source of funding—the school does not complain

[Mr. John Carlisle]

generally because it enjoys grant-maintained status—to help put things right and to make the children legally able to go to the school.

My hon. Friend, above anybody else, is extremely welcome to visit the school at any time that is convenient to him. I have been asked by the head teacher to pass on that invitation to him. I hope that when my hon. Friend comes to the school—I am confident that he will come—he will be able to see the works that, I am sure, he will promise will be carried out.

2.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) on securing this debate and on the manner in which he deployed his case. If there are any points at the end that he feels that I have not addressed, I know that, with his usual persistence, he will bring them to my attention. He mentioned that, like me, he is what must seem like a veteran on the 1979 intake. Those of our intake are very good on timing and nothing could be better on timing than for this debate to take place on an afternoon when an earlier debate also necessitated my attendance.

My hon. Friend made a passing reference to Cardinal Newman school. I shall respond on that point equally briefly. I am aware that the matter has been outstanding for some time. I assure him that we are doing our level best to bring the outstanding issues, some of which are quite complex, to a successful conclusion. I undertake that I shall reach that conclusion as soon as I possibly can.

The main issue of the debate is Icknield high school. I have noted my hon. Friend's kind invitation to visit the school and I hope that in time I shall be able to respond to it. Let me make it clear that capital grants for self-governing schools come under two different categories. First, there is a formula grant which all self-governing schools can claim, which is for small-scale capital works. For 1994-95, it is an average of £28,000 for a secondary school, with a minimum of £16,000. I may say more about that later. Secondly, for major capital projects, schools are invited annually to submit bids. They are evaluated on a competitive basis against the criteria announced by the Secretary of State and with regard to the overall level of capital funds available. Icknield school submitted a bid for the second type of funding.

It is always a disappointment for a school when it has a capital project turned down. Sadly, such disappointments are inevitable when demand always outstrips supply and hard choices must realistically be made. That is not only true for self-governing schools but a fact of life across all educational sectors. Nevertheless, a substantial amount has been made available for 1994-95 which, especially in the present tight economic climate, reflects the Government's full-blooded commitment to self-governing schools. I shall say more about that in a moment.

I assure my hon. Friend and the governors, staff and parents at the school that the bid was given full and careful consideration. I understand only too well the effort that goes into preparing such bids; rejecting them is certainly not something that we do lightly. In the case of Icknield high school, we followed standard procedure in obtaining detailed advice on its bid both from Ofsted and from our in-house team of architects before coming to a final decision. Although the bid as presented was turned down, the school has since been invited to bid for emergency funding on health and safety grounds. Officials from my Department contacted the school in January setting out the criteria for emergency grant, and we are awaiting details from the school on what needs to be done. Once the details are available, we shall of course consider the case for emergency funding as a matter of urgent priority.

I can certainly assure my hon. Friend here and now that any projects required on emergency health and safety grounds will receive full funding if the school cannot itself find funds for the work. That is true for all self-governing schools—all may apply for funding where children would otherwise be put at risk or sent home. I know that my hon. Friend, who is assiduous in his work as a Member of Parliament, will communicate that to Icknield school as soon as possible.

Finally, in this context, it should be remembered that Icknield's bid was only one of nearly 1,000 bids received and that it was competing with all of them for a share of the available funds. In such circumstances, there will always be some schools which miss out, even though their bids are for thoroughly worthwhile projects. That, as I have said, is an unfortunate fact of life where a large number of schools chase a limited resource.

I think it is instructive, however, to take a step back at this point and look at the full scope of capital funding available for self-governing schools. In December, the Government announced a package of more than £150 million for capital work at self-governing schools. As a consequence, two thirds of schools new to the sector stand to gain support for large-scale capital projects. As we have made clear many times, it is vital that schools entering the sector are established on a sound footing, and the latest package underlines our commitment to that goal.

Of the £150 million, £37 million will be provided to enable new and existing schools to begin work on major projects in the next financial year. In addition, funding had been set aside for projects for new schools entering the sector between September 1993 and January 1994. Announcements will be made about that next month, and the new work will build on the substantial capital work that has already been carried out in self-governing schools over recent years.

Almost £28 million is being provided in 1994-95 for continuing work in schools on projects started last year. That means that next year major capital work will be taking place in around half of all the self-governing schools which were operating by September 1993.

In addition, more than £30 million worth of projects in 82 schools have been identified as high priorities for funding in 1995-96. They will all receive funds in 1994-95 to start development work on the projects. Even that is not the end of the story, however. As well as allocations for major capital projects, self-governing schools receive a formula capital allocation. Thirty million pounds has been set aside for capital formulae in 1994-95. It is available to all self-governing schools and will be at an enhanced rate over last year, including a £16,000 minimum level which will be of particular benefit to smaller primary schools.

Mr. Carlisle: May I express the gratitude of Icknield high school for the increased capital funding that it receives? To save time, may I again ask my hon. Friend to consider whether, when he examines capital funds and the

reports that he receives, a school should be physically visited and inspected by members of his Department and of Ofsted so that officials might acquaint themselves with the condition of the buildings in question? In some circumstances, a written submission may not be sufficient to give a clear picture.

Mr. Squire: I had carefully noted my hon. Friend's point the first time and I must now note it doubly carefully. Perhaps he will allow me to come back to him, but I can say now that, where there was any doubt, a physical visit would certainly be made as a follow-up. However, I should like to pursue that issue some other time and get back to him later, as he would expect.

I was talking about formula capital allocation. I know from my personal experience, from visiting schools and speaking to many teachers and governors, that schools enjoy the flexibility provided by formula allocations. It is entirely up to them to determine their priorities for the funding and I am sure that they will continue to use it productively.

Although in particular instances we cannot provide schools with all that they would wish for, the funding that we are making available for capital work will help self-governing schools to thrive for the benefit of their current and future pupils and the local communities that they serve. I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate the constraints under which we have to work and will continue his support of the growth of the self-governing sector, something that he made clear. It is already clear that the self-governing sector will be the model for all maintained schools in the 21st century.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 7 February 1994

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Simpler Trade Procedures Board.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Mr. J. G. Davis, CBE—*Chairman*
Mr. J. M. Fetherston, OBE JP—*Vice Chairman*
Mr. R. Walker, OBE—*Chief Executive*
Mr. R. Dale—*Deputy Chief Executive*
Mr. F. R. Mingay, CMG DTI—*Ex-Officio*
Mr. M. Brown, HM Customs—*Ex-Officio*
Dr. C. J. Bell
Mr. N. R. Boakes
Mr. B. J. Kelleher
Mr. T. B. C. McGuffog
Mr. M. J. Booth
Viscount Chelmsford
Mr. C. J. Clark
Sir Julian Ridsdale, CBE
Mr. B. S. Wheble, CBE Hon FCIB
Mr. M. Williams

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the National Research Development Corporation.

Mr. McLoughlin: In answer to the hon. Member's question as to who are the members currently appointed to the National Research Development Corporation, they are:

Mr. I. Harvey
Mr. R. Kathoke
Dr. J. Morton
Sir R. Riley

Industrial Research Establishments

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the KPMG report on his Department's industrial research establishments.

Mr. Heseltine: I will take a decision on whether to place a copy in to the Library of the House when I have received the final report.

Power Transmission Lines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what studies his energy technology support unit has conducted or commissioned into the inhibitive effects of oxidative phosphorylation of electric field exposure from power transmission lines.

Mr. Eggar: The energy technology support unit has not conducted or commissioned any research into this subject but we are aware of the reported findings of research in the United States which may be related to it.

Compact Discs

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received relating to the production and sale of compact discs in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A small number of representations continue to be received about the price of compact discs. This is an issue currently being considered by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in its inquiry into the supply of recorded music in the United Kingdom.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:

(a) There is no paper shredder in my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade's private office.
(b) Excluding "next steps" agencies, my Department has approximately 50 paper shredders distributed among the various management units.

Small Businesses

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has discussed with the British Standards Institute the report of its policy committee on small businesses on BS5750.

Mr. McLoughlin: The British Standards Institution's policy committee for small businesses, chaired by Mr. Roger Dunn, has prepared a report on the application of BS5750, the standard for quality management systems, to small firms. The report is published by BSI today and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

BS5750 is a voluntary standard developed by industry. Many United Kingdom businesses have found it advantageous as a management tool. The report recognises this potential benefit and the overall contribution of the standard to higher and consistent quality in the provision of goods and services. It concludes that the underlying principles are equally applicable to large and small businesses, but that small businesses face particular problems in the course of preparing for and obtaining certification.

The committee notes that a number of research projects in this field have yet to be completed but goes on to make a number of provisional recommendations to Government, BSI and others. I have discussed these issues with BSI and my officials have consulted other interested parties.

I accept the recommendation addressed to my Department concerning consultant registration. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has already announced to the House on 7 December *Official Report*, column 154, a new consultancy brokerage service which will include computer listings of consultants offering advice on quality improvement. This service will itself operate under a quality assured system which will at least maintain, and where possible build upon, the high standards established under the enterprise initiative consultancy scheme. In particular, we shall ensure that the methods used in selecting consultants who apply to be listed will continue to be rigorous. The new service will actively promote BS5750 certification among management

consultants in general and ensure that potential clients are made aware of those listed consultants who have themselves already achieved certification to that standard.

We have also agreed to take the lead in a number of other areas. We shall take action as soon as possible, within the managing in the 90s programme, to publish guidance on BS5750 for small firms and for purchasers. We shall facilitate, through business links, the development by training and enterprise councils, chambers of commerce and others of local self-help schemes for small companies. We shall continue to contribute to the cost of research into the difficulties of small firms in this field and will seek a suitable forum for continued oversight of these issues. We shall also ensure that the European Commission is alert to the problem.

The report recommends action by certification bodies and the National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies and urges them to adapt their assessment procedures and to consider how fees and charges for small firms can be modified. My Department has consulted these bodies, who have welcomed the report and its recommendations. The NACCB-Association of British Certification Bodies small firms working party and individual certification bodies are actively preparing positive responses on these aspects.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Hendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the outcome of the review of the future of the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: On 22 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *363*, I announced a review to consider the scope for improving the way the Insolvency Service performs its functions and, in particular, to look at ways in which official receivers could concentrate more on their investigatory role by involving the private sector more in the mechanical processing work in insolvencies. The review was carried out by Stoy Hayward Consulting.

I have considered Stoy Hayward's report—a summary of which has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses—and have decided that its findings provide a sufficient basis for further, more detailed work to be done to assess the costs and benefits of and mechanisms for involving the private sector more in those mechanical, processing tasks undertaken by the official receiver in relation to bankruptcy and compulsory liquidation cases. The specification for this further work has been drawn up and a letter of invitation issued. If this work reveals likely value for money gains in pursuing any of the options identified, I will consider whether there should be live trials in one or more regions.

Private Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimates he has received from life insurance companies of their liability for compensation payments to people wrongly advised to transfer into private pensions.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Department has written to life offices to ask them to indicate their likely exposure to compensation in respect of mis-selling of personal pensions, and to provide guidance on how the Department expects them to reserve for any such exposure in future Companies Act accounts and DTI returns. Individual responses must remain confidential as between the life offices and the Department. However, where a life office considers that it is likely to have a liability or a contingent liability, in respect of mis-selling of pension business, the Department expects this to be recognised in the published accounts.

Charles Barker

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will institute an inquiry into the collapse and resale of the lobbying company Charles Barker; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* If the hon. Member will provide details of the matters which cause him concern, they will be given full consideration.

Electricity (Safety)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to ensure that only suitably qualified people advise customers of electricity companies on wiring and safety.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* I have no plans for this purpose. The guidelines provided by BS7671—the IEE wiring regulations—are well established and well known in the electrical contracting and associated industries.

BS7671 applies to the design, selection, erection, inspection and testing of electrical installations. It also makes requirements for safety with the objective of protecting persons, property and livestock against electrical shock, fires, burns and various mechanical hazards. Persons who wish to certify that an installation satisfies the requirements of this standard must be competent for the work. The standard sets out the requirements for competence.

The safety aspects of this standard are supported by legislation, for example the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidelines he has issued to companies regarding the qualifications of employees advising customers on rewiring and safety.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* I have not issued any guidelines for this purpose. The guidelines provided by BS7671—the IEE wiring regulations—are well established and well known in the electrical contracting and associated industries.

BS7671 applies to the design, selection, erection, inspection and testing of electrical installations. It also makes requirements for safety with the objective of protecting persons, property and livestock against electrical shock, fires burns and various mechanical hazards. Persons who wish to certify that an installation satisfies the requirements of this standard must be competent for the work. The standard sets out the requirements for competence.

The safety aspects of this standard are supported by legislation, for example the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974.

Rover Group

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement clarifying the Government's strategy for industry; and what assessment he has made of the implications for that strategy of the sale of Rover Group to the German Company BMW.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The Government's strategy is to help British industry win. The sale to BMW by British Aerospace of its stake in Rover is consistent with that strategy as Rover, while remaining a separate entity with its own manufacturing design and development facilities in the United Kingdom, will also gain increased export opportunities and better access to much-needed funds for further capital reinvestment. BAe will be able to pursue plans for the turbo-prop and regional jet businesses in Prestwick and Manchester.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning the percentage change in sales in each of the last three years for which figures are available for *(a)* Rover Group and *(b)* BMW (i) in the United Kingdom, (ii) in Europe and (iii) in Germany.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

Rover Group
Percentage change in sales

	United Kingdom	*Germany*	*EC*
1990	—	+16·3	—
1991	−18·5	+59·0	−9·3
1992	−6·0	+26·0	−4·0
1993	+10·5	—	+8·9

BMW
Percentage change in sales

	United Kingdom	*Germany*	*EC*
1990	—	−0·03	−2·3
1991	−10·0	+16·70	+12·4
1992	+5·0	+9·90	+10·7
1993	+0·6	—	—

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the future impact upon the attraction of investment from Japan of the sale of Rover Group to BMW.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The long-held welcome which this Government and country have given to investment from Japan is as strong as ever. The advantages we offer have led to our securing 40 per cent. of all Japanese investment in the European Community: these remain in place. I am sure that Japanese industry will continue to recognise these benefits and the strength of our relationship and will make its investment decisions accordingly.

Manufacturing Companies (Sale)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his overall policy on the sale of major manufacturing companies to overseas interests.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The Government generally welcome foreign investment in United Kingdom companies. Only in exceptional cases would I consider using the powers I possess.

Overseas Investors

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to seek in future to encourage overseas business to invest in existing British companies without seeking to change their ownership.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* We shall continue to maintain our successful policies towards both inward and outward investment.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Business Support

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value of loans awarded by the European investment bank for investments in the European Community in each year since its establishment; and what proportion of the loans were for the financing of projects in (i) the northern region and (ii) the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Nelson: A detailed breakdown of the bank's lending is published in its annual report and accounts, copies of which are available in the Library. The figures sought for 1991 and 1992 can be found in the reports for these years. However, it is not possible to obtain the information requested for previous years, since the bank did not then prepare or publish a full breakdown of lending by region.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value of European Community loans made at competitive rates to small and medium-sized enterprises in each year since its establishment; and what proportion of these loans were granted to businesses in (a) the northern region and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Nelson: Within the institutions of the European Community, there are two sources of loans for small and medium sized enterprises, the European investment bank and the European Coal and Steel Community. For the EIB, the information sought can be obtained from its annual report and accounts, copies of which are available in the Library. The ECSC, however, does not compile or publish statistics showing what proportion of its lending is directed to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Indonesia (Ministerial Visit)

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to public funds of his trip to Indonesia during the Christmas recess; and how many hours of official business he conducted while he was there.

Mr. Nelson: The cost of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's visit to the far east during the Christmas recess, with accompanying Treasury officials, was about £31,500. The Indonesian part of the trip involved four and a half days. During this time, my right hon. and learned

Friend met the President of Indonesia, a number of senior Indonesian Ministers with responsibility for the economy, the Governor of the Bank of Indonesia and a range of Indonesian and expatriate business people. He also visited a British-funded railway project, together with BP's new polyethylene plant in western Java.

Deregulation

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which organisations were consulted by his Department on each of the recommendations of the business deregulation task forces before they were agreed and action proposed in the DTI document "Deregulation: Cutting the Red Tape".

Mr. Nelson: Each of the task force recommendations agreed or agreed in principle by the Government has been or will be the subject of appropriate consultation with sector representatives.

VAT Repayments

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of VAT repayments by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise were made within 30 days of receiving a claim in the last year for which figures are available.

Sir John Cope: In the financial year ended 31 March 1993, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise made 98·5 per cent. of VAT repayments within 30 days of having received the claims.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the subjects on which his Department formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Nelson: The chief executives of the Central Statistical Office, the Office of Her Majesty's Paymaster General, the Valuation Office agency and the Royal Mint have delegated authority to reply to parliamentary questions on day-to-day operational matters within their responsibilities. Since the procedures for publishing chief executives' replies in the *Official Report* were introduced in October 1992, only three questions have been tabled concerning the operational responsibilities of the executive agencies of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Carbon Dioxide Energy Tax

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the fiscal return to the Exchequer during 1994-95 of implementation of the carbon dioxide energy tax as proposed by the European White Paper on employment.

Mr. Dorrell: The Commission White Paper on "Growth, competitiveness and employment" refers to the CO_2/energy tax proposed by the Commission in June 1992 but does not itself propose such a tax. The revenue which would be raised by implementing a tax as proposed in 1992 would depend on a number of factors, in particular: whether it took the place of other energy taxes, such as fuel duties; and decisions on the nature and size of any of the proposed exemptions to the tax.

Correspondence

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of written inquiries and customer complaints to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise were replied to within 10 working days.

Sir John Cope: The latest available figures show that 90 per cent. of all written inquiries and 65 per cent. of all customer complaints to Her Majesty's Customs were replied to within 10 working days.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Nelson: There is one shredding machine in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's private office and seven in use elsewhere in the Treasury.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the implications for open government of the proceedings of the Scott inquiry.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have provided Lord Justice Scott's inquiry with all the information it has requested. Any assessment of implications awaits Lord Justice Scott's findings.

Inherited Defects

Mr. Miller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he will take to protect the clinical work that relates to the research into inherited defects of connective tissue currently carried out by the dermatology research group at the clinical research centre at Harrow.

Mr. David Davis: The dermatology research group at the clinical research centre will be transferring to the department of pathology at the university of Cambridge in the course of the year. The Medical Research Council has funded the research group for a further five years and has funded new accommodation on the Addenbrooke's hospital site. The team will therefore be able to continue its clinical research programme into inherited defects of connective tissue. In addition, links are being formed with the East Anglia regional genetics centre.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible have *(a)* been abolished or *(b)* created since June 1992.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by the Prime Minister on 1 February, *Official Report*, column *611*.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Property Investment

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list the individuals and firms who have ceased to advise the Church Commissioners on commercial property investments in the last three years.

Mr. Alison: No firms other than those listed in my answer on 24 January, *Official Report*, column *1*, have advised the commissioners on commercial property investments in the last three years, although there have naturally been changes of personnel within these firms and in their terms of reference. The group advising the commissioners' assets committee on property matters is a new group and was established in response to one of the Lambeth report's recommendations.

Board of Governors

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list the current Church Commissioners' board of governors and the date of their appointment.

Mr. Alison: The members of the board of governors and their date of appointment are listed:

Member	*Date of appointment*
The Most Revd and Right Hon. G. L. Carey Archbishop of Canterbury (Chairman)	Ex-officio[1] (19 April 1991)
The Most Revd and Right Hon. J. S. Habgood Archbishop of York	Ex-officio[1] (18 October 1993)
The Right Revd J. Waine Bishop of Chelmsford (Deputy Chairman)	25 February 1982
Sir Michael Colman First Church Estates Commissioner	Ex-officio[1] (1 April 1993)
The Right Hon. Michael Alison MP Second Church Estates Commissioner	Ex-officio[1] (19 June 1987)
Mrs. M. H. Laird Third Church Estates Commissioner	Ex-officio[1] (1 January 1989)
The Right Revd and Right Hon. D. M. Hope Bishop of London	30 June 1993
The Right Revd A. D. Chesters Bishop of Blackburn	[2]24 September 1992
The Right Revd P. J. Nott Bishop of Norwich	30 June 1993
The Right Revd A. M. A. Turnbull Bishop of Rochester	28 April 1988
The Right Revd D. R. Lunn Bishop of Sheffield	27 June 1984
The Very Revd J. M. Moses Provost of Chelmsford	28 April 1988
The Very Revd B. H. Lewers Provost of Derby	28 April 1988
The Venerable G. G. Gibson Archdeacon of Auckland	1 April 1993
The Venerable J. Richards Archdeacon of Exeter	1 April 1993
The Venerable J. S. Gaisford Archdeacon of Macclesfield	[2]1 June 1991
The Venerable G. B. Austin Archdeacon of York	1 January 1980
The Revd Canon J. A. Stanley	28 April 1988
The Revd Prebendary R. N. Inwood	1 April 1993
The Viscountess Brentford	1 April 1993
Mr. A. Cooper	1 April 1993
Mr. H. Gracey	[2]1 June 1991
Mrs. P. R. Granger	1 June 1991
Sir John Herbecq	1 August 1982
Mr. P. A. Lovegrove	28 April 1988
Mr. E. G. Nugee QC	23 August 1993
Mr. J. F. M. Smallwood	17 November 1966
Mr. D. H. L. Hopkinson (co-opted)	[2]28 April 1988
The Very Revd T. E. Evans (co-opted) Dean of St. Pauls	[2]23 February 1989

[1] Ex-officio.
[2] Also served previous terms of office.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Judges (Training)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much training judges are having on the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Children Act 1989 requires that cases arising under the Act are heard by judges specifically authorised for the purpose by the Lord Chancellor. Before granting this authorisation, the Lord Chancellor requires that the judge should have had the appropriate training arranged by the Judicial Studies Board. For public law, this involves attending a seminar on the subject of care cases. District judges who handle such cases also receive training. In addition, family work is included in induction and refresher training for district judges and guidance on both public and private law work is given at one-day family law seminars held on circuits and attended by all levels of the judiciary involved in this work. The Judicial Studies Board also holds a conference each year for the family division liaison judges and the designated family judges, which is chaired by the president of the family division.

Shared Residency Orders

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many shared residency orders have been made since the Children Act 1989 came into force; and how many have been contested.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Shared Access Orders

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many shared access orders have been made since the Children Act 1989 was implemented; and how many of these have been contested.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Contact—formerly access—orders are made on the basis of one application and one order. There is no provision under the Children Act 1989 for shared contact applications or orders. The figures for the number of cases in which multiple contact orders have been made and which of those were contested are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Judiciary

Mr. Allen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will update the information given in his answer of 12 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *784*, to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North regarding the composition of the judiciary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information—as at 1 January 1994—is set out. The figures for black or Asian office holders are believed to be correct, but the formal recording of the ethnic background of applicants for judicial office only began on 1 October 1991, so such information may be incomplete. Aggregated information is not generally kept on the average ages of judges or on their school and university background. However, the results of a recent special exercise in relation to average ages are set out.

	Number	*Average age (years)*	*Men*	*Women*	*[1]Barrister*	*Solicitor*	*Black/Asian*
Lords of Appeal in Ordinary	10	66·5	10	—	10	—	—
Lords Justices	29	63·0	28	1	29	—	—
Heads of Division (excludes Lord Chancellor)	4	63·0	4	—	4	—	—
High Court Judges	95	57·6	89	6	94	1	—
Circuit Judges (includes Official Referees)	499	57·8	472	27	439	60	2
Recorders	813	52·0	775	38	740	73	9
Assistant Recorders (excludes Assistant Recorders in training)	432	45·7	375	57	357	75	8
Stipendiary Magistrates	78	53·1	70	8	36	42	1
Industrial Tribunal Chairmen	73	56·4	61	12	35	38	2
Value Added Tax Tribunal Chairmen	4	60·3	4	—	3	1	—
Social Security Appeal Tribunal Chairmen	33	50·3	23	10	8	25	—

[1] Or member of the faculty of advocates.

Landlord Mortgages

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what changes have been agreed following the Law Commission report on transfer of landlord mortgages.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The extensive recommendations in the Law Commission's report on "Transfer of Land: Land Mortgages"—Law Com. No. 204—are still under consideration by the Government.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will provide figures for the amount his Department has been reimbursed by the Department of Social Security in respect of statutory sick pay provision for each of the past three years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total reimbursement by the Department of Social Security in the 1992-93 financial year was £542,025·79; and up to the end of December 1993 was £472,052·53. No earlier figures are available.

PRIME MINISTER

European Investment Fund

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column 734, concerning the accountability of the managers of the European investment fund, for what period funds at their disposal have been part of the annual budget of the European Community; what are the names of those who have the duty of appointing the managers of the fund and who appoints them and what are the names, experience, current employment and other relevant interests of the managers already appointed and the number of vacancies.

The Prime Minister: The proposed European investment fund cannot be established until the necessary treaty amendment has been ratified by all the European Community's member states. Only then can managers for the fund be appointed. Meanwhile, the situation will remain as follows:

(a) No funds are at the disposal of the managers of the fund. The funding referred to in my answer of 1 February is the provision taken by the European Community for its planned subscription to the share capital of the fund. This subscription will be paid over four years. The Community's 1994 Budget contains provision for the first tranche and was adopted on 16 December 1993.

(b) The draft statute of the fund places the ultimate responsibility for appointing the managers of the fund with the fund's general meeting. This meeting would comprise representatives of the fund's shareholders: the European investment bank, the European Community and financial institutions from member states. The EIB and the EC would hold the majority of the share capital, and their representatives at the meeting would be accountable to the EIB's board of governors, and the ECOFIN Council, respectively.

(c) The draft statute envisages that day-to-day management would be in the hands of a financial committee. This would have three members, one of whom would be a representative of the EIB, one a representative of the EC, and one a representative of the financial institutions. No nomination to this committee can be made until the fund is established.

Child Nutrition

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations he has received from the National Children's Home in regard to child nutrition; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a letter from the N.C.H. Action for Children. A reply will be sent in due course.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Prime Minister how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in 10 Downing street and *(b)* in the Cabinet Office.

The Prime Minister: There are five paper shredding machines in 10 Downing street, and five in the Cabinet Office.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Radioactive Wastes (Dumping)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place document A/C1/48/L.17 on prohibition of dumping of radioactive wastes, presented to the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The document has been placed in the Library.

Indonesia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he knew about the proposed sale of Hawk aircraft to Indonesia when he visited Jakarta in April 1993; and whether this was discussed.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was aware of the proposed sale of Hawk aircraft when he visited Jakarta in April 1993. It was referred to during that visit.

UN Register of Conventional Arms

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will use the description of item column to give details of model type of the equipment, when making the United Kingdom's 1993 return to the UN register of conventional arms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans to do so. This is not currently a requirement of the UN arms register.

Military Equipment Embargoes

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries currently subject to embargoes on the export of British military equipment, when in each case the embargo was imposed and which equipment is covered.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We observe embargoes imposed by the United Nations on Iraq, imposed in 1991; Libya, 1992; Somalia, 1993; Liberia, 1992; Haiti, 1993; South Africa, 1977; and former Yugoslavia, 1991. The scope of United Nations embargoes is not defined; decisions on their application are made at national discretion on a case-by-case basis. We apply all these embargoes to all military equipment.

We also observe embargoes imposed by the European Union on China, 1989; Syria, 1986; Burma, 1991; and Zaire, 1993. We apply the embargoes on Burma, Zaire and Syria to all military equipment. We apply the embargo on China to weapons and any equipment which could be used for internal repression.

We also observe a voluntary embargo agreed by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe on Armenia and Azerbaijan, 1992, which we consider applies to all military equipment.

In addition, as a matter of declared national policy we refuse to supply military equipment to Argentina, since 1982, and to Israel, since 1982—in the case of Israel, we decided in 1983 to allow the export of electronic and small non-lethal components provided they did not form part of equipment due to be put into service with the Israeli armed forces in Lebanon.

In the case of Iran, there have been restrictions since 1979. Stricter guidelines were introduced in 1984 relating to the export of all defence-related equipment. Following a review of export licensing criteria for Iran announced by the President of the Board of Trade in December 1992, new guidelines were announced to Parliament in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' statement of 1 March 1993.

In the case of the United Nations embargoes on Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Liberia, Haiti and the former Yugoslavia, the Government have introduced Orders in Council under the United Nations Act 1946. In all other cases, controls are effected under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992, and its predecessors.

Export licences have been issued in respect of equipment for United Nations and EC peacekeeping activities and for the protection of those undertaking humanitarian and media work, for example, journalists in former Yugoslavia.

Biodiversity Action Plan

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the reason for not including the British Indian ocean territory and the Great Chagos Bank Atoll in the areas covered by the biodiversity action plan published on 25 January.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It was decided that given the special circumstances of the British Indian ocean territory —BIOT—it would not be appropriate for the islands to be included in the national plan for biodiversity.

Access to Diego Garcia is restricted because of the defence facility on the island. Nevertheless, legislative and other measures have been implemented to protect the territory's environment. BIOT has a conservation consultant who is developing a comprehensive programme for the territory and has close links with the charity, the Friends of the Chagos, an organisation concerned with the conservation of the Chagos archipelago.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the subjects on which his Department formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The framework documents of the Natural Resources Institute and the Wilton Park executive agency set out the responsibilities delegated to the respective chief executives. They will normally be responsible for answering questions on those matters for which they are responsible.

UNESCO

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards renewed membership of UNESCO; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are continuing to keep this matter under close review, but for the moment have taken no decision on whether to rejoin UNESCO.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Goodlad: There is one paper shredding machine in the private office and an estimated 548 machines in the Department's home and overseas offices.

United Nations

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the United Kingdom's annual contribution to the funding of the United Nations in each of the last four years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Details of the United Kingdom's contributions to the United Nations regular budget over the past four years are as follows:

1991—$44,775,548
1992—$49,437,654
1993—$51,229,662
1994—$51,067,778—provisional

Sheikh Riaz Ahmad

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what substantive reply he has received from the French authorities concerning Sheikh Riaz Ahmad who was refused leave to enter France in December 1992; how many representations he has now made to the French authorities; how many replies he has now received from the French authorities; what further action he intends to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British embassy has yet to receive a satisfactory explanation as to why Mr. Ahmed was refused entry to France. The embassy has sent eight notes verbales to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to which it has received four replies, none of which was regarded as satisfactory. On 11 January 1994 the consul-general called at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss Mr. Ahmed's case further. The Ministry agreed to look into the matter again.

I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as I have anything further to report.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards a cut-off convention for fissile materials available for nuclear warhead manufacture.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We supported the United Nations General Assembly resolution last year which called for the negotiation of a convention prohibiting the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Although we shall wish to consider very carefully the implications of such a convention for our nuclear deterrent, we recognise the potentially valuable contribution which a multilateral convention could make to non-proliferation. On 1 February, the conference on disarmament appointed a special co-ordinator to seek the views of its member states on the most appropriate arrangements for a cut-off convention.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *424*, what has been the total amount received from the United Nations for Britian's contribution of troops, equipment and expertise to the UNPROFOR mission in former Yugoslavia in each year since the operation began.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: UNPROFOR Croatia—UNPROFOR I—began in February 1992, UNPROFOR Bosnia-Hercegovina Command—UNPROFOR II—in September 1992.

United Nations reimbursements for UNPROFOR I in the financial year 1992-93 totalled £191,663·25. Reimbursements for UNPROFOR I and II in the financial year 1993-94 to date now total £17,120,698·94.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *425*, if he will list the payments made to his Department by the United Nations in respect of UNPROFOR in the last three financial years covering *(a)* military observers, *(b)* military contingents, *(c)* other costs pertaining to contingents, *(d)* civilian police monitors, *(e)* civilian staff costs, *(f)* international contractual personnel salaries, *(g)* engineering salaries and material, *(h)* helicopter operations, *(i)* fixed-wing aircraft, *(j)* aircrew subsistence allowance, *(k)* ground handling, *(l)* transport operations, *(m)* other equipment, *(n)* supplies and services, *(o)* integrated management information systems, *(p)* support for peacekeeping mission and *(q)* technological; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces explained in his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *424*, United Nations reimbursements to date have been made up of standard rate payments for troop costs and rations only. UNPROFOR Croatia—UNPROFOR I—began in February 1992 and UNPROFOR Bosnia-Hercegovina Command—UNPROFOR II—in September 1992. UNPROFOR II was only brought on to United Nations assessed contribution funding from 1 April 1993. The MoD Operation Hanwood withdrew from Croatia in September 1993. United Nations reimbursements have therefore been made in the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94 to date as follows:

	£
Financial Year 1992-93	
UNPROFOR I progress payments for troop costs for the period to 31 July 1992	
July 1992	117,726·45
February 1993	73,936·80
Total	191,663·25
Financial Year 1993-94 to date	
UNPROFOR I balance of refunds due for troop costs March to July 1992	
May 1993	131,899·88

	£
UNPROFOR I troop costs for the month of August 1992 June 1993	216,526·76
UNPROFOR I troop costs for the months of September and October 1992 July 1993	414,643·55
UNPROFOR I troop costs for the month of November 1992 August 1993	190,521·39
UNPROFOR I troop costs for the month of December 1992 September 1993	179,233·43
UNPROFOR I troop costs for the months of January to March 1993 October 1993	535,084·08
UNPROFOR I and II progress payments for troop costs April to June 1993 November 1993	5,419,567·12
UNPROFOR II rations for the period April to June 1993 November 1993	1,038,928·80
UNPROFOR II rations for the period July to September 1993 December 1993	974,359·39
UNPROFOR I and II progress payment for troop costs for July to September 1993 December 1993	5,112,072·48
UNPROFOR II progress payment for troop costs for October 1993 January 1994	1,578,704·56
UNPROFOR II progress payment for troop costs for November 1993 February 1994	1,329,157·50
Total	17,120,698·94

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration Laws (Employment)

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which EC countries have laws criminalising employers for employing workers who do not have permission to work under the immigration laws of the country; and for each country how long such legislation has been in existence.

Mr. Charles Wardle: From the information readily available we understand that most member states of the EC have penalties which involve fines and/or imprisonment for employers who employ foreign nationals who do not have the requisite permission to work. Information as to how long such legislation has been in existence is not available.

Committal Proceedings

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusion he has reached on the Royal Commission on criminal justice's recommendations regarding committal proceedings.

Mr. Howard: The Government have accepted the arguments put forward by the Royal Commission and agreed that committal proceedings should be abolished.

"Old style" or "full" committals are a costly and cumbersome process. They are open to abuse by the defence, particularly where the witness is also a victim. The much larger number of so-called "paper " committals are largely a formality, serving little purpose.

Abolishing committals would reduce, in most cases, the time taken by pre-trial procedures and should allow savings to be made in court and legal aid costs.

In place of committal hearings, we propose there should be a procedure allowing cases to be transferred to the Crown court administratively. This would apply in all indictable-only cases, and in triable either-way cases once a decision on mode of trial has been reached in the magistrates court.

As recommended by the royal commission, there would still be a procedure under which the defence could argue that there was no case to answer in advance of trial at the Crown court.

Under the proposed new "transfer for trial" procedure, such an application would in most cases be considered by the magistrates on the papers. But the court would have a discretion to admit oral argument by the defence on application.

Again as recommended by the royal commission, no witnesses would be called to give evidence in these proceedings. This means there will be no question of vulnerable witnesses being requested to give evidence twice.

A new clause will shortly be tabled as an addition to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which, if approved, will give effect to these proposals.

Police Performance Targets

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those police forces which had and had not *(a)* published targets and indicators of performances and *(b)* published target times for answering telephone calls and responding to incidents requiring rapid reaction by July 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not centrally available. Police forces will be expected to publish performance indicators and targets for 1993-94 during the course of 1994-95. Local authorities will also be publishing the Audit Commission performance indicators.

Immigration

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the current waiting time for interview in relation to settlement applications from spouses or fiances or fiancees in Pakistan;

(2) what is the current waiting time for interviews in relation to settlement applications from spouses or fiances or fiancees in India.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is published in table 10 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 33/93 "Control of Immigration: Statistics—First and Second Quarters 1993", a copy of which is in the Library. Statistics for the third and fourth quarters of 1993 will be published in April.

Overseas Electors

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens living overseas have applied to be registered to vote in elections in each parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of British citizens overseas applying to register as overseas electors is not collected centrally. Information on the number of overseas electors included in the 1993-94 register for each constituency was published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in "Electoral Statistics 1993"—EL No. 20—copies of which are in the Library. Figures for the 1994-95 register will be published in the summer.

Taylforth Libel Case

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan Commissioner on the release to *The Sun* newspaper of the facts of the arrest and caution which were the subject of the recent Taylforth libel case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that a reporter from *The Sun* telephoned the Metropolitan police press bureau seeking confirmation of the details of an incident on 17 June 1992 on a slip road of the A1. The press bureau confirmed that an incident had occurred, but did not volunteer the names of the persons involved.

Proxy Voting

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make the application form to vote by post or proxy due to disability or physical incapacity available in braille.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to do so.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidance is issued to chief constables on the reporting of criminal activity on police command and control systems and in published rates of recorded crime;

(2) whether each police force throughout England and Wales uses the same criteria in recording criminal activity on police command and control systems and in the publishing of statistics of recorded crime.

Mr. Maclean: Statistics of recorded crime are based on rules for classification and counting which are standard for all the police forces in England and Wales. A comprehensive set of counting rules is used by police forces in order to maintain the consistency of recording multiple, continuous and repeated offences. Although these rules are issued centrally, many decisions still have to be taken locally about the recording and counting of criminal incidents.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the report of a crime on a police command and control system which is reported for information only is included in the published crime statistics.

Mr. Maclean: The recording process starts when someone reports to the police that an offence has been committed or when the police observe or discover an offence. The police make an initial examination of the facts to determine if there is prima facie evidence that an offence has been committed; if so, a crime report will be made out and if that offence is deemed "notifiable", it will be included in the Home Office crime statistics.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the reporting of a series of criminal acts as a continuous crime on a police command and control system is recorded as a single crime in published crime statistics.

Mr. Maclean: Notifiable offences deemed by the police to be of a continuous nature, in accordance with Home Office instructions, will be notified to the Home Office as a single offence and published as such.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the report of a crime on a police command and control system as tampering is recorded in the published crime statistics.

Mr. Maclean: The recording of "tampering" offences is dependent on the interpretation of the circumstances surrounding each individual incident. An offence regarded as being attempted theft of/from a vehicle is a "notifiable" offence and would be published in the crime statistics. However, an offence deemed to be interference with a motor vehicle is not "notifiable" and would not be shown in the crime statistics.

Fire Fighting, Cleveland

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to make a decision on the provision of fire fighting services in Cleveland.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the light of advice which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has received from the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council and from Her Majesty's chief inspector of fire services, he proposes when local government in Cleveland is reorganised, to establish a combined fire authority for Cleveland. The combined authority will take over the functions under the Fire Services Act 1947 which are currently exercised by Cleveland county council, and will consist of members drawn from the four unitary authorities which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment proposes to establish in the Cleveland area when the county council is abolished.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide figures for the amount his Department has been reimnbursed by the Department of Social Security in respect of statutory sick pay provision for each of the past three years.

Mr. Howard: The amounts are as follows:

	£
1990-91	3,408,180·95
1991-92	2,771,581·37
1992-93	2,850,542·04

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible have been *(a)* abolished or *(b)* created since 1979.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 1 February 1994, *Official Report,* column *611.*

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which of the public appointments for which he is responsible require advance notice to and consultation with the Chief Whip's Office; and which appointments made since 1979 have been so notified and consulted upon;

(2) which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's Office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Howard: It is not the practice of Her Majesty's Government to answer parliamentary questions about discussions and consultations between Departments and offices of Government relating to public appointments.

Mandatory Life Sentences

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures he follows before he decides what tariff period should be set for persons sentenced to mandatory life imprisonment.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave on 27 July 1993, *Official Report,* column *863,* in response to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence).

Metropolitan Police

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the priorities of the Metropolitan police for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The priorities of the Metropolitan police for 1994-95 are:

(i) to deliver the standards defined in the Metropolitan police service charter;
(ii) to increase the number of notifiable offences solved to 190,000;
(iii) to increase the detection rate for burglary to a minimum of 15 per cent.;
(iv) to improve performance against terrorism;
(v) to improve performance against the criminal use of firearms; and
(vi) to improve policing performance and quality of service by restructuring the Metropolitan police service.

Details of each of the priorities and the way in which they address the key objectives for policing I announced on 3 December, *Official Report,* columns *786-87,* are set out in a corporate strategy document which the Commissioner is, with my approval, issuing today. I am sending copies today to all right hon. and hon. Members whose constituencies fall wholly or partly within the Metropolitan police district and I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list for each division of the Metropolitan police the establishment number by rank and the number of people in post by rank at the latest available date;

(2) if he will list *(a)* the sectors created in each division of the Metropolitan police, *(b)* the establishment level by rank for each sector, and *(c)* the number of people in post by rank in each sector, at the latest available date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that information in the form requested is not held centrally. The table shows the figures for police officers in post by rank at area level as at 31 December 1993.

Metropolitan Police
Area establishment and strength profile by rank as at 31 December 1993

	DAC	Commander	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Total	Variation
1 Area										
Establishment	1	2	13	18	47	136	507	2,525	3,249	
Strength	1	2	12	18	47	146	501·4	2,508·96	3,326·36	−12·46
2 Area										
Establishment	1	2	11	22	39	132	470	2,360	3,037	
Strength	1	2	7	19	43	135	462	2,326·14	2,995·14	−41·86
3 Area										
Establishment	1	2	13	19	46	128	470	2,527	3,206	
Strength	1	1	11	19	49	129	438·15	2,487·33	3,180·48	−25·52
4 Area										
Establishment	1	2	10	18	34	113	424	2,117	2,719	
Strength	1	2	10	16	38	110	433·7	2,018·29	2,628·99	−90·01
5 Area										
Establishment	1	2	11	16	37	121	399	1,866	2,453	
Strength	1	2	11	14	35	124·6	432·2	1,987·85	2,607·65	154·65
6 Area										
Establishment	1	3	13	20	44	148	481	2,400	3,110	
Strength	1	2	12	14	41	140	509·6	2,400·46	3,120·06	10·06
7 Area										
Establishment	1	2	12	17	43	123	475	2,203	2,876	
Strength	1	1	11	17	37	126	480·4	2,170·3	2,843·7	−32·3

	DAC	Commander	Chief Superintendent	Superintendent	Chief Inspector	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Total	Variation
8 Area										
Establishment	1	2	10	14	34	122	406	1,777	2,366	
Strength	1	2	8	15	32	118	402·88	1,829·2	2,408·08	42·08
Total Establishment	8	17	93	144	324	1,023	3,632	17,775	23,016	
Total Strength	8	14	82	132	322	1,029	3,705·33	17,729·53	23,020·46	4·46

Informers

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what payments have been made by the City of London police to Mr. Totterington-Jarvis for information supplied by him; and over what period he was acting as an informer.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The use of informants is an operational matter and entirely the responsibility of the chief officer of the police force concerned.

Racial Incidents

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when data will be available on the number of racial incidents recorded by each police force in England and Wales for 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In common with other statistics, information on reported racial incidents is now provided by police forces on a financial year basis. Information on the number of racial incidents reported to police forces in England and Wales for the year April 1993 to March 1994 will be available in mid-April.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures his Department has adopted to monitor the incidence of racial harassment and racial attacks in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Every police force in England and Wales is required to monitor the occurrence of racially motivated incidents using a standard definition agreed with the Association of Chief Police Officers, and taking account of Home Office guidance on ethnic classification issued as Home Office circular 70 of 1992. Data are supplied annually to the Home Office via HM inspectorate of constabulary.

Since April 1993, as part of the national package of core performance indicators for the police, each force will be expected to publish annual data on the total number of reported racial incidents in the force area, and the percentage of these in which further investigative action was taken. This information will be used by HM inspectorate of constabulary to monitor police performance.

In addition, the British crime surveys of 1988 and 1992 asked ethnic minority victims of crime about racial motivation. A paper on ethnic minorities' experience of crime, including the incidence of racial motivation, is due to be published shortly. The inter-departmental racial attacks group will be considering the latest available data on racial incidents as part of its continuing work programme.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of homicides in 1992 in which racial motivation was a factor.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not available. The police are required to make returns of each known homicide to the Home Office, but are not specifically requested to note whether they consider racial motivation to be a factor.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that no future licences will be awarded under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 which would allow ex-pets to be used in research.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All applications for the use of animals in scientific procedures are considered on their merits, and against the criteria and constraints set out in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. The Act contains strict provisions to guard against the possibility of stray or stolen dogs and cats being used in experiments.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that his Department will not grant licences for research on Dartmoor ponies; and what account he has taken of article 7(3) of directive 86/609 in considering this matter.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A blanket prohibition would not be appropriate. All applications for the use of animals in scientific procedures are considered on their merits, and against the criteria and constraints contained in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, which is operated in accordance with the requirements of directive 86/609.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to ban the import of wild-caught primates for the use in scientific experiments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Substantial progress has been made in reducing the use of wild-caught primates in British laboratories. The Animal Procedures Committee is considering the practical problems in the way of eliminating such use altogether, and I look forward to receiving its advice in due course.

Prison Statistics

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *574*, what is the expected date of publication of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales 1992".

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Publication of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales 1992" is now planned for June 1994. Summary information was published in March 1993 in Home Office statistical bulletin 7/93 "The Prison Population in 1992".

Young Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the second report of the Children's Society and Advisory Committee on Young Offenders, "A False Sense of Security", since it was published on 25 November 1993; and what proposals he has for action on the findings and recommendations of that report.

Mr. Maclean: The report made 20 recommendations. They were aimed at preventing and reducing youth crime, improving the youth justice system, dealing with persistent offenders and protecting the public from serious offenders. They have all been carefully considered. In brief, the Government's response is as follows:

we have longsupported both community-based crime prevention initiatives—including youth crime prevention panels which directly involve young people themselves—and also local inter-agency co-operation in the juvenile justice system;

we were already taking action in relation to some of the committee's concerns, such as making funding available for bail support schemes and setting time limits for the stages in court proceedings;

we agree that the report has made some useful comments on improving the effectiveness of community supervision programmes; this is an objective of the review of national standards—announced by my right hon. and learned Friend on 6 October 1993—for such programmes;

we think that the report places a proper emphasis on the need for independently inspected high standards of care in secure accommodation for children and for throughcare programmes aimed at rehabilitating such children: we intend that those standards and those objectives should apply in relation to the new secure training centres;

we think that the independent sector can play a part in the provision of secure accommodation for young people;

we do not accept the report's recommendation that plans for secure training centres should not be implemented.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Howard: In the Home Secretary's private office there are three shredding machines. The other information sought is not centrally recorded and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Killings

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many murders, how many unlawful killings and how many cases of manslaughter were committed in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and how many killings were committed by people found to have been of diminished responsibility.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1992"—Cm 2410—chapter 4 and table 4.2.

A copy of this publication is in the Library.

Criminals (Employment Status)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the employment status of persons convicted of crimes in England and Wales in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The information readily available is given in the table and is taken from a special data collection exercise undertaken in a small number of courts to monitor the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. The statistics are subject to sampling error and may not be representative of all courts in England and Wales. They will also reflect changes in employment status from the date of arrest. Some research studies on this issue were listed in my reply to the hon. Member on 1 February, *Official Report,* column *650.*

Employment status on date of sentence, for persons sentenced in selected courts[1] for indictable offences

Percentage of total offenders sentenced

Employment status on date of sentence	*July to August 1992*	*January to February 1993*
Currently employed (including self and part time employment)	19	18
Youth or other training scheme	1	1
Unemployed	63	70
Full-time education	3	3
Other	2	2
Not known	11	6
Total number sentenced [=100 per cent.]	3,100	3,600

[1]Magistrates courts —Bow Street, Bradford, Bristol, Cardiff Leicester, Maidstone, Newcastle, Portsmouth and York.

Crown court centres—Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Doncaster, Kingston, Knightsbridge, Maidstone, Newcastle, Preston and Wolverhampton.

Deportations

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been deported from the United Kingdom in each of the last three years; and what was the nationality of each person who has been deported.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 27 January 1994]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Persons removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process[1]

Geographical region and nationality	*1991*	*1992*	*1993[2]*
All nationalities	2,616	2,583	2,254
European Community			
Belgium	7	10	4
Denmark	—	2	2
France	4	5	6
Germany	5	5	10
Greece	2	2	3
Ireland	8	11	5
Italy	5	14	11
Luxembourg	3	—	—
Netherlands	29	30	23
Portugal	—	4	2
Spain	3	3	2
Other Western Europe			
Austria	—	—	3
Cyprus	12	16	11
Finland	2	—	1
Malta	1	1	1
Norway	2	2	1
Sweden	2	1	2
Switzerland	1	1	3
Turkey	60	58	35
Former Yugoslavia	37	13	10
Eastern Europe			
Bulgaria	8	1	13

Geographical region and nationality	1991	1992	1993[3]
Former Czechoslovakia	6	4	25
Hungary	4	7	4
Poland	128	126	155
Romania	2	5	1
Former USSR	1	—	6
Americas			
Argentina	1	—	1
Barbados	4	3	2
Brazil	67	76	51
Canada	8	18	10
Chile	4	3	6
Colombia	72	78	67
Guyana	6	5	12
Jamaica	129	141	147
Mexico	4	1	1
Peru	12	10	8
Trinidad and Tobago	2	9	5
United States of America	45	42	32
Venezuela	2	2	2
Africa			
Algeria	156	115	64
Angola	1	2	2
Egypt	39	30	27
Ethiopia	2	—	1
Ghana	137	140	132
Kenya	12	10	14
Libya	3	5	2
Mauritius	20	29	11
Morocco	99	73	50
Nigeria	640	623	440
Sierra Leone	43	20	20
Somalia	—	—	—
South Africa	22	23	44
Sudan	2	2	3
Tanzania	12	19	11
Tunisia	10	10	10
Uganda	11	9	8
Zaire	1	3	3
Zambia	11	23	15
Zimbabwe	10	11	28
Indian sub-continent			
Bangladesh	50	62	64
India	105	117	132
Pakistan	127	159	138
Middle East			
Iran	4	10	4
Iraq	52	—	1
Israel	14	10	10
Jordan	4	1	5
Kuwait	—	—	—
Lebanon	4	1	3
Saudi Arabia	1	—	—
Syria	2	1	4
Yemen	2	1	7
Remainder of Asia			
China	1	3	7
Indonesia	2	2	3
Japan	16	7	9
Malaysia	94	116	85
Philippines	20	25	43
Singapore	1	1	3
South Korea	2	—	1
Sri Lanka	7	7	6
Thailand	30	23	8
Hong Kong[2]	49	68	42
Australasia			
Australia	14	5	9
New Zealand	10	9	16
Others			
British Overseas citizens	—	2	—
Other countries not elsewhere specified	78	88	81
Less or nationality doubtful	8	9	5

[1] Including persons who departed voluntarily, but excluding illegal entrants removed. In total, some 6,100 persons were removed as illegal entrants or under the deportation process, including 400 who departed voluntarily, in the 12 months ending June 1993.
[2] British dependent territories citizens and British nationals (overseas) only.
[3] Provisional.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Murdered Service Men (France)

31. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General what discussions he has had with his German counterpart on the prosecution of those responsible for the murder of British service men in France in 1940.

The Attorney-General: None. The issue is one for the prosecuting authorities in Germany which have received full co-operation from the Ministry of Defence and our police.

Group Libel

32. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received on group libel.

The Attorney-General: In March 1992 the then Attorney-General and the Lord Chancellor received a copy of a report on group defamation from the board of deputies of British Jews.

Prosecution Costs

33. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Attorney-General to what extent the cost of prosecution is taken into account when the Crown Prosecution Service decides whether to prosecute.

The Attorney-General: Cost is not a specific factor to be taken into account in the decision whether or not to prosecute. However, as the code for Crown prosecutors makes clear at sections 8(i) and (viii), it may be considered in relation to offences where the penalty is likely to be merely nominal or the guilt of the defendant minimal in relation to that of the principle offenders.

Crown Prosecution Service

34. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Attorney-General how many cases were committed to Crown court for trial by the Crown Prosecution Service in 1993; and how many resulted in a conviction.

The Attorney-General: During the period January to September 1993, 76,404 defendants were committed for trial in the Crown court in cases where the Crown Prosecution Service had conduct of the prosecution and, over the same period, 60,758 convictions were recorded.

35. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Attorney-General to what extent the public interest is considered by the Crown Prosecution Service when a decision to prosecute is made.

The Attorney-General: The decision to prosecute is based, first, on whether there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction. Only if there is such evidence is the public interest considered.

36. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Attorney-General whether a record is kept by him of the reasons for discontinuance of prosecution by the Crown Prosecution Service; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No central record of the reasons for discontinuance of prosecutions is maintained. The Crown Prosecution Service conducted a survey in November 1993 on all cases discontinued by them in that month and I refer my hon. Friend to my written answer to him on 26 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *246*.

Fraud

37. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Attorney-General what further proposals he has to improve the effectiveness of the prosecution in cases of financial fraud.

The Attorney-General: The review of the handling of serious fraud cases which I anounced in October is due to be completed at the end of this month. It will then be considered by the Law Officers and the two directors.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Attorney-General how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

The Attorney-General: There are no paper shredding machines in my private office.

In the Departments for which I am responsible the numbers are as follows:

	Number
The Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers	1
The Treasury Solicitor's Department	13
The Crown Prosecution Service	84
The Serious Fraud Office	3

SOCIAL SECURITY

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide figures for the amount his Department has been reimbursed by the Department of Social Security in respect of statutory sick pay provision for each of the past three years.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

Statutory sick pay recovered

	£
1990-91	5,783,839
1991-92	4,589,107
1992-93	4,378,963

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons without accommodation were income support recipients in England at May 1992 and at the latest available date, breaking down the figures by age and by employment status.

Mr. Burt: The figures for May 1992 are not available. Since publication of these statistics for May 1991, collation of income support information in local benefit offices is no longer undertaken by clerical means but by the income support computer system. However, although all main functions are in place, work is incomplete on some functions less central to everyday operation. This includes the process to retrieve information on claimants without an address. Steps are being taken to introduce an appropriate retrieval process from the May 1994 statistical inquiry, information from which is expected to be available in early 1995.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* families with children are in receipt of income support and *(b)* how many children are living on income support in the Greenock and Port Glasgow area; and what were the comparable figures for 1979.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 4 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about families in receipt of income support in the Greenock and port Glasgow area.

The complete range of information you requested is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. This is because statistics which reflect the number of families with children are not collected locally on a routine basis. Children are treated as dependants of their parents and their needs are included within their parents claim.

However, I am able to provide information for Scotland as a whole and this is outlined below. The data has been obtained from the Supplementary Benefit Annual Statistical Enquiry for 1979 and the Income Support Quarterly Statistical Enquiry for February 1993 (These are the latest available figures and are based on a 1% sample of cases).

Year	*Families with children*	*Number of children*
1993	142,000	255,000
1979	55,000	109,000

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households, from data taken from the annual statistical inquiry, in 1991, 1992 and 1993, are having weekly deductions made from their income support as appropriate, for *(a)* electricity and *(b)* gas of (i) under £2 per week and (ii) in each £1 band above £2 per week up to £40 per week.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the tables:

Income support recipients with deductions for direct payment of fuel costs—May 1991 ASE

£ per week	*Cases with deductions for electricity*	*Cases with deductions for gas*
0·01 to 2·00	1,000	2,500
2·01 to 3·00	2,500	2,000
3·01 to 4·00	5,500	4,500
4·01 to 5·00	7,500	6,500
5·01 to 6·00	7,000	11,500
6·01 to 7·00	9,500	12,500
7·01 to 8·00	7,500	15,000
8·01 to 9·00	8,500	20,000
9·01 to 10·00	8,000	16,000
10·01 to 11·00	6,500	17,500
11·01 to 12·00	6,500	12,000

£ per week	Cases with deductions for electricity	Cases with deductions for gas
12·01 to 13·00	5,000	8,000
13·01 to 14·00	4,500	6,500
14·01 to 15·00	4,000	4,500
15·01 to 16·00	2,000	2,000
16·01 to 17·00	2,500	1,500
17·01 to 18·00	2,000	1,000
18·01 to 19·00	1,000	500
19·01 to 20·00	1,500	500
20·01 to 21·00	500	500
21·01 to 22·00	500	—
22·01 to 23·00	500	—
23·01 to 24·00	500	—
24·01 to 25·00	500	—
25·01 to 26·00	500	—
26·01 to 27·00	—	—
27·01 to 28·00	—	—
28·01 to 29·00	—	—
29·01 to 30·00	—	—
30·01 to 31·00	—	—
31·01 to 32·00	—	—
32·01 to 33·00	—	—
33·01 to 34·00	—	—
34·01 to 35·00	—	—
35·01 to 36·00	—	—
36·01 to 37·00	—	—
37·01 to 38·00	—	—
38·01 to 39·00	—	—
39·01 to 40·00	—	—
Over 40·00	—	—
Total number of cases with deductions	96,000	146,000

Note: The figures have been rounded to the nearest 500, and so do not necessarily add to the totals given.
Source: Income support statistics annual inquiry, May 1991.

Income Support Recipients with deductions for Direct Payment of Fuel Costs—May 1992 ASE

	Cases with deductions for electricity	Cases with deductions for gas
0·01-2·00	500	1,000
2·01-3·00	2,500	1,500
3·01-4·00	3,500	4,000
4·01-5·00	5,500	8,000
5·01-6·00	7,500	14,500
6·01-7·00	8,000	19,500
7·01-8·00	10,000	20,500
8·01-9·00	7,000	21,500
9·01-10·00	8,500	27,500
10·01-11·00	7,500	23,500
11·01-12·00	7,000	14,500
12·01-13·00	6,000	10,500
13·01-14·00	4,000	6,500
14·01-15·00	2,500	5,000
15·01-16·00	3,000	4,000
16·01-17·00	2,500	2,500
17·01-18·00	1,500	1,500
18·01-19·00	1,000	1,000
19·01-20·00	1,000	1,000
20·01-21·00	1,000	1,000
21·01-22·00	1,000	1,000
22·01-23·00	1,000	500
23·01-24·00	—	—
24·01-25·00	—	500
25·01-26·00	500	500
26·01-27·00	500	500
27·01-28·00	500	—
28·01-29·00	—	—
29·01-30·00	—	—
30·01-31·00	500	—
31·01-32·00	—	—
32·01-33·00	—	—
33·01-34·00	—	—
34·01-35·00	—	—
35·01-36·00	—	—
36·01-37·00	—	—
37·01-38·00	—	—
38·00-39·00	—	—
39·01-40·00	—	—
Over 40·00	—	—
Total number of cases with deductions	95,000	192,000

The figures have been rounded to the nearest 500, and so do not necessarily add to the totals given.
Source: Income support statistics annual inquiry, May 1992

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of invalidity benefit *(a)* under the age of 35, *(b)* between 35 and 45, *(c)* between 45 and 55 and *(d)* over 55 years, receive both an additional pension and an occupational pension; and how many of these in each age group are (i) women and (ii) men.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Invalidity Benefit claimants receiving Additional Pension as at 4 April 1992—latest date information is available

Age	Total	Men	Women
Under 35	112,000	56,000	56,000
35 to 44	142,000	86,000	57,000
45 to 54	257,000	165,000	93,000
55 and over	719,000	609,000	109,000
TOTAL	1,230,000	916,000	314,000

Notes:
1. Age as at 31 March 1992.
2. Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants of invalidity benefit in Great Britain, rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. Figures may not total due to rounding.

Estimated proportion of invalidity benefit recipients receiving occupational pension:

Age	Total Per cent.	Men Per cent.	Women Per cent.
Under 45	5	5	10
45 to 54	30	30	30
55 and over	55	55	35
TOTAL	40	45	25

Notes:
1. *Source:* 1990 and 1991 family expenditure surveys, figures rounded to nearest 5 per cent.
2. Sample too small to breakdown under 45 age group further.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average amount of *(a)* additional pension and *(b)* occupational pension paid to invalidity benefit claimants who are (i) men and (ii) women.

Mr. Scott: As at 4 April 1992, the latest date for which information is available, average amounts of additional pension and occupational pension paid to invalidity benefit claimants was as follows:

	Additional pension [1] £	Occupational pension [2] £
Men	15·21	65
Women	8·13	65

[1] Based on a 1 per cent. sample of invalidity benefit claimants in Great Britain.
[2] Estimated using data from the family expenditure surveys. Estimate subject to significant margins of error.

Deregulation

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which organisations were consulted by his Department, on each of the recommendations of the business deregulation task forces before they were agreed and action proposed in the DTI document "Deregulation: Cutting the Red Tape".

Mr. Hague: Each of the task force recommendations agreed or agreed in principle by the Government have been or will be the subject of appropriate consultation with interested parties.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was, in each year since 1991, *(a)* the number and *(b)* the percentage of claimants of sickness and invalidity benefit in (i) the north of England and (ii) in the United Kingdom who had transferred from unemployment benefit; and what was the numbers of claimants of unemployment benefit in each standard region who in each year since 1991, ceased claiming unemployment benefit and were not returned to either work, income support or other benefits.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the subjects on which his Department or its predecessors formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Scott: Next steps agency chief executives are usually asked to reply to parliamentary questions about the day-to-day operational matters of their agency and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in their agency's framework document.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out *(a)* the list of tendering organisations, *(b)* the successful organisation, *(c)* the value of the contract and *(d)* the criteria used for determining the successful organisation, in relation to the provision of health screening for Benefits Agency staff at their headquarters at Quarry house, Leeds.

Mr. Burt: The health screening exercise currently being carried out at Quarry house, Leeds, is part of a three-year DSS nationwide health screening programme due to be completed by March 1994.

For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it is not possible to provide a list of the tendering organisations, but they comprised four private sector health care providers and one national health service regional health authority[1].

The successful tenderer was the British United Provident Association—BUPA.

The Department is contractually obliged to pay for each screening carried out on volunteer personnel, aged 35 and over. BUPA's success in encouraging take-up therefore dictated the final cost, which will total almost £3 million.

The criteria used to determine the successful tenderer were:

(i) financial stability;
(ii) overall approach to quality to ensure integrity of service;
(iii) logistical planning;
(iv) quality of mobile units;
(v) previous experience of similar programmes;
(vi) capacity to meet the Department's specification;
(vii) overall value for money within a predetermined budget.

[1] The NHS regional health authority withdrew its bid as it could not provide fully equipped and self-contained mobile screening units.

Child Benefits

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the combined value of child dependency addition and child benefit for the child of a widow or invalidity pensioner at current and April 1993 prices and as a percentage of average earnings in November 1979 and at each subsequent uprating date.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the tables:

Table 1

Uprating date	Rate of Child Benefit plus Child Dependency Increase for first child[1]	Gross adult weekly average earnings[2]	As a percentage of gross adult weekly average earnings	Equivalent value of benefit at April 1993 prices
	£	£		£
November 1979	11·10	100·60	11·0	25·90
November 1980	12·25	120·20	10·2	24·79
November 1981	12·95	132·40	9·8	23·40
November 1982	13·80	142·40	9·7	23·47
November 1983	14·10	156·70	9·0	22·87
November 1984	14·50	167·00	8·7	22·42
November 1985	15·05	178·70	8·4	22·06
July 1986	15·15	189·10	8·0	21·84
April 1987	15·30	198·90	7·7	21·13
April 1988	15·65	218·40	7·2	20·80
April 1989	16·20	239·70	6·8	19·93

Uprating date	Rate of Child Benefit plus Child Dependency Increase for first child[1]	Gross adult weekly average earnings[2]	As a percentage of gross adult weekly average earnings	Equivalent value of benefit at April 1993 prices
April 1990	16·90	263·10	6·4	18·99
April 1991	17·95	284·70	6·3	18·96
April 1992[3]	19·40	304·60	6·4	19·65
April 1993	19·80	316·70	6·3	19·80

Table 2

Uprating date	Rate of Child Benefit plus Child Dependency Increase for subsequent children[1]	Gross adult weekly average earnings[2]	As a percentage of gross adult weekly average earnings	Equivalent value of benefit at April 1993 prices
	£	£		£
April 1992[3]	18·65	304·60	6·1	18·89
April 1993	19·05	316·70	6·0	19·05

Source: The abstract of social security statistics 1993

[1] The figures apply to both widows and invalidity pensioners.

[2] Rounded to the nearest 10p.

[3] From April 1992, the combined rate of child benefit and child dependency increases for the first child and subsequent children diverged. Table 2 reflects the rate in payment for subsequent children from that point.

Private Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to ensure that employers take back into occupational schemes staff who have been wrongly advised to transfer to a private pension.

Mr. Hague: Whether employees who have transferred out of an occupational pension scheme are allowed to rejoin the scheme is for the trustees of individual schemes to decide in the light of their scheme's rules.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Hague: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no paper shredding machines in his private office. The information for his Department is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Maternity Pay

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to announce the changes to statutory maternity pay required by the EC pregnancy directive.

Mr. Hague: We have analysed the responses to the consultation document and will be making an announcement shortly.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the cost of the various leaflets produced by the Child Support Agency explaining the child maintenance scheme.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Peter L. Pike, dated 31 January 1994:

Dear Mr. Pike

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for details about the cost of the leaflets produced by the Child Support Agency.

To date, the total cost of the first editions and, if appropriate, reprints of the leaflets published by the Agency has been £769,716·23. I have provided a breakdown of the figures on the attached Annex.

I hope that you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely.

Leaflets and brochures	Cost £
Parents who live apart	356,239·00
Advice for employers	23,114·00
Reviews and Appeals	39,450·00
Guides to Child Support	82,696·00
Notes for advisors	84,669·00
Feedback	14,758,87
Maintenance assessment information	72,914·10
Framework document	14,633·88
Business Plan	16,491·38
CSA Charter	30,644·00
Paying child maintenance direct from earnings	8,595·00
Proposed changes to legislation	25,511·00
TOTAL	769,716·23

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

6. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consultations he has held with the Sports Council with regard to the effective distribution of national lottery moneys.

Mr. Sproat: My Department is in regular contact with the Sports Council to discuss matters relating to the distribution of national lottery funds. I shall soon be formally consulting the chairman of the Sports Council on directions under section 26 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 regarding matters to be taken into account when distributing lottery proceeds.

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many organisations have expressed an interest in running the national lottery.

Mr. Sproat: I understand that the director general has received seven letters of intent. Although I cannot give details of these, I can confirm that six organisations have made public their intention to bid for the main licence to run the lottery. These are:

Camelot Group plc
Games for Good Causes plc
The Great British Lottery Company
N. M. Rothschild
Rainbow UK Ltd.
The UK Lottery Foundation

I understand that the director general will make public the list of those who have bid after tenders have been returned on 14 February.

25. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will meet representatives of the Sports Council to discuss distribution of national lottery moneys.

Mr. Sproat: In accordance with my statutory obligations, I will be consulting all the distributing bodies, including the Sports Council, on the directions I intend to issue to them under section 26 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993. I will consider whether to meet the Sports Council as part of that process.

News Accuracy

22. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the accuracy of news film reports on television and pictures in newspapers.

Mr. Brooke: I am not aware of any recent representations about the accuracy of news or film reports on television, but I do receive representations from time to time about pictures in newspapers.

Tourism

21. **Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to bring public funding of tourism promotion in England up to the levels per tourist head awarded to other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sproat: We have no such plans. My right hon. Friend will continue to set the level of tourism funding in England according to his judgment of relative spending needs and priorities in England. The levels of spending in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are matters for the respective Secretaries of State.

23. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to reduce the current deficit on tourism.

Mr. Sproat: The long-term growth in the number of United Kingdom residents going abroad for their holidays is a consequence of increasing affluence and improved travel services. My Department will continue to support the work of the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board in ensuring that both overseas residents and our own citizens are aware of what this country has to offer.

26. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to promote tourism in London and the south-east.

Mr. Sproat: The south-east, especially London, is one of the country's most important destinations for both domestic and overseas visitors. It is the role of the tourism industry, with support from the English tourist board and the regional tourist boards, to maximise the visitor potential. The British Tourist Authority features the south-east, and particularly London, strongly in its overseas promotion activities.

The London tourist board has created a London visitors council to strengthen the input of its commercial members to the work of London First.

On 14 January we launched a royal parks competition asking for ideas and designs for refurbishing the Marble arch area including Speakers' corner. This area has international importance with hundreds of thousands of people visiting it each year.

On 28 January, I announced plans to encourage more public events within the royal parks. The royal parks will soon be unveiling its largest ever programme of summer entertainment. To complement this, I intend to encourage medium to large-scale events that would add to the public's enjoyment of the royal parks, while not detracting from their unique character.

D-Day (50th Anniversary)

24. **Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with the Southern tourist board about celebrating the 50th anniversary of D-day; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: My officials and I have been in regular contact with the Southern tourist board about the organisation and promotion of D-day commemoration events in the south of England, and will continue to do so.

Arts Council

27. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the progress of his monitoring of the Arts Council's efficiency.

Mr. Brooke: I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 26 November 1993, *Official Report*, columns *211-12*.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what further representations he has had about the level of Government grant to the Arts Council.

Mr. Brooke: My Department continues to receive a number of representations about the level of Government support for the arts.

Grant Write-offs

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what criteria his Department uses in deciding whether to write off a particular grant.

Mr. Sproat: In accordance with the criteria set out in "Government Accounting", a grant is written off by my Department only after a most careful appraisal of the facts, if there is no feasible alternative and once all reasonable action has been taken to effect recovery.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total cost of maintenance and running costs of the royal palaces in each of the last five years; and how much his Department has received for each of those years from the royal household to assist with those costs.

Mr. Brooke: The cost of maintaining the occupied royal palaces has been as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	19·7
1989-90	17·2
1990-91	22·5
1991-92	24·0
1992-93	21·9

As part of the bargain struck with successive sovereigns, all surplus revenue from the Crown estates is surrendered to the Exchequer. This income is around £70 million a year.

ITV Company Mergers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the consequences for viewers and for employees of the recent merger of ITV companies.

Mr. Brooke: Changes in ownership do not alter the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1990 and the terms of the Indepedent Television Commission licences. These should ensure original programmes nationally as well as regional programmes and production.

"News At Ten"

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of the Independent Television Commission over proposals to alter the timing of "News at Ten".

Mr. Brooke: None. The chairman of the Independent Television Commission is well aware of the views of Parliament on this issue.

Sports Council

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Sports Council to discuss the public funding for athletics.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans to meet the chairman of the Sports Council to discuss the funding of athletics. Financial support for individual sports is a matter for the Sports Council to determine in accordance with its own policies and priorities.

British Library

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the report of his Department's consultants Kennedy and Donkin into the British Library project; if he expects the completion date for the project set to be adhered to; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Construction of the first phase of the project is substantially complete. A start has been made on the final phase of construction, and its structural frame is 75 per cent. complete. This completion phase is on schedule and I do expect the building to be completed in 1996 as planned.

The handover of the first phase of the building to the library has been delayed, first by problems with the bookshelving and more recently by problems with the electrical wiring. The bookshelving problem has been overcome, at the contractors' expense, and the installation is now complete. The essence of the wiring problem is that inspections have revealed installed low voltage wiring with damaged insulation. Plans for rectifying the faults in the installation of the wiring are being agreed with the contractor concerned.

I do not propose to publish the Department's report commissioned from the consultants Kennedy and Donkin. It is a contractually sensitive document.

English Heritage

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage for how many of English Heritage's properties there have so far been negotiations concerning the transfer of their management to local authorities.

Mr. Brooke: Since the publication of its forward strategy in October 1992, English Heritage has held negotiations for the alternative management of 102 sites, of which 46 would involve the transfer of management to local authorities. Of these, 40 are currently the subject of active discussion with 28 local authorities and one agreement has been completed. For the remaining five, interest has either been withdrawn or negotiations are in abeyance. Prior to October 1992, English Heritage had reached agreement with local authorities over some form of local management for 11 properties.

Elstree Film Studios

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he proposes to safeguard the future of Elstree film studios in Hertfordshire.

Mr. Brooke: There is nothing I can usefully add to the answer I gave on 6 December to a question on the same subject by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), *Official Report*, column 2.

HEALTH

Consultancies

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the *(a)* accountancy firms and *(b)* merchant banks to which her Department awarded private consultancy work in 1992 and 1993, together with a list of the consultancies concerned and the amount paid.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has employed the following accountancy firms in 1992 or 1993 for consultancy work:

Coopers Lybrand Deloit
Ernst and Young
KPMG
Price Waterhouse
Robson Rhodes
Touche Ross

We are unable to list the consultancies concerned and the amounts paid as this would breach contractual agreements and jeopardise future value for money.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on which occasions since 1979 her Department has employed the services of external consultants; and if she will give details of the purposes for which they were employed and the cost of employing them.

Mr. Sackville: It is not possible to list the use of external consultants back to 1979 and to list them giving details of purpose and cost would require commercial in confidence information to be made public in a way that would breach contractual agreements and jeopardise future value for money. We can however state that the use of external consultants in the Department must be justified under one of the following headings:

(i) Specialist skills required that do not exist in the Department,
(ii) Specialist skills exist but they are needed for higher priority objectives,
(iii) Where management have taken a decision to contract out the work,
(iv) Where impartiality is fundamental to the success of the project.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on which occasions since 1990 her Department has employed the services of external consultants; and if she will give details of the purposes for which they were employed and the cost of employing them.

Mr. Sackville: There have been numerous occasions since 1990 that the Department has found the need to employ the assistance of external consultants. Detailed information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Birth Defects

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will investigate the number of children in the Northern region who have been born with missing or defective limbs over the last 10 years;

(2) how many children have been born with missing or defective limbs in the Northern region in each year since 1989; and if she will list the village or town of each child.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of children born with missing or deformed limbs[1]—ICDs 775.0-755.9—notified to office of population of censuses and surveys in each year 1983 to 1992 for the Northern RHA and individual DHAs

Residence	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Northern RHA	96	128	109	118	105	112	95	65	87	56
Hartlepool	4	5	6	0	2	4	5	1	2	3
North Tees	6	10	4	6	6	8	5	2	1	2
South Tees	10	8	12	10	9	13	6	7	7	7
East Cumbria	4	1	3	5	6	6	3	1	5	3
South Cumbria	5	10	4	5	6	9	8	0	6	10
West Cumbria	5	8	6	6	6	6	1	5	3	5
Darlington	2	4	7	11	2	2	4	1	6	0
Durham	9	9	11	14	14	14	13	7	2	0
North West Durham	0	1	6	4	3	3	2	2	0	0
South West Durham	0	3	4	6	4	7	11	4	8	4
Northumberland	9	17	11	8	7	15	8	6	17	5
Gateshead	2	10	8	5	7	4	5	7	6	6
Newcastle	4	5	5	6	3	4	4	7	8	4
North Tyneside	2	4	2	9	7	7	7	5	3	2
South Tyneside	8	13	8	9	6	2	3	4	5	1
Sunderland	26	20	14	14	15	8	10	6	8	2
North Durham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

[1] ICD (International Classification of Disease) ninth revision.

Note: Prior to 1990 all malformations, however minor, were reportable to OPCS. In January 1990 an exclusion list was introduced. As a result minor malformations of the toe, coded to ICD 755.6 were no longer notifiable.

To protect the confidentiality of individuals we are unable to provide information on a single village or town.

Grantham and Kesteven Hospital

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has received relating to nursing and medical staffing levels at Grantham and Kesteven hospital in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Data on staffing levels at this level of detail are not available centrally.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many full-time consultant paediatricians are currently employed at the Grantham and Kesteven hospital; and how many were employed at the time of the Beverley Allitt case.

Dr. Mawhinney: Data on medical staff at local level are not available centrally.

Clinical Complaints Procedure

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each year since 1990 for each hospital in England, by department, how many complaints have been pursued and have succeeded under the clinical complaints procedure.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information held centrally about complaints is categorised as follows:

—by region.
—whether a complaint is about a hospital or community service.
—whether wholly or partly clinical or other.
—whether the complaint was investigated by health authority officers or referred for further investigation.

The information is available in the booklet "Written complaints by or on behalf of patients, England", copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Prostate Cancer

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many men died from cancer of the prostate in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Numbers of deaths from cancer of the prostate—ICD 185[1]—for England and Wales, 1988-1992

	Number
1988	7,458
1989	7,861
1990	8,098
1991	8,570
1992	8,735

[1] International Classification of Disease, Ninth Revision.

Private Patients

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the private patient income of trust hospitals in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: Information on private patient income of National Health Service trust hospitals for 1991-92 and 1992-93 will be placed in the Library. There are no figures for 1990-91 as NHS trusts did not exist in that year. The overall increase in private patient income for trusts is partially due to the increased number of trusts in 1992-93. The income raised is used to improve services for all patients.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* general practitioner fundholders, *(b)* general practitioner fundholding practitioners and *(c)* general practitioners were involved in fundholdings in the first, second, third and fourth wave by (i) region and (ii) FHSA.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information given in the tables is the number of fundholding units, and numbers of the practices and general practitioners who make up these units in the first, second and third waves by region. Fourth wave figures are not yet available and information at family health services authority level is not collected centrally.

First wave

Region	Fundholding units	Practices	GPs
Northern	27	29	168
Yorkshire	34	39	208
Trent	28	28	115
East Anglia	9	9	57
North West Thames	22	23	123
North East Thames	13	13	73
South East Thames	15	15	85
South West Thames	21	21	125
Wessex	17	18	98
Oxford	25	25	155
South Western	20	21	127
West Midlands	26	26	144
Mersey	20	21	107
North Western	16	17	88
Totals	293	305	1,713

Second Wave

Region	Fundholding units	Practices	General Practitioners
Northern	11	11	63
Yorkshire	25	27	154
Trent	28	32	157
East Anglia	4	4	27
North West Thames	21	26	110
North East Thames	8	8	43
South East Thames	15	15	77
South West Thames	17	18	100
Wessex	17	18	109
Oxford	21	23	124
South Western	18	20	108
West Midlands	31	33	178
Mersey	24	30	121
North Western	13	15	72
Totals	253	280	1,443

Third Wave

Region	Fundholding units	Practices	General Practitioners
Northern	31	34	161
Yorkshire	54	57	249
Trent	84	102	420
East Anglia	35	38	193
North West Thames	45	46	223
North East Thames	25	29	122
South East Thames	48	59	227
South West Thames	28	30	135
Wessex	22	23	128
Oxford	28	28	152
South Western	31	33	170
West Midlands	73	80	357
Mersey	40	51	196
North Western	37	49	168
Totals	581	659	2,901

Source: Regional Health Authorities.

Market Testing

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice she has issued in respect of what comprises acceptable levels of detail in any specification issued in respect of national health service contracts subject to market testing; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what guidance she has issued in respect of market testing in the national health service;

(3) if she will list her criteria for ensuring that procedures used in respect of the contract tendering procedure for market testing are of an acceptable standard;

(4) to whom she has delegated responsibility to ensure compliance of contracts let under national health service market testing guidance; and in what circumstances she may intervene.

Mr. Sackville: Guidance to the national health service was first issued in June 1993 under cover of executive letter EL(93)55. This document "Market Testing in the NHS Revised Guidance" sets out the standards expected. Additional guidance was issued in November 1993 as an attachment to a letter to all chief executives who are responsible for market testing. Both documents are available in the Library.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will publish full details of the arbitration procedure to be used in respect of disputed contracts let under the national health service market testing guidance;

(2) what action she has taken to ensure the justice of the arbitration procedure in respect of national health service market testing contract procedures.

Mr. Sackville: "Market Testing in the National Health Service Revised Guidance" issued in June 1993 provides a disputes and complaints procedure. In addition, the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 section 4(3) provides for the determination of any dispute in an NHS contract by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Bjork-Shiley Heart Valve

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department became aware of the United States Food and Drug Administration's *(a)* suspension and *(b)* withdrawal of the export licence for the Bjork-Shiley 70 deg convexo-concave valve.

Mr. Sackville: The first departmental record indicating the suspension and subsequent withdrawal of export permission is dated 15 January 1985.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been fitted with *(a)* a 60 deg convexo-concave heart valve and *(b)* a 70 deg convexo-concave heart valve since 1980.

Mr. Sackville: Approximately 5,000 60 deg Bjork-Shiley convexo-concave heart valves and 42 70 deg Bjork-Shiley convexo-concave heart valves.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients fitted with *(a)* 60 deg convexo-concave valves and *(b)* 70 deg convexo-concave valves have had them replaced.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the replacement of Bjork-Shiley heart valves is not held centrally. However, a Bjork-Shiley convexo-concave heart valve registry has recently been established and it will be possible to obtain data on future valve replacements.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she first became aware of faults in the Bjork-Shiley heart valve; and what action was taken.

Mr. Sackville: The Department was informed of the possibility of the failure of a small proportion of Bjork-Shiley convexo-concave heart valves in May 1982. The Department reviewed the information provided by the manufacturer and ensured that the action taken in identifying and withdrawing this group of valves was consistent with the extent of the problem as perceived at the time.

Pacemaker Leads

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the source of the information in her answer of 4 November, *Official Report*, column *452*, that 235 pacemaker leads have been replaced;

(2) who runs the national pacemaker database and register;

(3) pursuant to her answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *700*, what is the explanation for the different figures for the number of pacemaker leads fitted in that answer and in the answer given on 4 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *452*.

Mr. Sackville: The figure of 235 replacement pacemaker leads was obtained from the national pacemaker database—NPD—which is managed by Dr. A. F. Rickards, consultant cardiologist, at the Royal Brompton heart and lung hospital.

The NPD is continually being updated and the figures referred to on 2 December 1993 reflect the updated situation.

Pacemakers and Heart Valves

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which companies manufacture *(a)* pacemakers and *(b)* artificial heart valves currently in use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: According to information held by the national pacemaker database, pacemaker manufacturers with products currently in use in the United Kingdom are: Biotec; Biotronik GmbH & Co; Cardiac Pacemakers Inc.; ELA Medical; Intermedics Inc.; Medico Italia SRL; Medtronic Inc.; Osypka; Siemens; Sorin Biomedica SPA; Telectronics Inc.; Vitatron Medical BV.

According to information held by the United Kingdom heart valve registry, the following companies currently supply heart valves to the United Kingdom:

Aortech Ltd.
ATS Medical Ltd.
Baxter Healthcare
Carbomedics Inc.
Manley Western Ltd.
Medtronic Inc.
Cambridge Biomedical Ltd.
Sorin Biomedica
St. Jude Medical
Tissuemed Ltd.

Anophthalmia

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the conclusions of the research into the distribution of anophthalmia referred to in her answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) of 20 May 1993, *Official Report*, column 259.

Dr. Mawhinney: The study commissioned by the Department into the incidence of anophthalmia began on 1 January 1994 and is due to be completed by 30 September 1995. The Department of Health would usually expect the results of research it has commissioned to be published either as a separate scientific report or in a scientific journal.

Clothier Inquiry

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when she intends to publish the report of the Clothier inquiry; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she has received the report of the Clothier inquiry.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 2 February, *Official Report,* columns *718-19.*

NHS Contracts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances she is able to call in cases of national health service contracts subjected to arbitration for her further consideration.

Mr. Sackville: There is provision within the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 section 4(3) for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to act to determine cases where a dispute arises within a national health service contract.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those national health service contracts worth over £140,000, where the arbitration procedure has been invoked.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not required centrally to monitor market testing in the national health service and is therefore not collected.

Smoking

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in the United Kingdom aged (i) 15 to 20 years, (ii) 20 to 25 years, (iii) 25 to 30 years, (iv) 30 to 35 years, (v) 35 to 40 years, (vi) 40 to 45 years, (vii) 45 to 50 years, (viii) 50 to 55 years and (ix) 55 years and over smoke.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table.

Cigarette smoking among adults aged 16 and over Great Britain 1992

Age	*Men*	*Women*
16-19	29	25
20-24	39	37
25-34	34	34
35-49	32	30
50-59	28	29
60 and over	21	19

Notes:
1. Data published in General Household Survey 1992—OPCS.
2. Cigarette smokers are those respondents who affirmed that "they smoked cigarettes at all nowadays".

Information relating to Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken to achieve the targets on smoking set out in "The Health of the Nation" White Paper; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are publishing today "Smoke-Free for Health—An Action Plan to achieve the Health of the Nation targets on Smoking". Copies are available in the Library.

The action plan sets out the Government's comprehensive approach to reducing smoking, involving a range of inter-related measures, including action on price, health education, tackling parental influence and controls on tobacco advertising and promotion. As part of this wide-ranging programme, the Government will open negotiations with the tobacco industry to strengthen the existing voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising and promotion.

NHS Procurement

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to incorporate the EC services directive in respect of public procurement of national health service-related services.

Mr. Sackville: The Management Executive has incorporated advice on the EC services directive in their advice "Market Testing in the NHS Revised Guidance" published in June 1993, copies of which are available in the Library.

Medical Devices (Faults)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how her Department, through the medical devices directorate, assesses the effects of faults in medical devices.

Mr. Sackville: Adverse incidents related to medical devices are reported to the national reporting and investigation centre. Scientific and technical experts fro the medical devices directorate investigate these incidents, taking advice from medical and nursing advisors and, where necessary, from relevant specialists in academia and the Health Service.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the United States Food and Drug Administration regarding faulty medical devices.

Mr. Sackville: Officers of the medical devices directorate are in frequent contact with their counterparts in the United States Food and Drug Administration. This includes discussion of faulty medical devices where necessary.

Pacemakers

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 6 December, *Official Report,* columns *59-60,* which of the 17 pacemaker technical notes and one hazard circular issued by the medical devices directorate relate to specific manufacturers; and what are the names of the manufacturers.

Mr. Sackville: One hazard circular and 16 of the 17 pacemaker technical notes issued by the medical devices directorate relate to specific manufacturers. The names of these manufacturers are: Cardiac Pacemakers Inc; Intermedics Inc; Medtronic Inc; Siemens; Sorin Biomedica SPA; Telectronics Inc; and Vitatron Medical BV.

Deregulation

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which organisations were consulted by her Department, on each of the recommendations of the business deregulation task forces before they were agreed and action proposed in the DTI document "Deregulation: Cutting the Red Tape".

Mr. Sackville: Each of the task force recommendations agreed or agreed in principle by the Government have been or will be the subject of appropriate consultation with interested parties.

Cash Limits

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes are proposed to the cash limits and the running costs of her Department for 1993-94.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the cash limit for class XII, vote 3—Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England—will be reduced by £1,255,000, from £1,437,247,000 to £1,435,992,000. This reduction allows for transfers of £493,000—£484,000 running costs —to class XIII, vote 4—Department of Social Security, administration and miscellaneous services—for accommodation and word processing; £886,000 to class XII, vote 1—Hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, England—£318,000 to class XIV, vote 14—Hospital, community health, family health (part) and other services, Scotland—£148,000 to class XV, vote 8—Hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, Wales—and £80,000 for the Department of Health and Social Services, Northern Ireland for work of the national health service estate management and health building agency; and £10,000 to class III, vote 5—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: departmental research, advisory services and administration—for the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes. The overall decrease is partially offset by transfers of £348,000 from class XIII, vote 4—Department of Social Security, administration and miscellaneous services—for security functions and £332,000—£326,000 running costs—from class VII, vote 6—Department of the Environment: property holdings and other services to Government—for maintenance charges.

The Department's gross running cost limit will be increased by £180,000 from £253,084,000 to £253,264,000. This reflects the transfers mentioned above.

All increases will either be offset by savings, increased receipts or transfers to or from other votes and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which she is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's Office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if she will give details.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 3 February at column *852*.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance her Department have given to regional health authorities as to the selection procedures that should be followed, for considering possible names for consideration as non-executive directors of NHS trusts; what assessment she has made of the procedures adopted by the South West regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the past, regional health authority chairmen have adopted selection procedures they considered appropriate in order to identify the best candidates to meet Ministers' aim of appointing people from a variety of backgrounds and with a range of skills and experience.

Ministers will be discussing with the recently announced regional chairmen the procedures for identifying and selecting candidates for national health service appointments, with a view to adopting a common process in all regions which continues to identify the most able people available for appointment.

We have no reason to believe that the selection processes adopted by South Western regional health authority have been unsatisfactory.

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the guidance and terms of reference provided by her Department to regional health authorities for prospective appointments as non-executive directors of NHS trusts; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Appointments to the boards of prospective national health service trusts are made in accordance with general guidance from Ministers to the chairmen of regional health authorities. The appointment processes will be the subject of discussion with the recently announced regional chairmen, with a view to adopting a common process in all regions which continues to identify the most able people for appointment.

Health Service, Greenwich

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total paid or projected to be paid in salaries, fees, other remuneration and expenses to *(a)* members of the Greenwich health authority and *(b)* members of the Greenwich healthcare trust in each of the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: Figures for members of Greenwich health authority are shown for 1990-91 to 1992-93. Greenwich healthcare trust did not exist in these years as it is a third wave trust. Figures for 1993-94 are not yet available.

	£
1990-91	246,451
1991-92	344,808
1992-93	365,383

Source:

Annual accounts and pay and records files of Greenwich health authority.

Notes:

1. Payment to non-executive members was introduced part way through 1990-91. Only six months costs are reflected for that financial year.

2. One executive member only took up post near the end of 1990-91 which is partly why costs for that year are low compared with subsequent years.

3. Full year costs for executive members in post in 1990-91 have been reflected although the status of member was only conferred from October 1990. Prior to this the people concerned were employees of the authority.

4. The figures shown include employer's national insurance contributions and superannuation payments. Lease car allowance costs have been apportioned from the published figure for Greenwich health authority.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what salaries or other remuneration were paid or are

projected to be paid to the chairman and chief executive of Greenwich health authority and the chairman and chief executive of Greenwich healthcare trust in each of the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: Figures for the remuneration of the chairman and general manager of Greenwich health authority are shown for 1991-92 and 1992-93. Greenwich healthcare trust did not exist in these years as it is a third wave trust. Figures for 1993-94 are not yet available.

	1991-92 (£)	*1992-93* (£)
Chairman	19,120	19,285
General manager	92,266	97,702

Source: Annual accounts and pay and records files of Greenwich health authority.

Notes:

1. Greenwich health authority had a general manager rather than a chief executive.
2. The figures shown for the general manager include employer's national insurance contributions and superannuation payments. Lease car allowance costs have been apportioned from the published figure for Greenwich health authority.

Link

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the application of a section 64 core grant by Link, the British Centre for Deafened People; when she expects to make a decision on the matter; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We have received several letters about Link. We shall be deciding on this and a very large number of the applications for section 64 funding in due course.

Diabetes

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what funding is being made available by the NHS for the St. Vincent joint task force for diabetes;

(2) if she will make a statement on the progress of the St. Vincent joint task force for diabetes.

Mr. Sackville: The joint Department of Health—British Diabetic Association St. Vincent task force for diabetes is not funded directly by the national health service, although it includes a number of members who are NHS staff. Support costs for the task force are met by the British Diabetic Association and by the Department.

The task force is expecting to produce advice for the Secretary of State's consideration by mid-summer this year.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what use is being made of the chronic disease management scheme to collect data on the incidence of diabetes.

Mr. Sackville: General practitioner practices are collecting information on diabetes. This information will in time show both the incidence and prevalence of diabetes. This has considerable potential value and a number of medical audit advisory groups have already used these data to facilitate the improvement of the care of patients with diabetes in primary care.

Chemotherapy

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the applications of cannabis for the treatment of the side effects of chemotherapy.

Mr. Sackville: None. However, certain synthetic compounds of cannabis, cannabinoids, have been found to be of use against nausea and vomiting associated with cancer chemotherapy. An independent report into the use of *nabilone*, a semisynthetic cannabinoid developed for the treatment of chemotherapy-induced emesis, has concluded that it is no more effective than standard anti-emetic treatments and has a higher degree of toxicity.

Hypnosis

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy regarding the investigation and monitoring of the medical effects of stage hypnotism.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has not investigated the medical effects of stage hypnotism and currently has no plans to do so.

GP Fund Holders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1990 the expenditure on the purchase of health care from non-NHS bodies by general practitioner fund holders.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioner fund holders have the freedom to purchase the best possible health care for their patients from whichever provider unit they judge best. They must be able to satisfy the regional health authority that the contracts offer value for money and a high quality service for patients.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in her private office and *(b)* in her Department.

Mr. Sackville: *(a)* None, *(b)* 20.

West Country Ambulance Services Trust

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information regarding the resignation of Neil McCalley, a divisional director of the West Country ambulance services trust she is prepared to communicate to representatives of health service trade unions; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the trust.

SCOTLAND

NHS Trusts

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his answer of 24 January, *Official Report*, column *71*, if he will list the actual amounts spent by *(a)* the north Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust, *(b)* the south Ayrshire trust and *(c)* the Community healthcare trust in dealing with their public relations agencies; and what services these bodies receive for this expenditure.

Mr. Stewart: For the period April-December 1993, the amounts spent on public relations were as follows:

	£
North Ayrshire and Arran	21,600
South Ayrshire Hospitals	21,000
Ayrshire and Arran Community Healthcare	9,000

The services received varied in each case but included support in relation to communications with patients, local communities, general practitioners, staff, and the media on the services provided by each trust and on issues such as health promotion.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the persons appointed to each national health service trust and authority showing *(a)* their name, *(b)* their present employment or unemployment and *(c)* the remuneration for duties entailed in such posts.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 February 1994]:* The information requested, in respect of non-executive appointments by my right hon. Friend, has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the procedures adopted by *(a)* the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust, *(b)* the South Ayrshire trust and *(c)* the Community healthcare trust in awarding contracts for the provision of public relations services; what action he has taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: None. Such procedures are a matter for individual trusts to determine and apply.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the actual amounts of money spent by each of the NHS trusts in Scotland on their public relations; and what companies are employed by each of the trusts to provide these services.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available centrally.

Health Boards

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement indicating for each health board in Scotland, with the exception of Ayrshire and Arran health board; which agencies are employed to deal with their public relations; how much each health board pays for this service; and what changes have been made within each health board area for dealing with public relations inquiries following the introduction of NHS trusts.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available centrally.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 will apply to employees of regional and district authorities affected by the reorganisation of local government if they transfer to the employment of the proposed new authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The question of the extent to which the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 as amended will apply in the context of local government reorganisation is a matter of law. It is not for the Government to determine whether and how the law applies; that must be a matter for the courts. Whether the regulations apply in any particular case will depend on the detailed circumstances, and it will be for local authorities as employers to take a view on the likelihood of the regulations applying where a new authority appears to have taken over a function of an existing authority.

Fisheries Policy

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussion he has had regarding the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food department in which decision making on United Kingdom fisheries policy should be vested; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Ministerial responsibilities and departmental functions are matters for the Prime Minister. The existing system of four Fisheries Departments working closely together is a long-standing one, which has been shown to work effectively.

Planning Applications

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy not to implement the changes proposed to the Scottish Office's revised fee scale for applications for planning permission.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to alter his policy on revised fees scales approved by Parliament in December 1993.

Legal Actions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the legal actions which are outstanding between his Department and any company or contractor which is bankrupt or which has gone into receivership or liquidation; what is the value of his Department's claims in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: There are no outstanding actions in court which seek recovery of sums due under contract to my Department by any company which has gone into receivership or liquidation or any contractor who is bankrupt.

Special Advisers

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the former occupations of each special adviser attached to his office.

Mr. Lang: Both my special advisers were recruited as graduates.

GP Fundholders

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) on what date it became his practice that general practitioner fundholders were sent circulars for information that were not sent to non-fundholders;

(2) if he will make it his policy to include general practitioners who are not fundholders on the list of those

who are to receive NHS management executive circulars on accountability reviews, "Priorities and Planning Guidance 1994-95 and after."

Mr. Stewart: There is no fixed practice or distribution list for NHS Management Executive letters; they are distributed to those who need to be aware of the content. This varies from letter to letter. In the particular case of the circular (NHS MEL(1993)155) GP fundholders were included as recipients because the letter set out guidance directly applicable to them as NHS purchasers. However, the guidance is clearly of interest to other GPs and arrangements have already been made to provide copies to all GP practices in Scotland.

Lands Valuation (Scotland) Act 1854

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to amend the Lands Valuation (Scotland) Act 1854; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend proposes to amend the Lands Valuation (Scotland) Act 1854 in accordance with the terms of clause 139 of the Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Bill. The clause as it stands will give power to my right hon. Friend by regulations—(subject to annulment of either House of Parliament)—to prescribe the classes of plant and machinery to be subject to rating, in parallel with English regulations. It will also enable the regulations, if so made as to take effect other than at the beginning of a year of revaluation, to provide for the revaluation of any lands and heritages affected by the regulations. The provisions will permit harmonisation of rating liability of plant and machinery and the related law and practice throughout Great Britain.

Treasure Trove

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the administration arrangements relating to treasure trove in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: With the agreement of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, formal responsibility for the administration of treasure trove in Scotland has been transferred from HM Treasury to the Scottish Office. This is a further step in developing the policies set out in the White Paper "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good".

I have taken this opportunity to make some changes to the membership of the advisory panel on treasure trove. I have increased the membership of the advisory panel from three to four members, and I am pleased to announce that Dr. Barbara Crawford has agreed to be its first independent expert chairperson. At the same time a number of procedural changes are being introduced.

This package of measures will improve the effectiveness and standing of the advisory panel and open up the treasure trove procedures in general.

Greenock Prison

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons are detained in Her Majesty's prison, Greenock, and, of these, how many are *(a)* serving prison sentences, *(b)* on remand and *(c)* awaiting deportation.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 January 1994]:* I have asked Mr. E. W. Frizzell, the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. E. Frizzell to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 7 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of people detained in HM Prison, Greenock, and how many are serving prison sentences, on remand and awaiting deportation.

The information is given in the table:

Persons locked up on Wednesday 19 January 1994

	Number
Serving a prison sentence	94
On remand	100
Awaiting deportation	13
Total persons locked up	207

Woodland

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of hectares of woodland he expects to be planted next year in Scotland by *(a)* the Forestry Commission, *(b)* private foresters and *(c)* crofting townships.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The information is given in the table. The figures include new planting and restocking.

Estimated woodland planting 1994-95	*Hectares*
Forestry Commission	4,600
Private woodlands	15,000
Crofters' common grazing land	160

In addition, the Forestry Commission expects to pay grants to private owners for work intended to encourage natural regeneration on about 3,000 hectares.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible have been *(a)* abolished or *(b)* created since 1979.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Prime Minister on 1 February 1994 at column *611*.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Common Services Agency of the Scottish health service management committee.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The members of the Common Services Agency Board are as follows:

G. Scaife *(Chairman)*

Non Executive Directors

Mr. J. A Barrie
Mrs. J. Jolly
Mrs. C. Lenihan
Mrs. F. A. Stephenson
Mr. V. Wood

Executive Directors
Mr. T. Callaway
Mr. J. T. Donald
Mr. G. W. Tucker

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Health Education Board for Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The current members of the Health Education Board for Scotland are:
Mr. Ernie Walker OBE (Chairman)
Dr. Nancy Loudon OBE (Vice-Chairman)
Mr. David Campbell
Mr. John Christie
Miss Wilma Craigmile MBE
Professor Charles Forbes
Dr. Gillian McIlwaine
Professor Doreen Parry
Mr. Jimmy Reid
Dr. Andrew Tannahill (General Manager)
Mr. Raymond Watkins
Mr. David Woods

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The current membership of the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland is:
Chairman
Sheriff Hazel Aronson QC

Full-time Medical Members
Dr. J. A. Dyer (Director)
Dr. A. W. Drummond

Full-time Social Work Member
Mrs. C. E. McGregor

Part-time Members
Mrs. P. A. Baxter
Dr. E. D. A. McCall-Smith
Mr. P. H. Brodie QC
Mr. R. G. Davis
Mrs. A. H. M. Glen
Mrs. A. M. Green
Mrs. H. L. Grieve
Mrs. J. I . D. Isbister
Mrs. M. Jeffcoat
Dr. R. G. McCreadie
Dr. M. G. Livingston
Mr. J. C. Murray (Vice-Chairman)
Miss L. Noble
Mr. M. O'Reilly
Mr. J. G. Sutherland OBE

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Council for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The current members are:
Professor D. C. Carter
Dr. E. G. Buckley
Dr. J. S. Rennie
Dr. I. J. T. Davies
Professor R. M. Harden
Professor N. MacKay
Professor A. L. Muir
Professor R. A. Wood
Mr. J. S. Clyde
Dr. M. Church
Dr. J. F. Calder
Dr. I. Davidson
Professor H. Dick
Professor E. Johnstone
Dr. B. D. Keighley
Mr. J. Lusby
Dr. G. G. Shirriffs
Dr. D. Thomas
Dr. A. D. Toft
Dr. H. Zealley

Community Charge

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much community charge remains unpaid within *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Cunninghame district.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The amount of net budgeted community charge income uncollected by local authorities at 30 November 1993—the most recent date for which information is available—is, for Scotland, £371 million and, for Strathclyde region, £224 million. Information for Cunninghame district is not separately identifiable.

Council Tax

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals have been lodged against council tax banding in each region and islands area; how many have been determined and how many are still outstanding; and how many of those appeals relate to tied housing.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* Details of the numbers of appeals lodged and the status of these as at 30 November 1993 are given in the table.

Information about the number of appeals relating to tied housing is not collected centrally.

	Proposals lodged 1 April 1993 to 30 November 1993	*Proposals/appeals: Settled*	*Still to be dealt with*
Borders	2,996	254	2,742
Central	2,719	422	2,297
Dumfries and Galloway	3,048	1,077	1,971
Fife	6,411	3,139	3,272
Grampian	11,221	3,956	7,265
Highland	5,991	1,470	4,521
Lothian	11,739	2,093	9,646
Strathclyde	39,463	15,606	23,857
Tayside	11,171	1,113	10,058
Orkney	211	166	45
Shetland	159	114	45
Western Isles	837	227	610

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has given to assessors as to the calculation of council tax bands for tied housing in agriculture and other sectors.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* No detailed guidance has been issued to assessors. The special assumptions to be made in valuing dwellings occupied in connection with agriculture or fish farming are set out in the Council Tax (Valuation of Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 1992. The regulations were issued with Finance Circular No. 20/1992 which was copied to regional assessors. Annex B of the circular explains that these provisions are designed to ensure that the valuation of these dwellings will be undertaken on the basis that the dwelling may be occupied only along with the associated land.

There are no special provisions for tied housing in other sectors.

Prisoners

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners convicted for *(a)* theft, *(b)* burglary and *(c)* violent crimes against the person were (i) unemployed at or (ii) in receipt of income support at the time of their arrest in each of the past four years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* I have asked Mr. E. W. Frizzell, the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. E. Frizzell to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 7 February 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of prisoners convicted for *(a)* theft, *(b)* burglary and *(c)* violent crimes against the person who were (i) unemployed or (ii) in receipt of income support at the time of their arrest in each of the past four years.

The information is not available in the form requested. For each reception into a penal establishment information is collected on whether or not the person involved was employed or unemployed immediately prior to their reception. Information on whether a person was unemployed or on income support at the time of their arrest is not collected centrally.

The table below sets out the number of receptions to penal establishments in Scotland (excluding receptions as a result of fine defaults) of persons who were unemployed and had been convicted of theft, burglary (housebreaking in Scotland) or violent crimes against the person. These figures have been obtained using the best available approximations in The Scottish Office Home and Health Department's classification of crimes and offences to produce the categories requested in your question.

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
(a) Theft	2,754	2,602	2,879	3,313
(b) Burglary (housebreaking)	1,549	1,604	1,697	1,715
(c) Violence against the person	1,330	1,306	1,353	1,547

This information is supplied by the prisoner on arrival at the establishment and should therefore be treated with some caution.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners originally sentenced for murder had their sentences *(a)* subsequently reduced or *(b)* quashed on appeal while serving their sentences since 1970; and what sums of money were paid, by way of compensation, to those released from prison in such circumstances.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The mandatory sentence to be imposed on a person convicted of murder is imprisonment for life. Information prior to 1981 is not held centrally, nor is information on the results of retrials, but since 1981 three prisoners originally sentenced for murder had their sentence subsequently reduced, a further four had their sentence quashed on appeal and a retrial was authorised for two prisoners.

Compensation is not payable in cases where a conviction for murder is reduced or quashed on appeal within the normal time limits. Since 1970, two payments of compensation of £77,000 and £50,415 have been made to persons originally convicted of murder and whose sentences were subsequently quashed or reversed outside the normal time limits.

"Safe from Harm"

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is his intention to issue a guidance document for voluntary organisations similar to the one published by the Home Office entitled "Safe from Harm"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The Home Office code of good practice, "Safe from Harm", contains useful information which will assist voluntary organisations in England and Wales in the selection of staff and volunteers to work with children. We are presently examining the advice in the document for its relevance to Scotland and will consider the need to issue a similar document in Scotland when that examination is complete.

Homosexuals

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent guidelines have been issued to police forces concerning the issue of consenting homosexual relationships among males aged 16 years or more; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* None.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

43. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent meetings he has had with third-world Ministers to discuss the effects of GATT on third-world trade.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend discussed the GATT negotiations in detail with Commonwealth Ministers at the Heads of Government meeting in Cyprus last October. They all supported a declaration in favour of the Uruguay round. There has been a wide range of positive comment from third-world representatives about the outcome of the negotiations.

Non-governmental Organisations

45. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the Overseas Development Administration is supporting the work of non-governmental organisations in helping to meet the long-term needs of the poorest communities in developing countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1992-93 the ODA gave a total of £77 million to support the long-term development programmes of British non-governmental organisations.

Aid-Trade Provision

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the operation of the aid-trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ATP is a separate allocation within Britain's overseas aid programme. It is designed to support, in certain countries, development projects with industrial and commercial importance for the United Kingdom.

Aid

44. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline the Government's key objectives for overseas aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development outlined the future direction of the overseas aid programme in her Chatham house speech on 18 October 1993. Copies are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the aid awarded from the overseas aid budget to each recipient country in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1980 and *(c)* 1993; and if he will set out the gross national product for each recipient country in each such year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Information on bilateral aid by country, and on GNP, is available in the 1981, 1982 and 1993 editions of "British Aid Statistics" which are in the Libraries of the House. The latest available figures for bilateral aid are for 1992-93 and for GNP 1991.

In addition to our bilateral assistance, countries receive substantial amounts of assistance from multilateral bodies to which the United Kingdom makes a major contribution.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the aid provided to developing nations to reach 0·7 per cent. of gross national product.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government have agreed to reach the international aid target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP as soon as possible, but are not prepared to set a timetable for reaching it. Future levels of aid will continue to depend upon our economic circumstances and on other calls for public expenditure.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the levels of aid to *(a)* Indonesia, *(b)* Nigeria, *(c)* India, *(d)* Thailand, *(e)* Oman, *(f)* Malaysia and *(g)* Jordan over each of the last 10 years, (i) in totals each year and (ii) per head of the population.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The information is as follows:

Levels of bilateral aid 1983 to 1992-93

Thousands

	Population	*Country programme*		*ATP*	*Disaster relief/ Food aid*	*ODA programme total*	*CDC*	*Other*[1]	*Gross bilateral aid*	
		Total	*Per capita*						*Total*	*Per capita*
INDONESIA										
Calendar year										
1983	155,669	4,355	0·03	2,882	5	7,422	2,843	2,273	12,358	0·08
1984	158,915	4,663	0·03	5,868	15	10,546	15,473	2,273	28,292	0·18
1985	162,212	9,788	0·06	19,793	16	29,507	1,869	2,273	33,649	0·21
1986	166,627	5,139	0·03	51	—	5,190	1,435	2,273	8,898	0·05
1987	171,443	6,079	0·04	1,042	—	7,121	2,829	2,273	12,223	0·07
Financial year[2]										
1987-88	171,443	6,043	0·04	1,807	—	7,850	4,537	2,273	14,660	0·09
1988-89	174,832	8,333	0·05	2,410	—	10,743	4,350	2,273	17,366	0·10
1989-90	178,211	7,444	0·04	2,192	—	9,636	9,707	2,273	21,616	0·12
1990-91	181,580	10,689	0·06	6,342	—	17,031	5,550	2,273	24,854	0·14
1991-92	181,388	10,372	0·06	10,828	—	21,200	10,952	2,273	34,425	0·19
1992-93	184,274	11,916	0·06	9,778	178	21,872	9,041	2,251	33,164	0·18
NIGERIA										
Calendar year										
1983	93,642	5,480	0·06	—	—	5,480	—	—	5,480	0·06
1984	96,485	5,584	0·06	—	—	5,584	—	—	5,584	0·06
1985	99,669	6,240	0·06	—	—	6,240	—	—	6,240	0·06
1986	103,147	5,580	0·05	—	—	5,580	—	—	5,580	0·05
1987	106,638	6,554	0·06	—	30	6,584	—	—	6,584	0·06
Financial year										
1987-88	106,638	8,133	0·08	—	30	8,163	—	—	8,163	0·08
1988-89	110,068	6,310	0·06	—	—	6,310	—	—	6,310	0·06
1989-90	113,665	67,698	0·60	—	—	67,698	—	5	67,703	0·60
1990-91	117,510	34,864	0·30	—	—	34,864	—	606	35,470	0·30
1991-92	118,811	14,440	0·12	—	13	14,453	—	6	14,460	0·12
1992-93	101,884	13,951	0·14	—	—	13,951	1,900	4	15,855	0·16
INDIA										
Calendar year										
1983	733,248	121,019	0·17	6,336	245	127,600	—	—	127,600	0·17
1984	749,184	122,077	0·16	24,423	37	146,537	—	—	146,537	0·20
1985	765,147	87,419	0·11	8,879	168	106,466	—	—	106,466	0·14
1986	781,367	134,913	0·17	8,553	15	143,481	—	—	143,481	0·18
1987	797,526	78,042	0·10	115	307	78,464	—	—	78,464	0·10
Financial year										
1987-88	797,526	82,586	0·10	7,851	403	90,840	8,257	—	99,097	0·12
1988-89	815,590	69,411	0·09	1,911	20	71,342	13,305	—	84,647	0·10

	Population	Country programme Total	Country programme Per capita	ATP	Disaster relief/ Food aid	ODA programme total	CDC	Other[1]	Gross bilateral aid Total	Gross bilateral aid Per capita
1989-90	832,535	68,881	0·08	7,240	—	76,121	11,531	—	87,652	0·11
1990-91	849,510	82,679	0·10	5,580	65	88,324	11,791	700	100,815	0·12
1991-92	865,020	121,893	0·14	6,542	112	128,547	7,832	7	136,386	0·16
1992-93	883,473	93,107	0·11	867	7	93,981	21,340	49	115,370	0·13
THAILAND										
Calendar year										
1983	49,169	1,228	0·02	—	—	1,228	4,325	—	5,553	0·11
1984	50,023	1,880	0·04	225	15	2,120	17,916	—	20,036	0·40
1985	50,950	1,516	0·03	233	30	1,779	5,658	—	7,437	0·15
1986	52,642	1,440	0·03	404	—	1,844	2,371	—	4,215	0·08
1987	53,605	1,836	0·03	251	—	2,087	3,271	—	5,358	0·10
Financial year										
1987-88	53,605	1,879	0·04	426	—	2,304	2,620	—	4,924	0·09
1988-89	54,469	1,937	0·04	774	77	2,788	21,091	—	23,879	0·44
1989-90	55,200	2,121	0·04	3,212	6	5,339	6,190	46	11,575	0·21
1990-91	55,801	2,108	0·04	2,854	6	4,968	4,373	42	9,383	0·17
1991-92	56,679	2,057	0·04	207	6	2,270	1,675	57	4,002	0·07
1992-93	57,992	1,881	0·03	200	54	2,135	32,035	151	34,321	0·59
OMAN										
Calendar year										
1983	1,131	641	0·57	—	—	641	—	—	641	0·57
1984	1,138	570	0·50	—	—	570	—	—	570	0·50
1985	1,181	500	0·42	—	—	500	—	—	500	0·42
1986	1,294	610	0·47	—	—	610	—	—	610	0·47
1987	1,347	457	0·34	—	—	457	—	—	457	0·34
Financial year										
1987-88	1,347	740	0·55	—	—	740	—	—	740	0·55
1988-89	1,421	773	0·54	—	—	773	—	—	773	0·54
1989-90	1,486	815	0·55	—	—	815	—	—	815	0·55
1990-91	1,554	825	0·53	—	—	825	—	—	825	0·53
1991-92	1,618	1,044	0·65	—	—	1,044	—	—	1,044	0·65
1992-93	1,647	750	0·46	—	—	750	—	—	750	0·46
MALAYSIA										
Calendar year										
1983	14,863	2,201	0·15	797	—	2,998	874	—	3,872	0·26
1984	15,270	2,399	0·16	54	—	2,453	519	2,020	4,992	0·33
1985	15,611	2,562	0·16	1,660	—	4,222	3,232	—	7,454	0·48
1986	16,110	2,098	0·13	50,128	—	52,226	3,268	—	55,494	3·44
1987	16,528	2,673	0·16	5,801	—	8,474	1,305	—	9,779	0·59
Financial year										
1987-88	16,528	4,922	0·30	6,697	—	11,619	905	—	12,524	0·76
1988-89	16,921	2,683	0·16	3,925	—	6,608	1,692	—	8,300	0·49
1989-90	17,340	2,693	0·16	5,305	—	7,998	—	28	8,026	0·46
1990-91	17,752	2,624	0·15	17,336	—	19,960	7,924	23	27,907	1·57
1991-92	18,294	2,911	0·16	12,231	—	15,142	693	15	15,850	0·87
1992-93	18,610	2,665	0·14	17,798	—	20,463	526	6	20,995	1·13
JORDAN										
Calendar year										
1983	3,247	2,747	0·85	—	—	2,747	—	—	2,747	0·85
1984	3,385	2,665	0·79	3,440	—	6,105	—	—	6,105	1·80
1985	3,512	2,332	0·66	—	—	2,332	—	—	2,332	0·66
1986	3,620	5,641	1·56	—	—	5,641	—	—	5,641	1·56
1987	3,790	4,679	1·23	130	—	4,809	—	—	4,809	1·27
Financial year										
1987-88	3,790	4,235	1·12	260	—	4,495	—	—	4,495	1·19
1988-89	3,903	2,421	0·62	401	—	2,822	—	—	2,822	0·72
1989-90	4,041	4,653	1·15	452	—	5,105	—	—	5,105	1·26
1990-91	3,154	2,254	0·71	475	2,720	5,450	—	5,476	10,925	3·46
1991-92	3,453	2,649	0·77	473	—	3,122	—	—	3,122	0·90
1992-93	3,949	3,777	0·96	472	—	4,249	—	10,468	14,717	3·73

[1]This is mainly debt relief, but also includes small amounts of drug-related assistance funded by the Home Office and FCO.
[2]From 1987-88 data on aid spending have been compiled on a financial year basis.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total value of the aid trade programme for each year since 1979; what were the dozen highest value projects assisted under this programme in each of these years and the value of each of these projects; which was the main company or companies involved in each of these projects each year and what was the level of aid they received under this programme or in any related form; and in each case which of these contracts were let without tender in each of these years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The total value of the aid and trade provision—cash expenditure—for each year since 1979 was as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	29
1980-81	26
1981-82	53
1982-83	47
1983-84	28
1984-85	59
1985-86	36
1986-87	81
1987-88	49
1988-89	58
1989-90	62
1990-91	94
1991-92	101
1992-93	93

All the other information requested, with one exception, is contained in the detailed list of ATP projects placed in the Library of the House in October 1993 pursuant to the reply my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 28 October, *Official Report*, column *732*.

The one exception relates to aid received by companies in any related form, this information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all projects and programmes funded by the Commonwealth Development Corporation in the last five years; what projects and programmes are *(a)* legally committed and *(b)* planned in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Details of CDC's equity holdings, loans and commitments are given in its annual report and accounts, copies of which are laid before the House. Additions from January 1993 are shown. For reasons of commercial confidentiality information is not available on project proposals on which CTC is conducting negotiations with clients and co-investors.

We intend to make a statement shortly on the outcome of a quinquennial review of CDC, and to publicise a further progress report on recommendations made by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1992.

Country	*Project*
Belize	Belize Electricity Company
Dominican Republic	Hotel Flamenco Playa Puerto Plata
Dominica	Dominica Agricultural Industrial and Development Bank
India	Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd.
India	Modern Woollens Ltd.
India	Mysore Paper Mills Ltd.
India	Square D Software Ltd.
India	Tata Ceramics Ltd.
India	CESC Ltd.
India	CG Glass Ltd.
Indonesia	PT Samudera
Indonesia	PT Gunung Raja Paksi
Indonesia	PT Wiraswasta Gemilang Co. Ltd.
Malta	Malta Mariculture Ltd.
Mozambique	Grafite de Ancuabe Ltda
Nicaragua	Camarones Del Pacifico
Nigeria	Cadbury Nigeria plc
Nigeria	Heleena Farms Ltd.
Pakistan	International Housing Finance Ltd.
Pakistan	Ravi Chemicals Ltd.
Pakistan	Sarah Textiles Ltd.
Pakistan	Fauji Marine Oil Terminal Distribution Co.
Pakistan	Fauji Cement Co. Ltd.
Pakistan	Hub Power Co. Ltd.
Pakistan	Pearl Continental Lahore
Philippines	Bukidnon Resources Co. Inc.
Philippines	Hopewell Power (Philippines) Corporation
Tanzania	Tourism Promotion Services (Tanzania) Ltd.
Thailand	Thai Rural Equity Fund
Thailand	United Palm Oil Ind. Co. Ltd.
Zambia	Nanga Farms Ltd.
Zimbabwe	Hippo Valley Estates Ltd.
Zimbabwe	Triangle Ltd.
Zimbabwe	Wankie Colliery Co. Ltd.
Zimbabwe	Victoria Falls Safari Lodge (Pvt) Ltd.

Malawi

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by cost each bilateral aid project in Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A list of ODA's current bilateral aid projects in Malawi will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Nigeria

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each project funded by the Overseas Development Administration in Nigeria over the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have placed a list of all projects in the Library of the House.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what water projects the Overseas Development Administration is currently funding in Nigeria; and which companies have won those contracts.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

Indonesia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last reviewed the application of the good governance criterion governing the provision of aid by the Overseas Development Administration to the programme of aid to Indonesia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The position for all countries is reviewed at least annually and was last reviewed for Indonesia in autumn 1993.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which United Kingdom company was involved in providing the flight simulator supported under the British aid programme to Indonesia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom company supplying the flight simulator to the Indonesian domestic airline, Merpati, is Aeronautical Systems Designers Ltd.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what stage has been reached in the tendering process for the power plant in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, which is being funded under the aid trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The bids received by the Indonesian electricity authority for the Samarinda power station in East Kalimantan are currently being evaluated by the Government of Indonesia.

The bid documents for the associated transmission line were issued by the electricity authority in mid-January with a return date of 24 March 1994.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what water projects the Overseas Development Administration is currently funding in Indonesia; and which companies have won those contracts.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: ODA is currently funding a small project that forms part of a general research programme into canal systems maintenance in a number of countries including Indonesia. ODA is also supporting five village-based water self-help supply schemes.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which United Kingdom companies are involved in the Jambi power plant in Indonesia supported by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom company which supplied equipment for the Jambi power plant was Mirrlees Blackstone Ltd.

Malaysia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what water projects the Overseas Development Administration is currently funding in Malaysia; and which companies have won those contracts.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration is currently not funding any water projects in Malaysia.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the Wright report on privatisation in St. Helena.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Copies of the 1990 report by David Wright on the expansion of the private sector in St. Helena have been placed in the Library of the House.

Thailand

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what water projects in Thailand are currently funded by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration is currently not funding any water projects in Thailand.

Oman

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what scholarships and training have been provided under the British aid programme to Oman in the last five years; and in which subject areas.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number of scholarships and training awards provided under the British aid programme to Oman since 1990-91 are as follows. Details prior to this can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

1990-91	
English Language training	2
Infrastructure	5
Planning, Administration and Finance	4
1991-92	
Teacher Training	2
English Language Training	1
Renewable Natural Resources	10
Health	1
Infrastructure	6
Planning, Administration and Finance	1
1992-93	
English Language Training	10
Teacher Training	1
Renewable Natural Resources	6
Planning, Administration and Finance	1
Infrastructure	3

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many expatriate personnel were funded by the Overseas Development Administration to work in Oman in each year since 1980; and on which projects they work.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The following numbers of expatriate personnel have been funded by the Overseas Development Administration to work in Oman since 1988-89. Information prior to this can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Project

	Number
1988-89	6
1989-90	3
1990-91	4
1991-92	4
1992-93	2

Ministry of Electricity and Water

	Number
1988-89	1
1989-90	1
1990-91	1
1991-92	1

Ministry of Commerce and Industry

	Number
1988-89	1
1989-90	1
1990-91	1
1991-92	1

Oman Technical and Industrial College

	Number
1988-89	10
1989-90	13
1990-91	13
1991-92	9
1992-93	6

Educational Curriculum Reform

	Number
1988-89	4
1989-90	3
1990-91	2
1991-92	2
1992-93	1

Vocational Training Institute

	Number
1988-89	7
1989-90	8
1990-91	12
1991-92	12
1992-93	10

Institute of Health

	Number
1988-89	2
1989-90	1
1990-91	1

Tissue Culture

	Number
1988-89	1

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which projects other than scholarships and training have been funded under the British aid programme to Oman in the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The following projects other than scholarships and training have been funded under the British aid programme to Oman in the last five years:

Assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture in livestock control and marketing.

Advice to the Ministry of Electricity and Water on electricity safety rules and the operation of a drawing office in the electricity supply industry.

Advice to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on investment promotion and industrial diversification.

A training needs analysis for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Assistance to improve English language teaching at the Oman technical and industrial college.

Assistance to the Ministry of Education in curriculum development.

Assistance in teacher education at the Vocational Training Institute.

Assistance to improve English language teaching at the Institute of Health Sciences.

A study of the opportunities for tissue culture of date palms and other traditional crops.

Arms Expenditure

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is the policy of his Department that developing countries should be encouraged to spend less on armaments; and whether levels of spending on arms is taken into account in the allocation of aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is for each country to assess and provide for its own legitimate defence needs. The United Kingdom actively supports the increased emphasis placed by the International Monetary Fund and the World bank in their relations with developing countries on the implications for economic and social development of an excessive level of military expenditure. We have made it clear that we consider the setting of an appropriate level of military expenditure to be an important part of good government. It is one of the factors we take into account when deciding our allocations of bilateral aid.

Jordan

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each project funded by the Overseas Development Administration in Jordan over the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Projects funded by the Overseas Development Administration in Jordan over the last five years are as follows:

Provision of a livestock expert to assist the Ministry of Agriculture sheep husbandry project.

Financial assistance to farmers to replant fruit trees in the Jordan valley following the severe storms of January and February 1992.

Provision of advice to the Jordan Industrial Consortium Engineering Company.

Senior advisory assistance to the Jordanian Electricity Authority and to the Irbid District Electricity Company.

Provision of equipment to the Jordan Meteorological Department for monitoring weather systems and locust swarms.

Advice on air traffic control to the Jordan Civil Aviation Authority.

Feasibility study for the Government of Jordan on the restructuring of telecommunications.

Provision of equipment and advice to the geological mapping section of the Natural Resources Authority for compiling and printing maps.

Advice on computerising the Jordanian passport system.

Study of an aquifer at Qa Disi in southern Jordan to enable the Water Authority of Jordan to determine sensible abstraction rates.

Study for a possible professional link between the Water Authority of Jordan and a United Kingdom water company.

Diagnostic study into pollution at the King Talal dam.

Study of possible contamination of groundwater in the Amman Zarka basin.

Feasibility study into centralising the Water Authority of Jordan's maintenance facilities on a single site.

Advice to develop in-service teacher training and textbook production.

Provision of equipment to the structures testing laboratory at the Jordanian university of science and technology.

Assistance to develop teaching English for specific purposes at the Jordan university of science and technology.

Provision of computers and consultants to increase computer awareness among secondary school pupils.
Provision of equipment and advice to develop the national centre for occupational safety and health, and advice on industrial safety legislation.
Provision of equipment to vocational secondary schools.
Provision of a walking dragline for the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company.
The heads of mission small projects scheme is administered by the British ambassador to Jordan and funds four to six small projects each year.
The joint funding scheme has contributed to 11 Oxfam projects in Jordan over the last five years.

Water and Sanitation Projects

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the breakdown of spending on clean water and sanitation projects within the Overseas Development Administration in 1991-92; how much of the total is allocated to basic water supply and sanitation for use by the public; and how much for services to private dwellings.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Total specific spending on clean water and sanitation projects by the Overseas Development Administration in the financial year 1991-92 was £24·529 million. Data are not available to enable a separation to be made between expenditure on water supply and sanitation for public or communal use, and services directly connected to private dwellings.

Many non-governmental organisations have clean water projects as part of their wider rural development schemes.

Cash Limits

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have been made in the 1993-94 cash limit for expenditure by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit on the external assistance vote—class II, vote 5—will be increased by £3,736,000 from £1,811,060,000 to £1,814,796,000. The increase includes a transfer of £88,000 from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for assistance to the St. Petersburg potato industry and £3,337,000 in respect of a rollover of underspending against 1992-93 EC attribution. The gross running costs limit for the ODA has been increased by £311,000 from £51,771,000 to £52,082,000. This includes £235,000 in respect of an end of year flexibility entitlement and a transfer of £76,000 from Property Holdings for a maintenance club subscription. The net running costs limit for the Natural Resources Institute has been increased from nil to £3,788,000 to cover a revised forecast of income, and restructuring and relocation costs. The increases will be offset by transfers from other Government Departments and charges to the reserve and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Aid Categories

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what cash is distributed as tied aid; how much aid is untied; what other categories of aid exist; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are three main categories of tying status for official development assistance reported to the development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: tied, partially tied and untied.

In 1992, £650 million of the United Kingdom's bilateral aid commitments to developing countries were tied, £500,000 were partially tied and £324 million were untied.

EMPLOYMENT

Deregulation

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which organisations were consulted by his Department, on each of the recommendations of the business deregulation task forces before they were agreed and action proposed in the DTI document "Deregulation: Cutting the Red Tape".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Matters covered by task force recommendations on administration of training programmes, handling of unfair dismissal claims, and industrial tribunal procedures have been discussed with training and enterprise councils, the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, presidents of the industrial tribunals, the Council on Tribunals and other interested bodies as appropriate. A provision in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill relating to redundancy selection implements a proposal of the task forces, which represent business.

I have asked the Health and Safety Commission to consider the task forces' recommendations on health and safety at work as part of a general review of health and safety legislation. Decisions on these recommendations will be taken when the commission has made its report.

Wages Inspectorate

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints from employees were received by the wages inspectorate in March, April and May 1993; and in how many of these cases the inspectorate's investigation was completed within four weeks.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

1993	*Number of complaints received*	*Number of complaint inspections completed within four weeks*
March	113	78
April	100	69
May	93	65

Employees were told the results of investigations into their complaint. If the investigation could not be completed within four weeks, the employee was told about the progress of the investigation.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were in temporary employment at the latest available date; and what is the proportion of those in temporary employment as a percentage of the total number registered for employment for England as a whole and for each standard region within England.

Miss Widdecombe: Latest estiamtes from the summer 1993 labour force survey of the number and proportion of employees in temporary employment for standard regions within England are given in the table:

Standard region	*Employees in temporary employment (thousands)*	*Proportion of employees in temporary employment (percentage)*
South East	477	7·0
Greater London	196	7·8
East Anglia	67	8·0
South West	107	6·0
West Midlands	117	5·9
East Midlands	101	6·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	128	6·7
North West	145	6·2
North	83	7·4
England	1,224	6·6

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the subjects on which his Department formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The chief executive of the Employment Service Agency is usually asked to reply to parliamentary questions concerning the day-to-day operational matters of the agency and on subjects for which he has delegated responsibility, as set out in the agency's framework document, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Work Permits

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications for a work permit to employ a non-EC national were received in April 1993; what proportion of these applications were decided within eight weeks; and what proportion of applications on behalf of entertainers, sports people and models were decided within four weeks.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Four thousand, three hundred and ninety-nine applications for work permits were received in April 1993. Of the 2,850 cases processed in the month, 91·9 per cent. had been decided within eight weeks of receipt.

One thousand, four hundred and eleven of the total applications decided in April 1993 were for entertainers, sports people and models. Fifty-seven per cent. of these cases were decided within four weeks and 92 per cent. within eight weeks of receipt.

This exceeds the Department's published standard of 75 per cent. within eight weeks and was achieved at a time when the section responsible for work permits was in the process of moving between sites in Sheffield.

Employment Agencies

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications for new licences were received from employment agencies in April 1993; and in what proportion of these cases a licence was issued to the applicant within eight weeks.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In April 1993, 241 applications for new licences were received, 83·8 per cent. of which resulted in a licence being offered to the applicant within eight weeks.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment agencies have *(a)* been licensed, *(b)* had applications for licensing as an employment agency refused and *(c)* had their licences revoked in each year since 1973.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Agencies Act 1973, which requires all employment agencies and employment business to be licensed, came into force in mid-1976. The available records commence from 1977, the first full year of the Act's operation, and are provided in the table:

Year	*Number of current licences*	*Applications refused*	*Licences revoked*
1977	5,057	10	—
1978	5,896	4	1
1979	6,550	2	—
1980	6,990	3	—
1981	6,645	5	2
1982	6,624	7	—
1983	6,950	3	—
1984	7,668	—	—
1985	8,499	1	—
1986	9,984	3	1
1987	11,379	3	2
1988	13,541	—	—
1989	16,023	5	—
1990	17,227	3	—
1991	15,887	5	1
1992	14,701	3	2
1993	14,482	1	—
Totals		58	9

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much funding has been made available to each TEC in East Anglia in 1992-93 and 1993-94 for youth training, adult training, long-term unemployed and business start-up schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The table provides the information requested in respect of youth and adult training and business start-up allowances.

Separate figures are not available for the long-term unemployed. People unemployed for at least a year who have been through a jobplan workshop are given priority for places on the training for work programme, and the long-term unemployed also have access to a wide range of other opportunities available through the training and enterprise councils.

Details of TEC budgets

TEC Names	*Youth Training/ Credits £ million*	*Training for work £ million*	*Business Start Up Allowance £ million*
1992-93			
Bedfordshire	5·14	2·94	0·36
Cambridgeshire	2·60	1·06	0·31
Essex	16·02	6·08	0·82
Greater Peterborough	4·60	2·22	0·20

TEC Names	Youth Training/ Credits £ million	Training for work £ million	Business Start Up Allowance £ million
Hertfordshire	13·52	4·03	0·82
Norfolk and Waveney	10·78	5·58	1·26
Suffolk	9·78	2·16	0·93
1993-94			
Bedfordshire	5·16	2·60	0·43
Cambridgeshire	3·44	1·20	0·34
Essex	16·71	6·13	0·86
Greater Peterborough	5·09	2·45	0·27
Hertfordshire	13·28	4·00	1·03
Norfolk and Waveney	10·04	5·89	1·11
Suffolk	9·31	2·37	0·72

Notes:

[1] Funds are paid to TECs on the basis of a negotiated contract. The figures given above for both years are based on contracted amounts. The actual amount spent depends on claims made by the TEC.

[2] TFW figures include the programmes replaced by TFW, including employment training, employment action and HTNT.

[3] BSU figures are based on the amounts paid for starts and survivors.

Employment Service

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance is given to the Employment Service on the giving of information on claimants to hon. Members' staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Terry Rooney, dated 7 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about guidance to Employment Service (ES) staff on providing information about claimants to honourable Members' staff.

It may help if I explain the background. The rules of confidentiality are long established, having been in operation since the start of the National Insurance Scheme in 1911, when the Government of the day decided that information obtained about members of the public in connection with its administration should be regarded as confidential between the person concerned and the Ministry, and would not be released without the consent of that person. Successive Governments have continued since then to apply this policy. There are however specific groups of people who may receive personal information about a client without written consent; these include MPs, provided that they are acting on behalf of the client concerned. If however an enquiry about a client is received from someone claiming to be acting on behalf of the MP, we do not reply until the written consent of the client is produced.

The policy on issues concerning disclosure of information, is set out in the ES Disclosure Guide and other internal memos. This guidance is issued to all ES Jobcentres and updated regularly as necessary.

I hope this is helpful.

Protection of Young People at Work Directive

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what reason Italy and Spain gave for abstaining on the protection of young people at work directive in the Council meeting of 23 November 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Explanations of voting on the common position concerning the protection of young people at work are in the annex to European Council document 10237/93—Presse 199-G. I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library.

After-school Care

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money was allocated to each training and enterprise council in 1993-94 for after-school care in accordance with the Department of Employment's after-school care initiative; ane what each TEC's estimated out-turn expenditure is in 1993-94 in that area of activity.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) on 3 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *821*, which lists the funding made available for 1993-94 by training and enterprise councils including that for the out of school child care grant.

TECs are not asked to provide estimated outturn expenditure.

Health and Safety

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the organisations and individuals consulted or to be consulted by the Health and Safety Commission in its current review of health and safety legislation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* No definitive list is available. The core of consultation rests with the Health and Safety Commission's task groups, part of whose remit is, in turn, to consult widely. A list of task group members has been placed in the Library.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Legislation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many Government Bills have been defeated at *(a)* Second Reading and *(b)* Third Reading in the House of Commons since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

(a) One—Shops Bill [Lords], Session 1985-86.

(b) None.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the number of Bills passed in each Session since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The information is given in the table.

Bills passed by the Commons

Session	[1]1	[2]2	[3]	[4]4
1992-93	68	68	29	52
1991-92	47	46	15	33
1990-91	71	69	18	49
1989-90	46	45	14	34
1988-89	47	46	16	37
1987-88	63	62	16	49
1986-87	53	51	19	36
1985-86	70	70	23	49
1984-85	76	75	26	54
1983-84	73	73	30	60
1982-83	55	51	17	41
1981-82	56	56	19	46
1980-81	71	71	30	57
1979-80	82	81	25	71

[1] Number of Bills passed by Commons.

[2] Number of Bills which received the Royal Assent.

[3] Number of Bills which received Royal Assent which originated in the Lords.
[4] Number of Bills which received the Royal Assent which were Government Bills.

Paintings and Photographs

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many *(a)* paintings and *(b)* photographs there are on the walls of his rooms.

Mr. Newton: There are four paintings in my room in the House of Commons and seven paintings and 12 prints in my room at 68 Whitehall. There are no photographs on the walls in either room.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to buy or borrow photographs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so.

Early-day Motions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many early-day motions have been tabled in each year since 1964.

Mr. Newton: This information is available in House of Commons Factsheet No. 30, entitled "Early Day Motions".

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Regeneration (Regional Directors)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the environment if the appointment of, or powers given to, the new senior regional directors for urban regeneration, or the new procedures he proposes for determining the structure and distribution of related expenditure, are subject to any decision of Parliament.

Mr. Baldry: The integrated regional offices, headed by senior regional directors, will bring together the responsibilities of the existing regional offices of the Department of the Environment, Department of Transport, Department of Employment and Department of Trade and Industry. Their appointment does not require specific parliamentary approval. Voted expenditure on the new single regeneration budget, details of which were announced to the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 4 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *515*, will be subject to the approval of Parliament in the normal way.

Council Tenants

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council tenants received compensation in 1992-93 upon leaving their home for improvements made to it; and what was the total sum paid to them.

Sir George Young: Information on expenditure by local authorities under the existing discretionary power to make such payments, in section 100 of the Housing Act 1985, is not collected centrally. The Department proposes to monitor expenditure under the new right to compensation for tenants' improvements scheme being introduced on 1 April 1994, under section 122 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the subjects on which his Department or its predecessors formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Baldry: Next steps agency chief executives are usually asked to reply to parliamentary questions on the day-to-day operational matters of their agencies and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in their agencies' framework documents. Copies of replies provided by chief executives are published in the *Official Report*.

Planning Applications

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of planning applications to local authorities were decided within eight weeks in 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: An average of 63 per cent.

Food Superstores

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications for food superstores have been granted on appeal, for the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Baldry: The provision of information on planning appeals is the responsibility of the Planning Inspectorate. I have asked the inspectorate 's chief executive, Mr. Stephen Crow, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from H. S. Crow to Mr. John Ward, dated 3 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of food superstores for which planning permission has been granted on appeal.

The information is taken from the Inspectorate's records. The latest figures available for England are for the financial years that ended on 31 March 1992 and 1993 and are set out below:

Planning appeals allowed involving food superstores

	Number
1991-92	9
1992-93	13

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional public funding over the provision envisaged, is necessary to meet the full construction costs, including stations at Island Gardens and Cutty Sark, of the proposed docklands light railway extension to Greenwich and Lewisham.

Sir George Young: The full construction costs of the proposed extension, including Cutty Sark and Island

Gardens stations, were estimated at £139 million in November 1992. The Government have stated unequivocally from the outset that this project must be taken forward with the private sector in the lead without any Government grant or subsidy. That remains our position. A review of the commercial viability of the project undertaken last autumn indicated that the original estimated cost could not be funded from the level of revenues forecast for the extension. Third parties locally have assigned £7 million to the project but this will not be sufficient to close the funding gap. To ensure the project's financial viability, either major reductions in the scope of the project will need to be made or further third party finance will need to be contributed.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to charge a toll for cross-river journeys on the docklands light railway when it is extended to Greenwich and Lewisham.

Sir George Young: When London Transport promoted the Bill seeking powers to build the extension of the docklands light railway to Lewisham, it was envisaged that a premium fare, in the form of a cross-river toll, would need to be charged to recover the costs of construction. Current advice confirms that a premium fare will be necessary to make the project financially viable.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total value of the land and buildings held by the Leeds development corporation.

Mr. Baldry: The total value of the land and buildings held by the Leeds development corporation at 31 March 1993 was £7,507,000. The valuation figure, which is at the lower of cost and net realisable value, corresponds to the entry for development assets in the financial statements published in the corporation's annual report.

Westminster and Wandsworth Councils

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what concerns were expressed by his officials to himself or his predecessors in the operation by Westminster or Wandsworth council of *(a)* the cash incentive scheme and *(b)* the right to buy in general.

Sir George Young: By convention, advice given by officials to Ministers is not disclosed.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reference was made to the cash incentive schemes and right-to-buy policies of Westminster and Wandsworth councils in their housing investment programme submissions, monitoring statements and meetings since 1985; what concerns were expressed by his officials as a result of these; and what changes were made to the scheme.

Sir George Young: Local authorities' HIP submissions are public documents and copies have been placed in the Library of the House. The Department collects detailed information at the end of each financial year from all local authorities operating cash incentive schemes under section 129 of the Housing Act 1988, and monitors the right-to-buy performance of all London boroughs. We were satisfied that Wandsworth's proposals met the criteria but, in the case of Westminster, following discussions with the Department when the borough first planned to run a cash incentive scheme in 1989-90, the council confirmed that when properties vacated were to be sold they would be offered to existing council tenants only, thus creating a vacancy for reletting to a homeless household.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what reviews were carried out by his Department of the cash incentive schemes operated by Westminster and Wandsworth councils; what the results of these were; and what changes were made to the schemes as a result;

(2) what measures were taken by his Department to ensure that where the payment of a cash incentive in Wandsworth and Westminster council did not under their scheme result in the vacated houses being allocated for rent to someone in housing need the purchaser of those vacant properties themselves vacated a property which was let to someone in housing need.

Sir George Young: Since the introduction of the cash incentive scheme in 1989, the Department has collected detailed information at the end of each financial year. This includes the number of grants paid and dwellings released for each local authority running a CIS. It enables the Department to monitor schemes to ensure that they meet the objective of releasing vacancies to house—directly or indirectly—homeless households.

No changes were made to the schemes run by Westminster council or Wandsworth council as a result of this monitoring process.

The results of the first two years of this monitoring process were published by HMSO in a repoert "Cash Incentives Review" in 1992; a copy is in the Library.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons Westminster council was judged to be performing well in its housing policies which led to the award of higher housing investment programme allocations in recent years; and by how much the allocation was increased as a result.

Sir George Young: Westminster city council's performance as a housing authority was assessed against the criteria published by my Department at the beginning of each HIP round.

In recent years, Westminster has been assessed as performing strongly across the board, with particular strengths in the management of its stock, the promotion of tenant involvement and self-management, and the support of housing associations. These assessment's of Westminster's efficiency and effectiveness, along with assessments in respect of other published criteria, have been reflected in the discretionary elements of its HIP allocations.

For the past three years, discretion has been used to allocate 60 per cent. of the HIP annual capital guidelines, the remainder being allocated on the basis of a calculation of the general housing needs of local authorities. Westminster has in recognition of its efficiency and effectiveness been allocated ACGs significantly greater than it would have been using the needs calculation alone.

The criteria used in assessing housing authorities are available from the Library of the House, as are the details of the HIP allocations of individual authorities, and the calculations of their general housing needs.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when approval was given to the cash incentive scheme operated by *(a)* Westminster and *(b)* Wandsworth councils; and what special conditions were added to the schemes as proposed by these councils.

Sir George Young: Any local authority which applies under section 129 of the Housing Act 1988 to run a cash incentive scheme is required to ensure that the number of grants paid equals the number of people rehoused in rented accommodation; that grants are paid only to tenants who could not afford to buy without this assistance; and that the amount of individual grants is kept within the prescribed limit.

Both Westminster council and Wandsworth council met these criteria. Formal approval to run a cash incentive scheme in 1989-90 was granted to them on 14 August 1989 and 22 May 1989 respectively.

No changes were made by Westminster and Wandsworth councils when they sought and obtained annually approval to run a cash incentive scheme in subsequent years.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of subsidy was paid under the cash incentive scheme to Westminster and Wandsworth councils in each year since the scheme was introduced.

Sir George Young: The table shows the total Government resources made available in the form of supplementary credit approvals to Westminster and Wandsworth councils for cash incentive schemes each year since the scheme was introduced. No Government resources were made available in 1989-90 or in 1993-94.

Year	*Wandsworth* £	*Westminster* £
[1]1990-91	1,933,464	1,409,000
[1]1991-92	2,446,000	2,611,000
[2]1992-93	480,995	658,000

[1] Made available under the homelessness initiative.
[2] Made available under the housing market package.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Baldry: The answer is as follows:

(a) 1
(b) 62 (including *(a)*)

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, columns *827-28*, whether British Nuclear Fuels was charged by his Department for the work put into preparation on the Euratom treaty article 37 submission on THORP.

Mr. Atkins: BNFL was not charged for work done by the Department specifically to meet the requirements of article 37 of the Euratom treaty.

Paper Processing

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to monitor the progress of environmental health authorities in meeting the timetable requirements of part 1 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in respect of licences to control emission levels from paper coating processors.

Mr. Atkins: My Department monitors in various ways the operation of the local authority air pollution control system established under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This monitoring includes regular meetings of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—local authority liaison committee, the establishment of an industry forum, local authority statistical returns, and a review of the performance of 25 authorities undertaken by my officials last year.

Guidance notes on air pollution standards have been issued for the categories of processes coming under the control system. Each guidance note includes a timetable for completing process improvements. One such note was published on paper coating processes in February 1992 and a copy was placed in the Library of the House at the time. Each note is issued in consultation with the relevant industry organisation and it is our intention that they are reviewed every four years, or sooner if particular issues arise.

Surplus School Places

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he defines surplus places; what is the legal authority for his definition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

There is no statute governing the way in which surplus school capacity should be assessed. For current purposes the Department calculates the number of surplus places at a school as the difference between the number of places available, measured using a standard formula and based on the physical capacity of the accommodation at the school, and the number of pupils on the school's roll.

EDUCATION

Ministers (Travel)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Secretary of State in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Patten: The figures requested are as follows:

Financial Year	*Domestic Travel* £	*Overseas Travel* £
1992-93—planned	6,000	see note[1]
—actual	3,330	2,050[2]
1993-94—planned	6,250	see note[1]
—actual (to date)	3,080	400[2]

[1] The annual budget for foreign travel by all the Department's Ministers (including officials in attendance). This was £54,000 in 1992-93; the corresponding figure for 1993-94 is £50,000. These plans are not

disaggregated between Ministers.
[2] Expenditure incurred on the Secretary of State's travel (including officials in attendance).

Non-motorised Transport

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what initiatives he plans to introduce to make educational establishments equally accessible to users of non-motorised as to users of motorised transport, including provision for adequate secure cycle parking.

Mr. Forth: The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981, require that the land provided for a maintained school shall be adequate to permit provision of appropriate ancillary facilities, including vehicle parks. The Department's publication "The Outdoor Classroom", Building Bulletin 71, includes guidance on car parking and cycle storage facilities for schools. Parking and access arrangements at other educational establishments are a matter for the authorities responsible for those establishments.

Under-fives Education

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the component of standard spending assessment which is notionally attributed to the education of under-fives, *(b)* the actual expenditure on education of under-fives for each of the London boroughs for the most recent year that figures are available, *(c)* the number of children under five in maintained schools and *(d)* the percentage of under-fives in (i) nursery classes and nursery schools and (ii) infant classes, as a percentage of the under-five-years population.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested which is available is set out in the table. Reliable data on expenditure for under-fives are not available at the level of individual local authorities.

		£ million
(a)	Under-fives component of education SSAs	935·2
(c)	Number of under-fives in maintained schools	656,193
(di)	Percentage of under-fives population in nursery classes and nursery schools	26
(dii)	Percentage of under-fives population in infant classes	24

Notes:
1. The information on pupil numbers is derived from the January 1993 schools census carried out by the Department. The figure is based on a head count of the number of part-time (329,944) and full-time (326,249) pupils aged three and four on 31 August 1992.
2. The figures *exclude* pupils aged four on 31 August 1992 but whose fifth birthday fell between 1 September and 31 December as well as pupils aged under-five in maintained special schools.
3. The percentage rates have been calculated using information on the under-fives population supplied by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OCPS).

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing the component of standard spending assessment which is notionally attributed to the education of under-fives, expressed as a per capita figure for each child under five years, and the actual expenditure on education for under-fives expressed as a per capita figure for *(a)* each child under five years in maintained schools and *(b)* each child under five years in the population.

Mr. Robin Squire: We do not have precise figures for expenditure by local education authorities on under-fives in maintained schools, but we can estimate the costs at a national level. The latest year for which spending data is available is 1991-92. The table gives the figures all in relation to the 1991-92 financial year.

	£
Standard assessment (SSA) per population under five[1]	260
Estimated expenditure on under fives in maintained schools per under five pupil[2]	1,650
Estimated expenditure on under fives in maintained schools per population under five[1]	340

[1] The divisor for this is the population 0-4 on 30 June 1989. This is the basis on which the 1991-92 under-fives SSA was distributed to LEAs.
[2] Both the expenditure and the pupil numbers relate to pupils who were aged four or less on 31 August. The pupil number divisor is a financial year average.

Dearing Review

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the impact of Sir Ron Dearing's national curriculum review on the swimming and water safety requirement of key stage 2.

Mr. Robin Squire: The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority is currently considering what changes are needed in the statutory requirements for all the subjects of the national curriculum, including physical education. My right hon. Friend cannot anticipate the outcome of that consideration.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement setting out the arrangements for the membership and timetable for action for the working groups recommended by the national curriculum review undertaken by Sir Ron Dearing.

Mr. Robin Squire: Membership of the groups advising the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority on the revision of the national curriculum was announced by the authority on 12 January: a copy of its press notice is in the Library. The groups' work will be completed by the end of March and the authority will then advise my right hon. Friend on a revised national curriculum to go out to consultation between May and July. The aim is that new orders for each national curriculum subject should be distributed to schools in January 1995.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy that local education authorities should be represented on bodies which are relevant to their responsibilities as employers on such bodies as the Teacher Training Agency; and if he will invite those authorities to nominate representatives.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend will continue to make it his policy to appoint to bodies for which he is responsible members who will make an effective personal contribution, drawing on their knowledge and experience. While relevant experience may be specified in statute, and outside bodies may always suggest names for consideration, members are not normally appointed in a representative capacity.

Technology Schools Initiative

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what monitoring is being undertaken by his Department of spending by schools allocated funding from the technology schools initiative.

Mr. Robin Squire: TSI projects include a tender stage when project details are finalised and competitive tenders are sought to ensure value for money is obtained. For grant-maintained school projects, approval from the Department must then be obtained before work on the project can begin. Grant is paid only for expenditure which has been approved, and invoices must be submitted to support claims.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library a copy of Stratford grant-maintained school's successful bid for £300,000 under the technology schools initiative.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. Bids for awards under the technology schools initiative—TSI—were prepared by individual schools, with the involvement of the local education authority where applicable, for submission to the Department. Schools did not necessarily prepare their bids with any expectation that they would become public documents.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education by what date he expects Stratford school to have completed the project for which grants were awarded under the technology schools initiative.

Mr. Robin Squire: The project is expected to be completed before the end of the 1993-94 financial year.

Information (Circulation)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what facilities his Department provides for other Government Departments to circulate information to schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The DFE publishes a termly newsletter, *Schools Update*, which is sent to all schools. It has a section which offers information about the availability of leaflets and resource material from other Government Departments.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which Departments of Government in the last year have offered for circulation or circulated to schools printed or film/video material directly or indirectly; and if he will name the publications provided in schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department for Education does not keep a record of material distributed to schools by other Government Departments. In the last 12 months, the DFE has itself distributed sample copies of the following publicity material to schools:

Education Act 1993 Publicity Flyer
Grant-Maintained Schools—Experiences in The First Year
Grant-Maintained Schools—How to Become a GM School
Grant-Maintained Schools—Questions Parents Ask
Grant-Maintained Schools—Questions Staff Ask
How is Your Child Doing at School?
It's Your Choice
National School Tests in 1994
National Unauthorised Absence Tables
School and College Performance Tables (16-18 Age Group) 1993
School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document
School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Leaflet
Schools Update—termly newsletter to all schools
Secondary Schools Performance Tables 1993
Student Grants and Loans—A brief guide for higher education students 1993-94
Student Grants and Loans—A brief guide for higher education students 1994-95
The Charter for Further Education
The Charter for Higher Education

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend does not have a shredding machine in his private office. There are a total of three machines in the Department.

Grant-maintained Schools Centre

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what inquiries he has undertaken or commissioned into the application of grants by the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department's accountancy adviser was asked to review the financial systems of the GMSC as regards the application of grant. Subsequently, a firm of accountants was engaged to review these in more detail. In addition the centre is required to provide the Department with audited accounts every year, which must include a statement as to whether the auditors are satisfied that grant income has been applied correctly.

The auditors have certified that in 1992-93 grant was used for the purposes approved by my right hon. Friend.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which grants to the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. were incorrectly applied; if he will give the amounts, dates and purposes of such grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. The company's accounts for 1992-93 include an auditors' certificate that grant was applied for the purposes approved by my right hon. Friend.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the name of the consultants who conducted further work into the finances of the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. after his own Department's internal review of the company was concluded in February 1993; and if he will place a copy of its report in the Library.

Mr. Robin Squire: The consultancy was undertaken by the firm Coopers and Lybrand. Their report covers the full range of activities of the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre Ltd., more than half of which are not grant aided. It must therefore be treated as commercial in confidence.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place a copy of the accounts of the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. for 1992-93 in the Library.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend placed a copy of the accounts of the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. in the Library last week.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what inquiries he has undertaken or commissioned into the financial systems operated by the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Grant-Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. was visited by the Department's chief accountancy adviser in February 1993, and subsequently by consultants, who examined and advised on the centre's financial systems. The company improved its systems in the light of that advice, and the external auditor's report on the company's accounts for 1992-93 includes a statement that the centre is now maintaining an adequate system of internal control.

Teacher Training Initiatives

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many schools have agreed to take part in the proposed school-based teacher training initiatives; and how many students will be trained as a result;

(2) if he will make a statement on the representations he has received for and against participation in the school-based teacher training initiative.

Mr. Robin Squire: Consultations in 1992 and 1993 revealed widespread support for the principle of school-based teacher training, in which students spend considerable time in schools and schools are involved in the design and delivery of training. My right hon. Friend's criteria for new ITT courses now include these requirements, which should be fully in place by September 1994 for secondary ITT and by September 1996 for primary ITT.

A new scheme of school-centred initial teacher training —SCITT—was launched in March 1993, in which funds are paid direct to consortia of schools to organise and provide ITT for postgraduates. In 1993-94, 214 students began courses offered by nine consortia involving a total of 49 schools. Proposals from consortia of primary and secondary schools for courses to start in 1994-95 are currently being considered.

WALES

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what Welsh Office scrutiny there is of the working of the Development Board for Rural Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Development Board for Rural Wales, like other non-departmental public bodies, is subject to a range of controls, direction and monitoring as required by the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 and as set out in the board's financial memorandum and other guidelines. In addition, the board is set a number of targets, objectives and performance measures and in the context of its corporate planning cycle. I shall be chairing a meeting with the board in the summer to discuss its corporate plan targets for 1995-96. The board's finances are monitored on a monthly basis and its accounts are audited by the National Audit Office.

Business and Industry (Government Support)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much central Government money was spent on developing and supporting *(a)* manufacturing industries and *(b)* business in general in Wales for each year since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Expenditure through the Welsh Office's main schemes for business support is shown in the table. Separate figures for manufacturing industry are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The figures do not include grant in aid for development agencies in Wales, nor expenditure by DTI on UK-wide schemes.

£000s

	Regional development grant[1]	*Regional enterprise grant*	*Regional selective assistance*	*Exchange risk guarantee scheme*	*Total*
1979-80	50,663	—	4,774	(20)	55,417
1980-81	103,475	—	8,025	0	111,500
1981-82	122,171	—	7,716	4,311	134,198
1982-83	121,527	—	9,613	636	131,776
1983-84	72,126	—	11,141	2,092	85,359
1984-85	31,268	—	13,765	4,906	49,939
1985-86	81,933	—	19,387	3,770	105,090
1986-87	85,192	—	26,009	5,927	117,128
1987-88	47,528	—	28,211	5,987	76,726
1988-89	55,105	218	35,148	2,816	93,287
1989-90	27,459	944	34,865	5,274	68,542
1990-91	21,700	1,504	30,461	4,141	57,806
1991-92	14,161	1,430	55,021	3,535	74,147
1992-93	5,532	1,096	58,819	5,480	70,927

[1]Figures for RDG up to 1983-84 are gross of receipts. Net figures are not available for those years. All other figures are net.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much central Government money was spent per head of the population on education in Wales in each year since 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Based on the appropriation accounts of the Welsh Office, the information is estimated to be as follows:

£ per head of population (in cash terms)

	Per cent.
1979-80	1·17
1980-81	1·26
1981-82	1·77
1982-83	1·89
1983-84	2·55
1984-85	3·16
1985-86	3·94
1986-87	4·84
1987-88	7·38
1988-89	8·52
1989-90	10·37
1990-91	11·79
1991-92	14·76
1992-93	32·68

These figures are not wholly comparable in every case because of changes in classification. However, figures for total identifiable Government expenditure on education in Wales are available on a consistent basis and the information is as follows:

£ per head of population (in cash terms)

	£
1979-80	192
1980-81	234
1981-82	256
1982-83	277
1983-84	291
1984-85	299
1985-86	298
1986-87	330
1987-88	358
1988-89	391
1989-90	423
1990-91	458
1991-92	521
1992-93	568

Unemployment Schemes

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much central Government money was spent on schemes to help unemployed people in Wales in each year since 1979 in total and per person unemployed; and if he will list which schemes are included in these totals for each year.

Mr. Redwood: The information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

National Curriculum

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional resources have been allocated to the Welsh Office for the expanding of the national curriculum in key stage 4 during 1994-95.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The curriculum for 14 to 16-year-olds in Wales is being slimmed down to provide flexibility and choice and is not being expanded.

Tourism

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much central Government money was spent per head of the population on encouraging tourism in Wales for each year since 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information in the table represents central Government support to the Wales tourist board per head of the population in cash terms:

Central Government support to Wales Tourist Board 1978-79 to 1993-94

Year	£ per head of population in Wales[1]
1978-79	1·2
1979-80	1·3
1980-81	1·5
1981-82	1·8
1982-83	2·0
1983-84	1·8
1984-85	2·3
1985-86	2·7
1986-87	2·8
1987-88	3·1
1988-89	3·3
1989-90	3·5
1990-91	3·7
1991-92	3·9
1992-93	4·6
[2]1993-94	4·8

Source: Wales tourist board and OPCS

[1] Population estimates are Registrar General's mid-year estimates of resident population.

[2] Projected population from the Government Actuary's Department.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he received a copy of the curriculum vitae of the chair of the Welsh Development Agency before making the appointment; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: I did not read the chairman's curriculum vitae. Such documents are confidential and not suitable for placing in the Library of the House. I read a letter and memorandum about Mr. Rowe-Beddoe's career and suitability for the job before asking to see him. I did not discuss politics when I met him, with officials present. The CV was received in the Welsh Office, did include on it on page 2 a reference to the Conservative party, but this was not repeated in the materials I read before confirming the appointment.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he first considered the curriculum vitae submitted by Mr. David Rowe-Beddoe in support of his application for the post of chairman of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Redwood: My Department provided details about Mr. Rowe-Beddoe's career. I had no need to consider the curriculum vitae.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applicants for the post of chairman of the Welsh Development Agency were personally interviewed by *(a)* himself and *(b)* his immediate predecessor as Secretary of State.

Mr. Redwood: I met the selected candidate; officials sifted CVs of over 80; my predecessor interviewed six.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he first became aware that Mr. David

Rowe-Beddoe, the person he appointed as chair of the Welsh Development Agency had been, immediately prior to that appointment, the chairman of the Monte Carlo branch of Conservatives Abroad.

Mr. Redwood: Recently. Mr. Rowe-Beddoe was appointed because of his business skills. His political associations were not a consideration.

Transport Expenditure

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans his Department has to produce annual statistics of all Government spending, capital and revenue across all modes of transport in Wales, including data on tonnages, passenger numbers, investment and subsidy.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Comprehensive information on transport in Wales including data on tonnages, passenger numbers, Government expenditure, investment and subsidy, is published annually in "Welsh Transport Statistics", copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The next edition—No. 10—is due for publication on 6 July 1994.

Cereal Support Payments

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to ensure that Wales and England are treated as one region for the purpose of cereal support payments.

Mr. Redwood: This is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and me to decide jointly.

Milk Marque

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of discussions with the Milk Marketing Board on the setting up of Milk Marque; and what representations he has received from Welsh farming unions on this matter.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), on 3 February 1994, *Official Report*, column 866.

I have received four letters from hon. Members on behalf of the farming unions. In addition my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has met the National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales on 16 and 23 December 1993 respectively to discuss this matter.

Sheep and Beef Premiums

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on late payment of sheep annual premium and special beef premium to farmers in Wales in 1993; and what steps he intends to take to ensure that payments are made on time in 1994.

Mr. Redwood: I have received representations from several sources.

Processing work on these schemes was delayed initially by the need to establish a new computer system to enable payments to be issued from the Welsh Office, and not from MAFF as previously. The system has now been established and good progress is being made.

Payments have been sent to 84 per cent. of sheep premium claimants. Payments have been authorised for 46 per cent. of holdings which submitted beef special premium claims and will be sent to them shortly.

Priority is being given to the remaining claims.

A5

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a statement on the commencement dates for each section in respect of the dualling of the A5 across Anglesey.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Member to the 1993 supplement to "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s".

Denbigh Graig Quarry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to take measures to halt the proposed extension of the Denbigh Graig quarry by Tarmac/Roadstone; what account he has taken of the objections of residents and organisations in Denbigh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is a matter for Clwyd county council as the mineral planning authority for the area.

Crossrail

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement regarding the potential benefits to Wales of the crossrail project in central London.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Crossrail will afford travellers from south Wales speedier and more convenient access to the west end, the City and to destinations in east London and beyond.

M4

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he received during the consultation period on the proposals to extend the M4 relief road through the Gwent levels; how many of these representations approved of the Welsh Office's proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 31 January 1994, *Official Report*, column 526.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Redwood: The answer is: *(a)* 1 *(b)* 17.

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales concerning the enhancement of value for money to be achieved from overseas travel by its staff;

(2) what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales concerning the strengthening of financial controls, and improvement of assessment and monitoring of overseas travel claims;

(3) what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales concerning the resignation of its executive director with effect from 2 February 1994.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: These are matters for which the chairman and the board of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales have already given consideration. Overseas travel claims are currently being investigated by the district audit service at the request of the chairman and the board, following an internal inquiry, and the police have been informed by the chairman of the results of the investigation so far. The chairman and the board may wish to take into consideration any comments, the district audit service may offer following its investigation and I expect that they will continue to keep the Welsh Office fully informed.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to establish a special advisory body for sustainable development policies in Wales on the lines of that proposed for Scotland.

Mr. Redwood: The Government panel on sustainable development will provide independent and authoritative advice to all Ministers, including me. The Welsh Office is also giving priority to ensuring that Welsh interests are properly reflected in the round table and citizen's environment initiatives. I see no need for another quango in Wales to deal with this.

Teacher Training

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools have agreed to take part in the proposed school-based teacher training initiative; and how many students will be trained as a result.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Schools in Wales have not yet been invited to participate in school-centred courses of initial teacher training. Subject to the passage of the Education Bill currently before Parliament, it would be for the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to decide on the allocation of training places in higher education institutions and schools.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the representations he has received for and against participation in the school-based teacher training initiative.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have received a number of representations from schools, higher education institutions and other interested parties about schools-centred teacher training. Some were opposed to schools taking full control of the training of student teachers; others supported the initiative provided that proper guidance and funding were made available.

Agriculture Support Schemes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he plans to take to introduce more clarity and efficiency into the system of forms for the support schemes for agriculture in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 4 February]:* I wish to see forms and explanatory literature kept as simple and straightforward as possible, although they inevitably have to be comprehensive enough to inform farmers of the full range of scheme rules. I have established a working group which will report to me in the near future on the streamlining of agri-environmental and other schemes in Wales.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure the provision of full consumer protection and trading standards service in all parts of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 4 February]:* It is a matter for local authorities to ensure that they perform their statutory duties satisfactorily.

TRANSPORT

Carriage of Goods

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific restrictions in respect of the carriage of goods apply to vehicles in taxation class restricted showman's heavy goods vehicle.

Mr. Key: This is an extremely complex area and I will write to the hon. Member in detail.

Bowbelle

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate and place in the Library details of the certificates of service held by the crew of Bowbelle; and whether they satisfied medical fitness certification requirements.

Mr. Norris: The manning of Bowbelle was fully in accord with the statutory requirements for the vessel, and all the crew were properly qualified. Some of the crew held certificates of competency or service. These certificates can be issued only to persons possessing a valid medical fitness certificate.

Tax Concessions (Germany)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has made to the German Government about the extension of tax concessions available to German shipping companies.

Mr. Norris: None, but the EC Commission, which has responsibility for the initial consideration of these matters, is currently considering whether the extension of tax concessions available to German shipping companies is an illegal state aid within the terms of the treaty of Rome.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible have been *(a)* abolished or *(b)* created since 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 1 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *611*.

Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *509*, if he will publish the terms of reference for each contract awarded over the past five years.

Mr. Norris: The contracts awarded over the past five years contain a wide variety of types of work. They will not normally have been let against simple terms of reference, but if the hon. Member has a particular interest in any one of the specific cases listed in my answer of 31 January, I will be happy to respond.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answers of 31 January, *Official Report*, columns *506-9*, regarding contracts for which bids are currently being considered by his Department, if he will publish the terms of reference for each contract.

Mr. Norris: The contracts currently being considered contain a wide variety of types of work. They will not normally be let against simple terms of reference, but if the hon. Member has a particular interest in any one of the cases listed in my answer of 31 January, I will be happy to respond.

Operator Licensing

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the method used to calculate the annual savings to the transport industry of his proposals for simplifying the operator licensing system for buses and lorries quoted in his press statement No. 24 of 19 January.

Mr. Key: The press statement figure was based on the saving to the haulage industry as a result of the introduction of continuous licensing. It was calculated on a fee charged at five-yearly intervals which would be less than the current grant charge because no processing of an application would be involved and the elimination of advertisement costs for operators already in the industry.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to ensure that local residents are aware of their rights to object to the issue of goods vehicle operator licences.

Mr. Key: Applicants for a goods vehicle operator's licence must advertise their application for a licence in a local newspaper which is circulated in the area of the applicant's operating centre, i.e. where the vehicles are to be kept. The advertisement must appear within 21 days before, or 21 days after, the application is made.

The advertisement makes local residents aware of their right, if they are owners or occupiers of land in the vicinity of an operating centre, to submit written representations to the licensing authority within 21 days after the date when the advertisement appeared in the local newspaper.

Further advice is given to representors in a booklet entitled "A Guide to making Representations". Copies of this booklet are available free of charge from traffic area offices.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the savings to his Department of the introduction of continuous licensing for operators of buses and lorries.

Mr. Key: It is estimated that the effect on departmental expenditure will be neutral.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the meetings held by his officials with representatives of local authorities to discuss the deregulation of operator licensing.

Mr. Norris: Prior to the 1989 review of passenger and goods vehicle operator licensing, meetings took place between officials and the associations of district councils, county councils and metropolitan authorities. These associations received and responded to the 1993 consultation document but no further meetings were requested.

Litter

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he intends to take to ensure that motorways are regularly cleared of litter.

Mr. Key: We take a positive approach to our obligation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to keep motorways in England clear, so far as is practicable, of litter and refuse. Our maintenance agents carry out regular safety inspections and patrols during which they report litter accumulations; if debris is observed which could present a hazard to traffic, it is removed as soon as possible. Other offending material is then removed in accordance with the demanding standards specified in the code of practice on litter and refuse, issued under the Act. We spend over £5 million a year on sweeping and cleaning motorways and scavenging the verges.

Traffic Area Offices

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what amount was spent by traffic area co-ordinating division on promotion of the work of the traffic area offices in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Key: It is estimated that promotional work by the traffic area co-ordination division in publishing annual reports and customer service guides on behalf of the traffic area offices will amount to £4,500 in the present financial year 1993-94.

Buses

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1985, how many *(a)* double-decker buses, *(b)* single-decker buses, *(c)* minibuses and *(d)* midibuses, owned by London Buses Ltd., were (i) under four years old, (ii) between four and seven years old, (iii) between eight and 11 years old, (iv) between 12- and 15-years-olds and (v) more than 15-years-old;

(2) if he will publish a table, showing for each year since 1985, the number of *(a)* double-decker buses, *(b)* single-decker buses, *(c)* minibuses and *(d)* midibuses operated by private bus companies on behalf of London Transport were (i) under four years of age, (ii) between four and seven years of age, (iii) between eight and 11 years of age, (iv) between 12 and 15 years of age and (v) more than 15 years of age;

(3) if he will publish a table, showing for each year since 1985, the number of *(a)* double-decker buses, *(b)*

single-decker buses, *(c)* minibuses and *(d)* midibuses operated by or on behalf of London Transport which were (i) under four years of age, (ii) between four and seven years of age, (iii) between eight and 11 years of age, (iv) between 12 and 15 years of age and (v) more than 15 years of age;

Mr. Norris: The information requested on the age profile of the buses owned by London Buses Ltd. is given. The same information for vehicles operated by private bus companies on behalf of London Transport is available only at disproportionate cost.

LBL fleet age profile 1985-94
Age range in years

Year and Type		3 or less	4 to 7	8 to 11	12 to 15	over 15	Total Fleet
1985-86	DD	1,323	1,197	346	—	1,640	4,506
	SD	—	69	381	—	—	450
	Midi	22	—	—	—	—	22
	Mini	5	—	—	—	—	5
		1,350	1,266	727	—	1,640	4,983
1986-87	DD	1,121	1,680	385	—	1,227	4,413
	SD	—	69	414	—	—	483
	Midi	53	2	—	—	—	55
	Mini	3	—	—	—	—	3
		1,177	1,751	799	—	1,227	4,954
1987-88	DD	755	1,539	1,055	50	918	4,317
	SD	—	69	416	—	—	485
	Midi	165	2	—	—	—	167
	Mini	3	—	—	—	—	3
		923	1,610	1,471	50	918	4,972
1988-89	DD	461	1,551	1,337	50	813	4,212
	SD	7	—	362	80	—	449
	Midi	367	2	—	—	—	369
	Mini	3	—	—	—	—	3
		838	1,553	1,699	130	813	5,033
1989-90	DD	270	1,323	1,399	394	784	4,170
	SD	12	—	250	54	—	316
	Midi	486	20	—	—	—	506
		768	1,343	1,649	448	784	4,992
1990-91	DD	127	1,064	1,715	273	776	3,955
	SD	30	—	102	67	—	189
	Midi	738	100	—	—	—	838
		885	1,164	1,817	340	776	4,982
1991-92	DD	70	698	1,796	391	718	3,673
	SD	9	—	69	55	—	133
	Midi	866	182	—	—	—	1,048
		945	880	1,865	446	718	4,854
1992-93	DD	135	528	1,510	710	686	3,569
	SD	95	5	69	12	—	181
	Midi	1,000	230	—	—	—	1,230
		1,230	763	1,579	722	686	4,980
1993-94 (est)	DD	138	295	1,679	507	601	3,220
	SD	122	11	—	72	—	205
	Midi	911	367	—	—	—	1,278
		1,171	673	1,679	579	601	4,703

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* double-decker buses, *(b)* single-decker buses, *(c)* minibuses and *(d)* midibuses have been bought by London Buses Ltd. in each year since 1985; and what was the cost of each category.

Mr. Norris: The typical cost of vehicles to London Buses Ltd.—in 1993-94 prices—is as follows:

	£
Double-deckers	110,000
Single-deckers	95,000
Midibuses	55,000
Minibuses	35,000

The number of vehicles of each type that LBL have bought in each year since 1985 is shown in the table.

New buses delivered

Year	DD	SD	Midi	Mini	Total
1985-86	135	—	—	3	138
1986-87	229	—	12	—	241
1987-88	—	—	65	—	65
1988-89	—	—	174	—	174
1989-90	59	1	150	—	210
1990-91	11	7	352	—	370
1991-92	23	2	316	—	341
1992-93	105	73	224	—	402
1993-94 (est)	—	53	98	—	151
TOTAL	562	136	1,391	3	2,092

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to introduce measures to privatise London Buses Ltd.

Mr. Norris: London Transport currently expect to offer the 10 London Buses Ltd. operating companies for sale in the spring.

Motorway Usage

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the level of motorway usage *(a)* nationally and *(b)* by individual motorway by (i) all vehicles, (ii) trucks and (iii) motor cars, in (1) 1970, (2) 1980 and (3) 1990; and what the figures are currently.

Mr. Key: The table gives traffic on motorways in Great Britain. The data are available only from 1973. The corresponding information for individual motorways is not available.

Traffic on motorways in Great Britain

billion vehicle kilometres

Year	*All motor vehicles*[1]	*Cars*	*Goods vehicles*
1973	18·6	13·2	4·0
1980	29·4	21·8	5·2
1990	61·6	46·9	9·0
1992	61·0	46·9	8·4

[1] Includes light vans, buses and coaches and motorcycles in addition to cars and goods vehicles.

Road Construction

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the planned expenditure on road construction in the years 1994-95 to 1996-97.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 24 January, *Official Report*, column 77.

Motor Traffic Growth

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of his projections of future traffic growth is expected to be heavy goods traffic; and what proportion is expected to be private cars.

Mr. Key: Car traffic forecasts do not differentiate between private and commercial use. The growth in car traffic forecast in the national road traffic forecast between 1994 and 2025 is between 57 per cent. and 87 per cent. The growth in heavy goods vehicle traffic over the same period is forecast to be between 54 per cent. and 110 per cent.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the projected growth of motor vehicle traffic by the year 2025.

Mr. Key: It is projected in the NRTF that all motor vehicle traffic will grow by between 58 per cent. and 94 per cent. between 1994 and 2025. The forecast range results from differing assumptions about economic growth and fuel prices.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the source of information that is provided to the Government on future motor vehicle traffic growth.

Mr. Key: The growth in motor vehicle traffic is forecast within the Department of Transport. The information used is detailed in the booklet "National Road Traffic Forecast (Great Britain) 1989".

Road Lighting

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will light more roads in order to help achieve his target of reducing road deaths and serious injuries by a third by the year 2000.

Mr. Key: In deciding which road safety measures to introduce we apply the general principle that resources should be used in a way which is most likely to be effective in reducing casualties. There may be cases where lighting should be installed, but there are also many other ways of improving roads to reduce deaths and serious injuries. Lighting will not always be the most effective solution.

Public Transport

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will specify the measures his Department is taking to encourage freight traffic to use rail and passengers to use public transport.

Mr. Key: Government policies are designed to encourage passengers and freight to transfer from road to public transport where that makes economic and environmental sense. Some 90 per cent. of passenger and inland freight traffic goes by road, but next year about 40 per cent. of total transport expenditure will be used to improve public transport. The existing freight facilities grant scheme is also to be extended by the Railways Act 1993 and our new track access grant for freight services will start in April.

Road Maintenance

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of roadworks begun on or since 1 April 1993 are accompanied by a sign displaying the name of the organisation for which the work is being carried out and an emergency telephone number.

Mr. Key: Under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, the information described by the hon. Member is required to be displayed at works carried out by public utilities and others with apparatus in the road. The requirement does not apply to roadworks carried out by the highway authority. Compliance appears to be generally good but precise figures are not available.

The Department is the highway authority for the trunk roads and motorways in England. On these roads, all new construction works, and maintenance works other than short duration works, are accompanied by a sign naming the Department and giving other information about the work.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what percentage of *(a)* major and *(b)* all road maintenance contracts let between July 1992 and July 1993 were covered by lane rental agreements;

(2) what percentage of *(a)* major and *(b)* all road maintenance contracts let between July 1992 and July 1993 have contained direct financial incentives to minimise the amount of road coned off and to finish the work quickly.

Mr. Key: Three quarters of all major maintenance contracts let between July 1992 and July 1993 were lane rental. These contracts provide direct financial incentive to finish work quickly. Figures for non-major maintenance works are not available. It is a requirement in all trunk road maintenance contracts that traffic lanes should not be coned off unnecessarily.

Diabetics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy not to debar insulin-dependent patients from holding heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle licences.

Mr. Key: The advice of the honorary advisory board on driving and diabetes is that to allow insulin-treated diabetics to drive these large vehicles would constitute an unnecessarily high risk to road safety.

Pollution

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has made of the effect of Her Majesty's Government's plans for increasing the number of cars on the road and Her Majesty's Government's efforts to reduce pollution with technology such as filters and catalysts.

Mr. Key: Road traffic growth is largely a function of economic growth; current projections suggest that road traffic will increase by 58 to 94 per cent. by 2025. The forecasts of traffic demand do not represent targets which the Government are seeking to meet.

The Government have agreed tight emission standards for both cars and lorries within the European Union. As a result, most new cars have needed catalytic converters since the beginning of 1993. These reduce harmful emissions by about 70 per cent.

Unanimous agreement of a common position on vehicle emissions has been reached at the recent EC Council which will significantly tighten emission standards for new cars registered after 1 January 1997. Standards will be tightened further by the year 2000.

As a result of these standards, we expect ambient levels of most vehicle related pollutants to decline until well into the next century.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what study he has made of reports from the Centre for Exploitation of Science and Technology in relation to toxic effects of pollutants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Centre for Exploitation of Science and Technology produced a report on road transport and the environment as part of the United Kingdom environmental foresight project. The report contains a wide ranging review of environmental policies and aims to indentify future trends. In reaching views on these matters the Government take advice from a number of expert groups including the expert panel on air quality standards, established by the Department of the Environment, the Advisory Group on the Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes and the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants, which report to the Department of Health.

Seamen (Employment Agencies)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many employment agencies for seamen have *(a)* been licensed, *(b)* had applications for licensing as an employment agency for seamen refused and *(c)* had their licences revoked in each year since 1973.

Mr. Norris: Ninety-three licences in total have been granted to employment agencies for seamen since 1973. Prior to 1988 the Department of Transport refused licences to commercial agencies, and there were only nine licence holders. These consisted of seven Merchant Navy establishment administration offices, which all closed by 1990, and two unions. Information is not available as to when these nine licences were first issued. Since then, one licence was issued in 1988, 29 in 1990, 19 in 1991, 21 in 1992, 13 in 1993 and one in 1994. No licences have been refused since 1990 but two were revoked in 1993.

Crossrail

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to take into account in considerations on the crossrail project for central London the benefits that scheme might have for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We remain committed to achieving the benefits of the crossrail project, which is a scheme of wide-ranging significance. Benefits to passengers travelling to and from points beyond the London area are taken into account in evaluations of the scheme. This includes benefits to people travelling to and from Wales.

Traffic Congestion

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for the reduction of traffic congestion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The focus of the current trunk road programme is on relieving congestion on the existing network through widening schemes and the provision of bypasses on inter-urban routes.

In urban areas, there will be cases where on economic or environmental grounds it is neither practicable nor desirable to meet demand by road construction. In these cases, the answer may lie in a mix of traffic management measures—including priority routes in London, parking controls, encouraging public transport, car sharing and park-and-ride schemes. A wide-ranging study of urban traffic congestion is being carried out. It includes the possible role of city congestion charging. The introduction of the "package approach" will encourage local authorities to develop a coherent strategy for dealing with urban transport problems, and provide more flexibility for funding between modes.

Ports (Policing)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he is considering to bring responsibility for policing the ports of the United Kingdom under the direction and control of the British Transport police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: A member of the Port of Liverpool police made such a proposal in a letter copied widely to Members of the House. I do not support the proposal. Rather, it is for each port to decide about its policing arrangements.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Norris: The Department has 186 paper shredding machines. Three are in the Secretary of State's private office.

Traffic Monitoring

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what monitoring is undertaken by his Department of road works in London and their impact on traffic movement.

Mr. Norris: The Secretary of State is responsible for works co-ordination on motorways and trunk roads. Our own planned highway works are discussed with other London highway authorities with Metropolitan police and statutory undertakers to help to minimise inconvenience to the public. In addition, our consultant and borough agents receive advance details of certain types of street works proposed by statutory undertakers on trunk roads on our behalf; to enable co-ordination of all these activities to take place.

London Roadworks

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will name all those London roads for which his Department is responsible and which are currently undergoing roadworks; and if he will name in each case the body responsible for the works.

Mr. Norris: The following is a list of major roadworks currently being carried out on the trunk road network in London on behalf of the Secretary of State:

National Improvement Schemes

A406/M1 Junction
A406 Silver Street to Hall Lane
A406 Hanger Lane to Harrow Road
A406 East of Falloden Way to East of High Road Finchley
A40 Long Lane
A40 Widening, Long Lane to West End Road
A12 Hackney Wick to M11 Link Road
A13 West India Dock Road Junction

Maintenance and Small Improvement Schemes

M1 Junction 4-5—carriageway patching work
M1 Junction 1-5—communication cable laying
M4 Heston Road to Elevated section—overlay and partial reconstruction
M4 Heathrow Spur—overlay and partial reconstruction
A3 Hook Underpass—maintenance work
A3 Coombe Lane Flyover—replacement of expansion joints
A3 Malden Way—replacement of expansion joints on Hogsmill River Bridge
A4 Great West Road/Sutton Lane and Heston Road junction—improved right turn facilities
A4 West Cromwell Road Bridge and viaduct—replacement of expansion joints
A10 Church Street—junction improvements
A10 Bullsmore Lane to Carterhatch Lane—installation of cycle facilities
A13 New Road to Lambs Lane and Sandy Lane—resurfacing works
A13 Old Roding Bridge—bridgeworks
A13 Butcher Row/Branch Road—junction improvements
A23 Hermitage Bridge—maintenance work
A23 Foxley Lane Railway Bridge—maintenance work
A41 South of Brent Cross Flyover—drainage works
A406/A5 Staples Corner Flyover—bridge repairs

The upkeep of the trunk road network is an ongoing daily task requiring maintenance and improvement works.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which London bridges are currently closed or affected by roadworks; and which bridges are due for closure or roadworks during 1994.

Mr. Norris: None of the Secretary of State's bridges across the River Thames is currently closed or affected by road works. Roadworks are in progress on Blackfriars bridge and Lambeth bridge. I am advised by the local highway authorities that Westminster bridge, Albert bridge, Putney bridge and possibly London bridge are likely to be affected by works during the remainder of 1994.

Public Transport Liverpool

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* inspections and *(b)* prosecutions were carried out by the Traffic Commission in respect of public transport in the Liverpool area (i) in the two years preceding and (ii) since deregulation.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* Data are not maintained for the Liverpool area alone. The north-western traffic area is the smallest area for which data may be available. Inspections are carried out by traffic examiners, responsible for such matters as drivers hours, tachographs and operator licensing, which may result in prosecution. Vehicle inspections are also carried out by vehicle examiners who are responsible for checking roadworthiness of vehicles. Offences may result in prohibitions. The police and local authority trading standards staff may also bring prosecutions in certain circumstances. Because changes have occurred in the way the figures are recorded, as well as in traffic area office boundaries, it is not possible to provide a consistent series of figures.

In the two years since the boundary change, PSV inspections and prosecutions by traffic examiners in the north-western traffic area were as follows:

	1991	*1992*
Vehicles examined	4,703	5,421
Prosecutions	53	77

AGRICULTURE FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which non-departmental public bodies for which she is responsible have been *(a)* abolished or *(b)* created since 1979.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 1 February 1994 at column *611*.

Fish Stocks

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money has been made available by the European Union to improve monitoring of fish stocks; and how it will be spent.

Mr. Jack: European Union funding is available for research and development under programmes such as FAR and AIR and the Fisheries Departments participate in relevant projects. However such funds are not available for regular monitoring of fish stocks which is funded by member states.

Live Cattle (Exports)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what discussions she has had with the European Commission and the Standing Veterinary Committee concerning lifting the ban on the export of live cattle; and if she will make a statement regarding the ban on the export of live cattle;

(2) what plans her Department has to exempt highland cattle from the current ban on the export of live cattle;

(3) what representations she has received regarding the ban on the export of cattle; what analysis her Department has carried out as to the effects of the ban on the industry in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The export of live cattle over six months of age from the United Kingdom to other member states is prohibited under European Commission decision 89/469/EEC. This is because of the position on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The EC Scientific Veterinary Committee in conducting a scientific evaluation of BSE in September 1993 endorsed the Community control measures on BSE. There has been no change in this position.

Officials attend the monthly meetings of the animal health standing veterinary committee in Brussels at which regular updates on the BSE situation in the United Kingdom are given. There has been no discussion recently about the lifting of the ban on the export of live cattle for breeding from the United Kingdom and the exemption of certain breeds from the restrictions. This would be a matter for consideration initially by the European Commission who are keeping the position under review and are aware of the improving disease situation in the United Kingdom. Several representations have been received on this subject and are being considered in the light of the present situation on BSE in the European Union.

Decommissioning Grant

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing boat owners have had their application for decommissioning grant accepted; how much was paid out in each case; and how many owners have withdrawn from the scheme after their applications were accepted; how much money for the first round of the decommissioning scheme is likely to be underspent; what plans she has to re-allocate that money; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: On 21 September I announced that we were to pay decommissioning grant to the owners of 142 vessels. Since that time the owners of some of those vessels have withdrawn their applications. We currently expect to pay decommissioning grant in respect of 137 vessels. As I said on 21 September, payments will average £340 per vessel capacity unit (VCU).

On the question of withdrawals and the reallocation of funds, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 3 February at column *818*.

Goosanders

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many licences have been issued by her Department for the slaughter of goosanders on the Duke of Devonshire's estates in the Yorkshire dales.

Mr. Soames: Two licences have been issued for the Duke of Devonshire's estates in the Yorkshire dales to shoot a restricted number of goosanders as an aid to scaring.

Licences are not issued to cull bird populations. They are granted only where the Ministry is completely satisfied that the applicant has provided sufficient evidence of the serious damage being caused to the fishery and where other methods of non-lethal scaring have been shown to be ineffectual or impractical, not just difficult to implement.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will carry out a review of the financial situation of dairy farmers with milking herds of fewer than 40 cows, with particular reference to the problems faced when production exceeds quota; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: There are no plans to carry out such a review. However, among the amendments which the Ministry will be making to the dairy produce quotas regulations from 1 April are provisions which may be of assistance to smaller producers. In particular, we are planning to relax some of the current restrictions on the lease and sale of quota; and we will be making some technical ajustments which will provide for a more quitable redistribution of unused quota to over-quota groups of producers at the end of the quota year.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in her private office and *(b)* in her Department.

Mr. Jack: There are no paper shredding machines in the Minister's private office.

The purchase of paper shredding machines is a decentralised function within this Department and central stock recordse are not kept. To answer the second part of the question would require a survey covering the Department's offices throughout England, Scotland and Wales, which could be done only at a disproportionate cost.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the use of bovine somatotropin in milk production.

Mr. Soames: I refer to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) on 3 February 1994 at column *817*.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates have been made of the increased cost of subsidies for milk production were bovine somatotropin to become freely available in a non-quota system; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have made no such estimate as currently the Community has no policy to dismantle current milk quota arrangements and replace it with an alternative regime. It remains the Government's objective to get rid of production quotas and to expose the dairy industry throughout the Community to the free market forces of supply and demand.

Birds (Killing)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of all licences issued by her Department for the killing of birds protected under the Countryside and Wildlife Act 1981 during the last three years, specifying the number and species killed.

Mr. Soames: Figures for 1993 are not yet available. The number of licences issued for birds protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for the years 1990 to 1992 and the number of birds killed are as follows.

	1990		*1991*		*1992*	
	No. of licences issued	*No. of birds killed*	*No. of licences issued*	*No. of birds killed*	*No. of licences issued*	*No. of birds killed*
Feral pigeon and house sparrow	435	12,756	382	4,899	333	6,583
Canada goose[1]	73	3,708	86	4,833	94	2,737
Bullfinch	2	1,346	1	402	1	587
Herring gull[2]	1	1,005	1	781	1	1,546
Brent goose	87	831	108	1,244	214	2,797
Greylag goose[1]	2	23	5	91	14	37
Cormorant	3	11	4	18	4	10
Greenfinch	1	0	0	0	0	0
Robin	1	1	0	0	5	2
Blackbird	2	4	0	0	2	1
Wigeon	1	0	1	13	1	0
Moorhen and coot	0	0	1	40	2	36
Heron	0	0	1	5	2	1
Mallard	0	0	0	0	1	2
Thrush	0	0	0	0	1	1
Blue Tit	0	0	0	0	1	1
Pink-footed goose	0	0	0	0	1	0
Pied Wagtail	0	0	0	0	1	0
Wren	0	0	0	0	1	0

Notes:
[1]Includes the pricking of eggs.
[2]Includes the taking of eggs and nests.

Set-aside

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes have taken place since set-aside was introduced in *(a)* the acreage of land cultivated, *(b)* the acreage of set-aside fallow land, *(c)* the totals of pesticides used and *(d)* the totals of agro-chemicals used.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The set-aside arrangements under the arable area payments scheme first came into operation at the end of 1992 in respect of the 1992-93 crop year. The total area of relevant arable crops (cereals, oilseeds, linseed and proteins) in England and Wales for 1992 and 1993 respectively was:

	hectares
1992	3,738,800
1993	[1]3,349,900

[1] *Source:* June census.

The area of land set-aside in England and Wales under all the options of the voluntary five-year set-aside scheme, the one-year set-aside scheme and the arable area payments scheme was:

	1992 hectares	*1993 hectares*
Five-year scheme	128,779	114,778
One-year scheme (applied in 1992 only)	12,192	—
Arable area payments scheme (applied in 1993 only)	—	501,120
Total area set aside	140,971	615,898

Just over 25,000 tonnes of pesticides and herbicides were used in England and Wales in 1992, but this figure includes quantities used for protected crops as well as for outdoor arable crops. The 1992 British survey of fertiliser practice indicates that the average application rate of organic fertilisers was 257 kg/ha. Comparable figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Intervention Stocks

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, columns *131-32*, when she expects to receive figures for actual expenditure in respect of each member state under the EC surplus food scheme in 1993.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* Final figures will be available after 31 March, which is the closing date for the notification of member states' expenditure under the 1993 scheme.

DEFENCE

Defence Planning

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purpose and outcome of the recent trilateral meeting between France, Germany and the United Kingdom on co-operative defence planning.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence hosted informal discussions with his French and German counterparts in London on 26 January 1994 to share views on European security issues following the NATO summit. The discussions, which were wide-ranging and constructive, did not cover defence planning.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what cost has been incurred in providing documents to the Scott inquiry additional to that given in his reply of 8 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *80*.

Mr. Aitken: The direct cost of the provision of documents to the Scott inquiry between 1 July 1993 and 31 January 1994 is estimated to be approximately £58,000.

Armaments (Shipping)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what safety and environmental protection precautions are taken at each of the ports used by his Department for the shipping abroad of armaments and explosives.

Mr. Aitken: Protection is afforded through the licensing of commercial ports by the Health and Safety Executive as required by the Dangerous Substances in Harbour Areas Regulations 1987. Dockyard ports and the military berth at Marchwood are also licensed in accordance with HSE standards.

Allivane International Ltd.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when payment was made by his Department to Allivane International Ltd. for the storage of ammunition at the central ammunition depot at Longtown, from 7 to 16 June 1988 to which he referred in the reply on 7 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *125*.

Mr. Aitken: No payment was made by my Department to Allivane International Limited for the storage of ammunition at the central ammunition depot at Longtown from 7 to 16 June 1988.

Overseas Trainees

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any *(a)* Iraqi, *(b)* Iranian, *(c)* Indonesian and *(d)* Malaysian nationals are currently training at British military establishments in the United Kingdom or at overseas bases.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

(a) No
(b) No
(c) Yes
(d) Yes

It is not our practice to give details of training or numbers involved.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the information he secured from the CIA on Iraqi military capabilities, as indicated in his reply of 10 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *192*.

Mr. Hanley: In this instance the United States Government have not been able to produce a copy of the report in a form that is releaseable to foreign Governments. My Department, however, regularly exchanges information and assessments with the US authorities, and I believe that we have a good picture of Iraqi military capabilities.

Tornado-Helicopter Accident

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking following the report from the military accident investigation, pursuant to his answer of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *239*; and when he will publish the report.

Mr. Hanley: The RAF board of inquiry report into the investigation of the accident involving a civil helicopter and an RAF Tornado on 23 June 1993 is not yet complete. A summary of the board's findings will be published as soon as they are available. The RAF's flying procedures are kept under constant review to ensure that flying is conducted with full regard to safety and a number of possible measures to reduce further the risk of collision are under consideration. A new system of notification by civil operators engaged in pipeline inspections has also been introduced by the CAA, and is currently under review after an initial six month period.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which of the public appointments for which he is responsible require advance notice to and consultation with the Chief Whip's office; and which appointments made since 1979 have been so notified and consulted upon.

Mr. Hanley: It is not the practice of Her Majesty's Government to answer parliamentary questions about discussions and consultations between Departments and offices of Government relating to public appointments.

No-fly Zone (Bosnia)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Sea Harriers first took part in monitoring and enforcing the no-fly zone over Bosnia; under what operational command; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Sea Harriers first participated in no-fly zone operations on 2 August 1993. The Sea Harriers remain under national command. Their tasking on no-fly zone operations is co-ordinated between the command of NATO's 5th allied tactical air force and the commander of the Royal Navy task group.

RFA Sir Geraint

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much the United Nations is paying for the charter of RFA Sir Geraint to transport heavy equipment of the Nordic battalion from Trieste to Split; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The UN has agreed to pay a daily hire charge of £3,500 for the use of the landing ship logistic, LSL, Sir Geraint and to meet any additional costs arising as a result of the charter.

HMS Birmingham

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the pattern of rotation of Royal Navy ships on Adriatic embargo operations of the recent alleged sabotage of HMS Birmingham.

Mr. Hanley: HMS Birmingham sailed recently for pre-deployment work in United Kingdom waters after a two-week delay and will shortly deploy for the Adriatic. HMS Coventry, the Op Grapple escort, has been made available for the NATO-WEU embargo operation until HMS Birmingham arrives in theatre.

UNPROFOR

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many reservists on S type engagement in the regular forces are currently deployed with the British contingent in UNPROFOR; and if he will give a summary of the categories of reservists concerned.

Mr. Hanley: Members of the Territorial Army and the Royal Marines Reserve may volunteer to undertake short regular engagements or commissions on special terms. No one serving on that basis is currently deployed as part of the British contingent of UNPROFOR.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to seek information on the monthly additional allowances paid by countries contributing troops to the UNPROFOR mission since 28 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Having now received some information from other countries participating in the UNPROFOR mission, I am satisfied that the current arrangements for paying United Kingdom service personnel in the former Yugoslavia are both fair and justifiable and compare well with other nations. All personnel serving under United Nations auspices in Bosnia, including United Kingdom personnel, receive a United Nations allowance of $1·28 per day and a lump sum of $73·50 to cover rest and recreation: this is passed on in full by the British Government.

There are, however, inevitable differences in the pay and allowance regimes of the various participating nations. United Kingdom service personnel, for example are not paid "danger money". But their basic salary is in general significantly higher than the other nations' troops. For example the basic pay of British junior NCOs is some 70 per cent. higher than their French counterparts, some 55 per cent. higher than their Belgian counterparts and some 35 per cent. higher than their Norwegian counterparts. In addition, all United Kingdom personnel receive, throughout their career and irrespective of where they are stationed, an X-factor representing an 11·5 per cent. enhancement of basic salary which contains an element which recognises the need for them to serve on occasions under difficult and dangerous circumstances.

Troop reimbursement costs paid to nations providing personnel for United Nations deployments are intended to allow participating Governments to recover certain costs from the United Nations, including an element for the salary costs of personnel on a per capita basis. United Kingdom personnel continue to receive their full pay and allowances from the British Government, including for those deployed from Germany and proportion of their local overseas allowance at a rate of 70 per cent. for married personnel and 40 per cent. for singles, in recognition of their continuing financial commitments at home.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) purusant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *425*, if he will give a breakdown of the annual receipts and costs areas they cover received by his Department from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the British contribution to UNPROFOR;

(2) what has been the cost to his Department of the British contribution to UNPROFOR in each of the last three financial years; and if he will give a breakdown;

(3) what costs have been reclaimed by his Department from the Foreign and Commonwealth office for each year since Britain contributed troops, equipment and expertise to UNPROFOR.

Mr. Hanley: UNPROFOR was established in financial year 1992-93 when the additional cost of the British contribution amounted to some £63,000,000. This amount was reimbursed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Ministry of Defence in full in financial year 1992-93 and comprised £1 million for personnel costs; £8 million for set-up costs; £12 million for deployment; £38 million for sustainment; and £4 million for miscellaneous support and equipment. For the current financial year, it is anticipated that the additional cost will amount to some £75 million which will be reimbursed in full by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Employment Legislation

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what employment legislation is applicable to his Ministry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Crown is bound by legislation which contains a specific provision to this effect, or where this is the necessary implication of the legislation.

Service Women (Numbers)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many women were in each of the armed forces as *(a)* female officers and *(b)* non-commissioned females in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Year as at 1 April	Royal Naval services		Army		Royal Air Force	
	Female officers	Service women	Female officers	Service women	Female officers	Service women
1979	434	3,402	884	4,933	608	5,036
1980	440	3,395	877	5,373	706	5,402
1981	481	3,590	945	5,644	755	5,518
1982	465	3,495	959	5,014	752	5,016
1983	436	3,465	933	5,211	740	4,634
1984	387	3,542	984	5,589	767	4,977
1985	374	3,332	1,009	5,762	801	5,149
1986	380	3,062	979	5,582	850	5,186
1987	403	2,980	1,115	5,491	971	5,443
1988	399	2,945	1,137	5,285	1,053	5,350
1989	407	3,064	1,186	5,465	1,099	5,277
1990	430	3,231	1,230	5,816	1,136	5,625
1991	456	3,716	1,253	6,096	1,181	6,116
1992	473	4,100	1,197	6,585	1,194	6,099
1993	495	3,991	1,170	6,424	1,139	5,698

Note: Figures prior to 1 April 1986 exclude female officers in the medical, dental, veterinary and legal specialisations as they were included in the male officer numbers.

Pregnant Women

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Ministry first received a legal challenge from a woman serving in the armed forces or formerly serving in the armed forces with regard to dismissal from the armed forces on the ground of pregnancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The first legal challenge to the policy of compulsorily discharging service women on pregnancy was received from two former service women in June 1990. With the assistance of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the women applied to the High Court for judicial review of the decision to discharge them.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average amount paid in compensation to women who had to leave the armed forces because they became pregnant in each year since compensation payments were first made; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Hanley: Compensation payments to women discharged from the armed forces on the ground of pregnancy commenced in 1992-93, when the average amount paid was £3,462. The figure for the current financial year to date is £3,823. My answer of 21 January to the hon. Member, *Official Report,* col *939,* should have given a total of £5,822,943 as the figure paid in compensation to women compulsorily discharged from the armed forces on grounds of pregnancy between August 1978 and August 1990. The current figure for compensation claims paid is 1,720 at a total cost of £6,234,779.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many women who left the forces because they became pregnant in each year since 1980 subsequently rejoined the forces at a lower rank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Royal Navy and Army do not hold this information centrally and it could not be provided without disproportionate cost. Fourteen airwomen discharged on pregnancy after 1980 rejoined the Royal Air Force at a lower rank: nine in 1991, four in 1992 and one in 1993. All these women rejoined the RAF under the local service airwoman scheme. Three of those who re-enlisted in 1991 have since transferred to regular service.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under which vote and subhead his Ministry made compensation payments to women who left the armed forces because they became pregnant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: As with all compensation paid by my Department in common law and industrial tribunal cases, payments made to pregnant ex-service women are made centrally on behalf of the three services from the second Under Secretary of State's top level budget—vote 1L2.

Creches

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 January, *Official Report,* column *940,* what estimates he has of the costs involved in providing creche facilities at military bases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I have nothing further to add to my answer of 21 January, *Official Report,* column 940.

Equal Opportunities Employment

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what policy statement his Ministry has with regard to equal opportunities employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is the Department's policy to promote equal opportunity in the field of employment for disabled civilian personnel, for personnel of all racial groups and between men and women. The level of fitness required of service personnel precludes the recruitment of disabled persons. For operational and practical reasons, female service personnel are excluded from certain areas of employment, but the positon is kept under continuous review.

Dual-use Technology

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the development of dual-use technology.

Mr. Aitken: We favour the development of dual-use technology wherever practicable. The Defence Research Agency is currently pursuing a number of initiatives in this field including the pathfinder scheme and the development of dual-use technology centres.

Lightweight Fighter

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the objectives of the common affordable lightweight fighter programme.

Mr. Aitken: The common affordable lightweight fighter programme is sponsored by the United States Department of Defense. Its overall objective is to demonstrate, through flight testing, technologies to enable the development of a lightweight fighter aircraft of modular design. It is intended that the developed aircraft will have an advanced short takeoff and landing variant and a conventional takeoff and landing variant, sharing common designs of modules of engine, airframe and avionics. Cost reduction of design and manufacturing processes, is a major objective of the programme.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the United Kingdom to join the common affordable lightweight fighter programme; and on what terms.

Mr. Aitken: We hope to join the risk reduction phase of the United States common affordable lightweight fighter programme this summer, subject to mutual agreement of terms that are still under consideration by both countries.

NATO Soldier Modernisation Plan

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the NATO soldier modernisation plan so far as it affects United Kingdom companies and forces.

Mr. Aitken: The NATO soldier modernisation plan is a long-term concept for an integrated system of personal equipment for soldiers which is currently the subject of a study by the NATO industrial advisory group, NIAG. A number of representatives from United Kingdom companies are involved in this work. It is too early to assess the effect of the NATO soldier modernisation plan on United Kingdom companies and forces.

Long-term Costings

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to release information relating to long-term costings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The 10-year costing of the defence programme, known as the long-term costing, is designed for internal planning purposes. Approval to commit expenditure is subject to separate procedures and endorsement by Ministers as appropriate. To avoid giving a misleading impression as to the firmness of our plans we would not normally provide details of the contents of the long-term costing.

Desert Storm Syndrome

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has relating to possible psychological aspects of Desert Storm syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We have no evidence to support the existence of a medical condition peculiar to armed forces service in the Gulf conflict, so statements on its possible psychological aspects would be mere speculation.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what new information he has received in the last six months relating to Desert Storm syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has continued to receive information relating to the alleged Desert Storm syndrome over the past six months from various sources. The information and sources are too numerous to list in detail but include:

(a) the results of medical assessments on those United Kingdom service and ex-service personnel concerned that their health might have been affected by their Gulf service, who came forward in response to my offer to such personnel of investigation by armed forces medical services' specialists.

(b) information from the United States authorities about the investigations and research they are undertaking into the existence of the alleged Syndrome.

(c) correspondence from various individuals and organisations concerning claims that service and ex-service personnel who served in the Gulf are suffering unexplained illnesses.

(d) media reports of the alleged existence of Desert Storm syndrome.

To date none of the information has provided scientific evidence to support claims of the existence of a medical condition peculiar to service in the Gulf conflict.

Accommodation (Expenditure)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy regarding expenditure on improvements and furnishings for the accommodation assigned to commanding officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence provides married quarters for all ranks of the armed forces. The scale of provision of quarters for commanding officers varies according to the rank and responsibilities of the appointment. Expenditure on improvements and furnishings of these and all quarters is limited to that which is necessary to maintain the property to an appropriate standard.

Defence Industrialists

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish all the graphical information on defence expenditure that has been shown to defence industrialists in the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: No central record is kept of the contacts with industry at all levels at which such information may have been passed. I will however make arrangements, as soon as possible, to place in the Library of the House appropriate unclassified graphical information from the chief of defence procurement's first two conferences for defence suppliers, in July 1992 and July 1993. These include illustrative indications of possible trends in certain categories of defence procurement expenditure.

Britannia Royal Naval College

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of building dog kennels at Britannia Royal Naval college, Dartmouth.

Mr. Hanley: The work undertaken to prepare the site and to house the Ministry of Defence police guard dogs at Britannia Royal Naval college, Dartmouth cost some £54,000.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 8 February 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many staff in his Department are covered by statutory sick pay.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The majority of staff employed by the Department are eligible for statutory sick pay under the relevant provisions. There are certain employees, for example those over minimum state pension age or those employed for a period of less than three months, who are not covered. It has not proved possible to obtain detailed figures in the time available. I will, however, write to the hon. Member as soon as I can with the relevant figures.

Divorce

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column 719, under what statutory authority the arrangement regarding the passage of information on divorce cases was established.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As I stated in my answer of 20 January, an arrangement was made last November between officials from my Department and from the Home Office immigration and nationality department to provide the information specified in my earlier answer.

This was an informal arrangement arrived at between officials. No legal advice was sought at the time. When the matter subsequently became known to senior officials, legal advice was sought which showed that the informal arrangement was entered into without statutory authority, and it was therefore terminated immediately.

As I stated previously, no information supplied to the Home Office has in fact been used by it. The Home Office has destroyed all notifications in its possession and has confirmed that it has neither made nor retained any separate record of the information from the courts.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Financial Services Regulations

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he is taking to monitor the effects of the new regulations governing the financial services industry.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury's responsibilities for making rules and regulations under the Financial Services Act have been transferred to the Securities and Investments Board. It is primarily for the Securities and Investments Board to monitor the effect of its rules. The Diretor General of Fair Trading is responsible for reporting to the Treasury any significant anti-competitive effects.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible have been *(a)* abolished or *(b)* created since 1979.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Prime Minister on 1 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *611*.

Launderettes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he is giving to a lower rate of VAT for launderettes; and when he expects to reach a conclusion.

Sir John Cope: None. All member states within the EC have agreed that reduced rates of VAT may be applied only to the specific list of goods and services in the EC VAT rates directive. Launderette services do not appear in this list. Furthermore, the directive does not allow for the introduction of any new zero rates.

VAT (Domestic Fuel)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the fiscal return to the Exchequer during 1994-95 of the extension of VAT to domestic fuel.

Sir John Cope: The extension of VAT to domestic fuel and power is estimated to raise £950 million in 1994-95. The effect on the public sector borrowing requirement will be offset in part by increases in Government spending, announced in the last Budget, which are designed to provide help for pensioners and low income households in meeting increased fuel bills.

Departmental Head of Information

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to the Treasury of having a facsimile machine installed at the home of his Department's head of information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury keeps one spare portable fax machine for contingencies such as senior officials having to work from home because of illness. This machine was temporarily installed in the home of the head of information.

Department of Telecommunications

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the reasons for differences in the way DTELS staff have been treated in respect of redundancy protection from the way PSA and Forward Catering staff were treated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's policy is that there should be a clean break between the public and private sectors when civil service activities are privatised. There is therefore a general presumption against offering Government guarantees of redundancy entitlements to staff transferred to the private sector. In certain circumstances, however, where because of market testing or because of the climate in the relevant sector of the economy the prospects for the business were uncertain, guarantees in the event of bankruptcy have been given. Each case has been considered on its merits in consultation with the representatives of the staff concerned.

Co-operatives

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to encourage the development of retail, wholesale and manufacturing co-operatives.

Mr. Portillo: Many Government policies are directed towards encouraging the development of new businesses.

Correspondence

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the Inland Revenue's published standards for replying to taxpayers' letters in 1992-93; and to what extent those standards were met.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1992-93 the Inland Revenue standard was to reply to all letters within 28 days and to deal substantively with correspondence in at least 90 per cent. of cases. In the remaining cases the response tells the taxpayer when the letter will be dealt with. In fact, the network of tax and collection offices recorded that 99 per cent. of correspondence has been dealt with substantively within 28 days.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to his recent question on 4 February 1994 at column 988.

Tax Concessions (Shipping)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what fiscal measures he will take to assist the competitive position of the British shipping industry following the German Government's decisions to extend tax concessions for investors in shipping companies.

Mr. Dorrell: The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Budget that shipping companies will benefit from a special higher limit of £5 million for the amount which they can raise annually from investors under the new enterprise investment scheme. Other measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 15 December 1993 include an extension of the Government's existing support for training to cover junior officers.

Intrastat System

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action is being taken in response to the recommendation by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee that the Central Statistical Office conducts a special review of the Intrastat system covering visible trade with other EC countries.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have informed the chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee about the work already in hand to review the operation of the Intrastat system.

In view of the importance of statistics on international trade, Customs and Excise and the Central Statistical Office have been monitoring carefully the operation of the Intrastat system since its introduction in January 1993. In the light of the results of this monitoring considerable efforts have been made, successfully, to improve the accuracy and speed of response.

Following a slow start in the early part of 1993 response rates for the first nine months, to September 1993, are now in excess of 95 per cent. by value for both arrivals and dispatches. There has also been a substantial improvement in the speed on response with 90 per cent. of the trade by value being submitted within seven weeks of the due date, an improvement of 20 weeks over the early months. Customs are working strenuously to obtain further improvements.

Discussions have also been held with Customs authorities and statistical offices in other EC countries to identify and investigate changes in the pattern of recording following the introduction of Intrastat.

Further investigations are being carried out to validate the register of traders which is being used, to make checks against data reported on the VAT forms and elsewhere, and to examine the recording of trade where the movement of goods involves intermediaries or transit through other member states.

The procedures used for deflation to constant prices and conversion to the balance of payments basis are also being checked.

A report on these investigations will be published as soon as they are complete. The statistics which have been released remain the best available estimates. If however the investigations point to revisions, these will be made at the earliest opportunity.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) of 14 January, *Official Report*, column 305, if he will set out the reasons why a ban on arms sales to Indonesia would not be appropriate.

Mr. Goodlad: Our policy on arms sales to Indonesia is based on the principle that all sovereign states enjoy the right, under article 51 of the United Nations charter, to defend themselves. This is a right we claim for ourselves and it would be inconsistent and discriminatory to deny it to others.

The export of defence equipment is controlled through our domestic export licence system.

A ban on arms sales to Indonesia would not in our view bring about a change in the circumstances of East Timor.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's Office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 3 February 1994, *Official Report*, column 858.

Iran

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to raise the persecution of the Iranian Church with the Iranian Government; what information he has on the closing of churches and intimidation of Christians; and if he will urge the Iranian Government to allow people from the United Nations Human Rights Commission into Iran to investigate the situation of the Church;

(2) what action Her Majesty's Government will be taking to urge the Government of Iran to conduct a full and impartial investigation into the murder of Bishop Haik Hovsepian Mehr and to allow observers from the United Nations Human Rights Commission to take part in such investigations.

Mr. Goodlad: We and our European partners repeatedly underline to the Iranian Government the importance we attach to their human rights record, including on religious minorities.

The European Union, with our full support, expressed concern to the Iranian authorities at the reported death sentence on Reverend Mehdi Dibaj. We understand that Reverend Dibaj was subsequently released pending further investigation by the court.

We and our European partners have also told the Iranian authorities that we were disturbed at the circumstances surrounding Rev. Hovsepian's recent death. The Iranians have said that Rev. Hovsepian's death is still being investigated.

We have received several reports about the position of Christians in Iran from Christian groups in the United Kingdom and the United Nations special representative. Our embassy in Tehran also monitors the situation. We are concerned at recent reports of persecution, especially of members of "The Assemblies of God".

We have co-sponsored resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights reflecting the reports of the United Nations special representative on human rights in Iran, Mr. Galindo-Pohl. We have urged the Iranian authorities to co-operate with him fully.

Paedophiles

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action his Department is taking to persuade the Governments of *(a)* Sri Lanka, *(b)* Thailand and *(c)* the Philippines to charge and prosecute British paedophiles who commit offences in those countries.

Mr. Goodlad: We abhor the abuse of children wherever it occurs and take every suitable opportunity to encourage the authorities in Sri Lanka, Thailand and the Philippines in their efforts to address this problem.

EC Documents

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the European Council code of conduct on public access to Council and Commission documents.

Mr. Goodlad: We support greater openness in the Community and welcome the Council's agreement on the code of conduct, which fulfils a commitment entered into at Maastricht in 1991.

Rhinoceros Horn

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken by the Governor of Hong Kong to ensure that legislation prohibiting trade in rhinoceros horn is effectively enforced, and to ensure that any existing stockpiles of horn are immediately destroyed.

Mr. Goodlad: There are no known stockpiles of rhino horn in Hong Kong.

Existing endangered species legislation in Hong Kong is as tight as it can be as regards rhino horn.

The Hong Kong Government have set up an endangered species liaison group to co-ordinate local enforcement operations and to liaise with international agencies concerned with environmental issues, including non-governmental organisations.

At the end of 1993, in response to a report by the Environmental Investigation Agency—EIA—the Agriculture and Fisheries Department of the Hong Kong Government carried out a series of searches of 58 shops. Suspected rhino hide was seized from two shops, together with a number of packets of medicine claiming to contain rhino ingredients. This enforcement activity will continue.

Malaysia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the protocol agreed in March 1988 between the then Secretary of State for Defence and the Government of Malaysia contained figures relating amounts or percentages of civil aid to amounts of arms purchases.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes. But as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs made clear in his reply to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 25 January, at column *145-46*, the Secretary of State for Defence, after consultation with ministerial colleagues in London, wrote to the Malaysian Minister of Finance in June 1988 to say that aid could not be linked to defence sales. As a result, the issue was not taken up in the memorandum of understanding on defence procurement signed in September that year.

Jordan

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much debt relief was granted to Jordan over the last five years; and under what scheme this was granted.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Over the past five years, debts due from Jordan have been rescheduled twice. A total of £190 million has been rescheduled including debt owing to both ECGD and ODA. The reschedulings were concluded as part of general agreements between Jordan and its Paris club creditors. Some of these debts were rescheduled over an extended period under Paris club terms available for lower-middle

income countries. Interest is charged at market rates on ECGD-insured debts but no interest is charged on rescheduled ODA debts.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England).

Mr. Brooke: The members currently appointed to the Royal Commission for the Historical Monuments of England are:

Baroness Park of Monmouth CMG *(Chairman)*
Professor Richard Bradley
Dr. Derek Keene
Professor Geoffrey Martin CBE
Bridget Cherry
Dr. Richard Gem
Professor Martin Biddle
Trevor Longman
Anne Riches
Robert Yorke
Professor Charles Thomas CBE
Professor Gwyn Meirion-Jones
Dr. Malcolm Airs
Professor Michael Fulford
Dr. Marilyn Palmer

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the British Film Institute.

Mr. Brooke: The current governors of the British Film Institute are:

Mr. Jeremy Thomas *(Chairman)*
Ms Jan Ashdown
Dame Jocelyn Barrow OBE
Lord Brabourne CBE
Mr. Kenneth Branagh
Mr. Bob Cryer MP
Mr. Charles Denton
Sir Anthony Durant MP
Mr. Matthew Evans
Ms Brenda Ferris
Ms Premila Hoon
Ms Linda James
Mr. Steve Morrison
Ms Lynda Myles
Mr. Simon Relph
Mr. Allan Shiach
Mr. Anthony Sloman
Mr. Brian Tesler CBE
Mr. Alexander Walker
Ms Andrea Wonfor

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites.

Mr. Brooke: The members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites are:

Dr. Basil Greenhill, CMG CB (Chairman)
Fergus Bateson
Dr. Margaret Rule, CBE
Alex Flinder
Andrew Saunders
Lt. Cmdr. John Pugh, MBE, RN
Tim Schadla-Hall
Professor Sean McGrail
Guy Wilson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the Football Licensing Authority.

Mr. Brooke: The current members of the Football Licensing Authority are:

Mr. Norman Jacobs, OBE (Chairman)
Mr. Albert Brannon, CBE, FIFireE
Mr. Keith Bridge, MA, IPFA, CBIM
Mr. Ronald Broome, OBE, QPM
Mr. Trevor Brooking, MBE
Dr. Judith Fisher, MB, BS, FRCGP
Mr. Simon Inglis
Mr. Christopher Lewis, BSc Econ, MSc, C Psychol, AFBPs
Professor Sam Thorburn, OBE, FEng FICE FIStructE

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

War Crimes Act 1991

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest position regarding action under the War Crimes Act 1991; and whether any charges are likely to be brought during 1994.

The Attorney-General: The Metropolitan police war crimes unit is still actively pursuing its inquiries under the War Crimes Act 1991. Those inquiries are not yet complete and the question of a possible prosecution cannot be considered until they are concluded.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Deregulation

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which organisations were consulted by her Department, on each of the recommendations of the business deregulation task forces before they were agreed and action proposed in the DTI document, "Deregulation: Cutting the Red Tape".

Mr. Jack: Each of the task force recommendations agreed or agreed in principle by the Government has been or will be the subject of appropriate consultation with interested parties.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the United Kingdom Government require a tenant farmer to obtain the consent of the landlord in order to dispose of the milk quota allocated to him.

Mr. Jack: The EC regulations establish a link between quota and land. Landlords therefore have a clear interest in any quota apportionment—and its potential disposal—and are required to give their consent. A refusal to give this consent will necessitate the appointment of an arbitrator to decide the apportionment for the parties concerned.

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what account she has taken of the Advocate General's view expressed during the Herbert Wachauf case on milk quota 5/88 (1989) concerning the effect of article 40(3) of the EC treaty on the requirement for a tenant farmer to obtain the consent of his landlord, if the imposition of that requirement having regard to the particular situation of the tenant farmer, would result in discrimination between producers.

Mr. Jack: We have taken note of the judgment of the European Court in case 5/88-Herbert Wachauf. In our

opinion this case does not give rise to any suggestion of discrimination in our implementation of the EC milk quotas regulations.

Foresty

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will list all land currently owned by the Forestry Commission in *(a)* Humberside, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* South Yorkshire and *(d)* West Yorkshire;

(2) which of the Forestry Commission's holdings in *(a)* Humberside, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* South Yorkshire and *(d)* West Yorkshire are currently earmarked for sale.

Mr. Jack: The Foresty Commission is preparing a list of all its woodlands in Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, and this will identify those which the Commission is currently selling or planning to sell. I shall send a copy to the hon. Member and I shall also arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the subjects on which her Department formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by her to an executive agency.

Mr. Jack: Next steps agency chief executives are usually asked to reply to questions on day-to-day operational matters and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in the agencies' framework documents.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements she is making in existing English ESAs to facilitate new public access to the countryside.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As part of our programme to implement the EC's agri-environment regulation—Reg. 2078/92 EEC—I have laid before Parliament today regulations to amend section 18 of the Agriculture Act 1986 to enable me—and, as appropriate, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland —to introduce arrangements to encourage farmers to provide new public access opportunities in ESAs.

I shall be laying before Parliament tomorrow orders introducing a new voluntary access tier into each of the first round ESA schemes—the Broads, Somerset levels and moors, Pennine Dales, West Penwith and South downs. In addition, I shall shortly be laying orders introducing parallel arrangements into the other existing English ESA schemes—Breckland, Clun, North Peak, Suffolk River valleys, Test valley, South West peak, Exmoor, Lake district, South Wessex downs, North Kent marshes, Avon valley. Information about the new access tier will be made available to farmers in all existing English ESAs from tomorrow and farmers will be able to enter into access agreements with the Minister after the orders come into force.

Arable Areas Payments Scheme

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many landowners in England are receiving annual payments under the arable area payments scheme in the latest financial year of *(a)* up to £100,000, *(b)* between £100,000 and £500,000, *(c)* between £500,000 and £1,000,000 and *(d)* over £1,000,000; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 11 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *55*.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in how many cases payments to farmers and landowners under the arable area payments scheme have been withheld or recovered in England; what is the amount of money withheld or recovered in each case; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Every case in which payments may be withheld or recovered is examined very carefully and applicants have an opportunity to comment before a final decision is taken. This means that it is only possible to provide very provisional figures at this stage. Over 100 payments have so far been reduced or withheld entirely, but there are further cases still under consideration. These figures exclude penalties for late applications and adjustments made following corrections notified by the applicant under the special arrangements which applied in 1993 for dealing with genuine errors. It is not yet possible to give a precise figure for amounts of money withheld because individual cases vary considerably.

Fraud

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her Department's policy for dealing with employees found guilty of fraud.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 1 February 1994]:* The Ministry has internal disciplinary procedures which provide a range of penalties applicable in cases of misconduct. These are subject to regular review. Dismissal would normally apply where the case amounts to gross misconduct. An officer found guilty of fraud could expect to be dealt with accordingly.

Identification of Animals

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how the Government intend to implement EC directive 92/102 on the registration of holdings and the identification of animals; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Proper identification of animals and proper record keeping by farmers is essential if we are to protect our high animal health status and I am pleased to announce that I have decided on the best way forward on the identification and registration of cattle, pigs, sheep and goats.

The United Kingdom fought successfully in negotiations in Brussels for a commonsense approach to animal identification. We pressed hard for a system that would be the most efficient and at the same time the least burdensome to farmers and we achieved the best possible result.

The EC directive requires brief details of all cattle, pig, sheep and goat holdings to be held on a central register. This has been completed for cattle, is under way for pigs and will be completed by the 1 January 1995 deadline for sheep and goats.

Each calf born on or after 1 July 1994 will have to have one ear tag inserted bearing that animal's unique number. The current requirement for inserting the tag in non-dairy calves within seven days of birth will be relaxed to the 30 days set in the directive. Officials are discussing, with the ear tag manufacturers, how to control the issue of tags to ensure there is no duplication of numbers and the least disruption to the way farmers buy their tags.

The directive also allows each member state to devise its own arrangements for the movement of pigs within their own country. We have told the Commission that we shall base ours on the Movement and Sale of Pigs Order 1975. Pigs going for export will have to be ear tagged or tattooed to show the country and herd of origin.

The arrangements for sheep and goats are not due to be implemented until 1 January 1995. However, the sheep industry representatives have already said they would like to see similar requirements introduced as for pigs. Agriculture Department officials will be consulting them shortly about the details.

The more detailed record-keeping requirements for cattle were implemented by the Bovine Animals (Identification, Marking and Breeding Records) (Amendment) Order 1993. The minor changes required will be introduced shortly and those for sheep and goats on 1 January 1995.

Agriculture Department officials will be writing to all those who took part in the consultation exercise setting out the new arrangements in more detail. Copies of this letter will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the Government have reviewed the operations of the Movement and Sale of Pigs Order 1975; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have been conducting a deregulatory review of the Movement and Sale of Pigs Order 1975. It is clear that the industry accepts the need for this order to protect the high health status of the national herd. However, we have decided to streamline its operation to reduce the burden on farmers.

We will be allowing farmers to issue their own documents, currently issued by local authorities, for the movement of pigs off their own farms. The self-issued documents, which will replace the existing licences, will also act as the movement document required under the Animal Identification and Registration Directive, so that farmers will not have to fill in two pieces of paper to move one pig.

We will also be scrapping the requirement to mark pigs going to slaughter, other than swill-fed pigs, where we will be simplifying the mark to a single red line to allow for easier marking on the farm.

I believe that these changes will enable the order to operate more efficiently while at the same time maintaining the high level of protection for the health status of our pig industry.

Agriculture Department officials will be writing shortly to all those who took part in the consultation exercise setting out the new arrangements in more detail. Copies of this letter will be placed in the Library.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the latest figures for the percentage of young people aged 16 to 19 years who are *(a)* in full-time education, *(b)* in training schemes, *(c)* employed and *(d)* unemployed.

Miss Widdecombe: Latest estimates from the summer 1993 labour force survey for Great Britain show that of all 16 to 19-year-olds 50 per cent. were in full-time education; 7 per cent. were employed in Government employment and training programmes; 26 per cent. were otherwise employed and not in full-time education; and 11 per cent. were ILO unemployed and not in full-time education.

Dock and Port Areas (Deaths)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaths in dock or port areas in each of the last five years have led to ongoing or completed prosecutions by the Health and Safety Executive; what have been the outcomes of the completed prosecutions; who were the named defendants in the cases; and what were the penalties imposed in those cases where the defendants were convicted.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Fatal injuries occuring within the docks and harbours industry reported under the reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurences regulations 1985 (RIDDOR), between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1993

Year	*Number of deaths*	*Of which leading to prosecution*	*Total informations laid*	*Convictions*
1988-89	10	—	—	—
1989-90	11	3	6	5
1990-91	2	—	—	—
1991-92	7	—	—	—
[1]1992-93	8	4	5	5

Details of prosecutions

(a) *1989-90*

1. One information laid against Michael Anthony Johnson—fine of £600 on conviction.
2. One information laid against Watchet Marine Ltd.—fine of £1,000 on conviction.
3. Two informations laid against Transit (Boston) Ltd.—total fines of £15,000 on conviction.
   Two informations laid against Port of Boston Ltd.—fine of £10,000 on one conviction; one case dismissed.

(b) *1992-93*

4. One information laid against Northern Cargo Services Ltd.—fine of £1,500 on conviction.
5. One information laid against Northern Cargo Services Ltd.—fine of £3,000 on conviction.
   One information laid against Robert Hodgins—fine of £520 on conviction.
6. One information laid against Associated British Ports—fine of £3,500 on conviction.
7. One information laid against Ardrossan Harbour Co. Ltd.—fine of £7,500 on conviction.

Accident Figures

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest annual figures for accidents in the building and manufacturing industries.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provisional figures for the year commencing 1 April 1992 are provided in the following table:

Table 1: Occupational injuries (a) in the Construction industry (b) 1992-93p, as reported to all enforcement authorities

Employment status	Severity of injury: Fatal	Major (c)	over 3 Day (d)	Total
Employee (including trainee)	63	2,062	11,675	13,800
Self-employed people	24	678	1,278	1,980
Member of Public (f)	5	100	(e)	105
All people	92	2,840	12,953	15,885

Table 2: Occupational injuries (a) in the Manufacturing industry (g) 1992-93p, as reported to all enforcement authorities

Employment status	Severity of injury: Fatal	Major (c)	over 3 Day (d)	Total
Employee (including trainee)	58	5,283	47,309	52,650
Self-employed people	2	127	173	302
Member of Public (f)	0	49	(e)	49
All people	60	5,459	47,482	53,001

Footnotes (Tables 1 and 2)
(a) Based on injuries reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR).
(b) As defined by Standard Industrial Classification 1980 Division 5.
(c) As defined under RIDDOR, but chiefly amputations, serious fractures, and any other injury requiring hospitalisation for more than 24 hours.
(d) Injuries causing incapacity from normal work for more than three days.
(e) Not reportable.
(f) Injured as a result of someone else's work activity.
(g) As defined by Standard Industrial Classification 1980 Divisions 2, 3 and 4.
p=provisional.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest annual accident figures for *(a)* Coventry and *(b)* the west midlands.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provisional figures for the year commencing 1 April 1992 are provided in the following table:

Table 1: Occupational injuries (a) in Coventry, 1992-93p as reported to HSE's Field Operations Division Inspectorates and Local Authorities (f).

Employment status	Severity of injury: Fatal	Major (b)	over 3 Day (c)	Total
Employee (including trainees)	0	65	824	889
Self-employed people	0	4	5	9
Member of Public (e)	0	70	(d)	70
All people	0	139	829	968

Table 2: Occupational injuries (a) in the County of West Midlands, 1992-93p, as reported to HSE's Field Operations Division Inspectorates and Local Authorities (f).

Employment status	Severity of injury: Fatal	Major (b)	over 3 Day (c)	Total
Employee (including trainees)	9	712	6,892	7,550
Self-employed people	1	47	150	198
Member of Public (e)	2	440	(d)	442
All people	12	1,199	6,979	8,190

Footnotes (Tables 1 and 2)
(a) Based on injuries reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR).
(b) As defined under RIDDOR, but chiefly amputations, serious fractures, and any other injury requiring hospitalisation for more than 24 hours.
(c) Injuries causing incapacity from normal work for more than three days.
(d) Not reportable.
(e) Injured as a result of someone else's work activity.
(f) Table does not include injuries reported to HSE's Mines, Railways or Explosives Inspectorates which are not readily available.
p=provisional

Upper Limb Disorders

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate his Department has made of the incidence of work-related upper limb disorders; what discussions his Department has had with the TUC and the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers about their work on these disorders; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Evidence from a supplementary questionnaire to the 1990 labour force survey indicates an

annual prevalence of around 117,000 self-reported cases of upper limb disorders caused by work. Health and Safety Executive—HSE—officials have attended meetings of a TUC working group to discuss work-related upper limb disorders, and a conference in July 1993 organised jointly by the TUC and the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers. Guidance for employers on prevention of upper limb disorders was published by HSE in 1990, and a four-year "Lighten the Load" campaign to raise awareness of musculoskeletal harm was launched in 1991. An action programme to tackle upper limb disorders agreed by the Health and Safety Commission in December 1993 is now underway.

Petrol Service Station Employees

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what legal remedies are available to employees of petrol service stations whose employers deduct from their hourly wages the cost of stock or petrol stolen by third parties.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Wages Act 1986 makes it unlawful for an employer to deduct more than 10 per cent. from the gross wages of retail workers because of cash shortages or stock deficiencies. Where a deduction is in breach of the Wages Act workers may complain to an industrial tribunal; where it is in breach of their contract of employment they may take action in the civil courts.

Health and Safety at Work

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has for introducing new measures to improve the Health and Safety at Work etc., Act 1974.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no such proposals. However, at the Government's invitation the Health and Safety Commission is currently undertaking a review, which builds on their long-standing work of rationalising and modernising all health and safety legislation. In response to a request from the Commission, the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill includes a clause designed to facilitate the removal of outdated and unnecessary health and safety legislation. The aim is to achieve a more effective health and safety regime. The commission will report back on the findings of its review in April.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library the heads of agreement between Northern Ireland Electricity and Scottish Power on the proposed interconnector.

Mr. Tim Smith: No. The agreement forms the basis of a commercial arrangement between two private sector companies.

Water Executive Depot, County Antrim

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future provision of a new water executive depot in Larne, County Antrim.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Department of the Environment does not intend to proceed with a replacement of the Larne depot at this time.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the subjects on which his Department formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Sir John Wheeler: Next steps agency chief executives are usually asked to reply to parliamentary questions about the day-to-day operational matters of their agency and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in their agency's framework document.

Arable Area Payments

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases payments to farmers and landowners under the arable area payments scheme have been withheld or recovered in Northern Ireland; what is the amount of money withheld or recovered in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: To date there have been four cases where payments were withheld under the arable area payments scheme. The amounts involved were £3,177·95, £3,444·25, £772·98 and £77·08. Further cases are under consideration.

One late application valued at £121·76 was also rejected and one payment totalling £361·92 was recovered.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's Office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

The Prime Minister: It is not the practice of Her Majesty's Government to answer parliamentary questions about discussions and consultations between Departments and offices of Government relating to public appointments.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) of 25 January, *Official Report,* column *152,* if he will now make it his policy to give substantive answers to parliamentary questions on his testimony given at the Scott inquiry on 17 January.

The Prime Minister: No. While Lord Justice Scott's inquiry continues, it would be inappropriate to comment substantively on any of the evidence which has so far been taken.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what powers Lord Justice Scott has to compel the attendance as witnesses before his inquiry of people who are neither civil servants nor ministers.

The Prime Minister: Lord Justice Scott does not have powers to compel people to appear before his inquiry. I

have made it clear that if he feels a change in his powers or terms of reference is needed, the Government will be ready to consider that.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the possible trial of Libyan suspects relating to Pan Am 103 taking place in The Hague, under a Scottish judge, with Scottish court rules.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policy is to obtain justice for the 270 victims of the Lockerbie disaster. Part of this is to ensure the appearance for trial in a United Kingdom or United States court of those accused of the Lockerbie bombing. The two accused would receive a fair trial in Scotland. There is therefore no need to establish a special court to try them in The Hague. The Libyan Government should comply in full with Security Council resolutions 731, 748 and 883 without further delay.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Biwater Group

Mr. Burden: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the public engagements of Ministers held in connection with the Biwater group of companies since 1983.

The Prime Minister: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Charterline Pilot Scheme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *406*, what proportion of the representations he has received on the Charterline pilot scheme have been *(a)* favourable and *(b)* critical.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* Recent surveys of Charterline users show that 87 per cent. are happy with the Charterline service and 93 per cent. would use the Charterline service again. I have received one representation critical of Charterline.

Pergau Dam

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what factors led him to make a decision at Prime Ministerial level to over-rule an accounting officer in the case of the Pergau Dam.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already said to the House on this matter and to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State's answer of 25 January 1994 at column 145-46 to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Know-How Fund

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to extend the know-how fund to other countries in the near future.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The know-how fund will be extended to the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia with effect from the beginning of the financial year 1994-95.

TRANSPORT

Great Western Line

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the original target dates for the Great Western line franchise *(a)* to begin running as a shadow franchise and *(b)* in the private sector; and what are the current expected dates for these stages.

Mr. Freeman: The Great Western main line should begin operating as a shadow franchise from 1 April, which has always been the target date. It will be for the franchising director to determine when this franchise should be offered to the private sector.

Ports

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the arrangements for the policing of ports following privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Many harbour authorities have statutory powers to employ their own constables but few do so. On privatisation, the statutory powers used by the former undertakers are transferred to the new owners. The Department does not intervene in ports' decisions about their policing arrangements.

Seamen's Agencies

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the licensing requirements for seamen's agencies; and on how many occasions licences have been refused or revoked since 1973.

Mr. Norris: Seamen's agencies may be licensed in accordance with section 110 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894. This section permits the Department of Transport to make the licence subject to such terms and conditions as are considered appropriate. Prior to 1988 the Department refused licences to commercial agencies and the only licence holders were seven Merchant Navy establishment administration—MNEA—offices, and two unions. No licences have been refused since 1990 but two were revoked in 1993.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *604*, what statements and press notices were made and issued on the channel tunnel rail link in November 1989; and if he will set out the information in the same form as his earlier answer.

Mr. Freeman: The information is as follows:

3 November 1989

Cecil Parkinson in response to a question from Jonathan Aitken MP

"I am greatly encouraged by the clear indications that I have had from the private sector that Channel Tunnel Rail services, including a new Channel Tunnel Rail Link can be financed commercially and that . . . the new link can still be brought into operation by 1988."

I regret that this item was not discovered during the search which was made in response to the hon. Member's earlier question.

British Rail Board Pay

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of British Rail board members pay was linked to performance in July 1992 and July 1993.

Mr. Freeman: In the year to 31 March 1992 BR executive board members participated in a bonus scheme with a potential maximum of 25 per cent. of annual remuneration. Percentage payments made in 1992 were in the range of 10 per cent. to 11 per cent. of remuneration. In the next year the potential maximum was 40 per cent., and payments were 22·5 per cent.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the subjects on which his Department formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Norris: Next steps agency chief executives are usually asked to reply to parliamentary questions about the day-to-day operational matters of their agency and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in their agency's framework document.

British Rail, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many Doncaster-based British Rail employees were employed by each division of British Rail on 1 January *(a)* five years ago and *(b)* 10 years ago.

Mr. Freeman: As at 1 January 1994 the number of Doncaster-based British Rail employees by division was as follows:

	Number
Central Services	391
Trainload Freight	449
Inter City	547
British Transport Police	17
Regional Railways	258
BR Maintenance Ltd.	570
National Stores Centre	335
Total	2,567

Information for the previous years is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Rail Season Tickets

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail season ticket holders have, since January 1993, *(a)* had the validity of their season tickets extended for days when there is no effective service, *(b)* been offered discounts on the renewal of their season tickets to compensate them for poor service in the previous year and *(c)* made use of the season ticket discount offered.

Mr. Freeman: Information on season ticket extensions is not held centrally. Decisions on extensions are made by local BR management according to local circumstances. I understand that 93,182 passengers have been offered and have accepted discounts on renewal of their season tickets since January 1994.

Merchant Navy (Homosexuality)

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *828*, whether he will introduce legislation this year to decriminalise homosexuality in the Merchant Navy.

Mr. Norris: The Government will bring forward the necessary legislation at the earliest convenient opportunity, taking account of the many other pressures on the legislative timetable.

Pollution Incidents

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what action his Department is to take following the recent pollution incidents in North Wales, Lancashire and Cumbria caused by the Norwegian company Stolt-Nielson;

(2) what is the cost of the clean-up operation in North Wales, Lancashire and Cumbria following the pollution incident caused by the Norwegian company Stolt-Nielson.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply.

I refer to my answer to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on 26 January 1994 at column *245*.

The marine pollution control unit has discussed the circumstances of this incident with the Stolt-Nielson group. The group has agreed to settle claims for the reasonable costs incurred by local authorities and other organisations involved in cleaning up the pollution and treating affected birds. Preliminary estimates of these are of the order of £100,000.

British Rail Employees

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail employees deal with the public in the course of their work; and how many of these wear name badges.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail employs approximately 22,000 retail staff. This figure includes all station and terminal staff and directly employed on-board train staff who come into contact with the public. All staff who have face-to-face contact with the public are required to wear name badges.

London Transport Board Pay

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of London Transport board members' pay was linked to performance in July 1992 and in July 1993.

Mr. Norris: Only the full-time executive members of the London Transport Board are covered by performance

pay arrangements. Non-pensionable bonuses for these members are paid retrospectively, based on performance in the previous financial year. In the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94 the bonuses paid represented on average additions of, respectively, 14 per cent. and 27 per cent. to the basic salary for the relevant year of the members concerned. The increase between the two years is partly explained by an increase in the maximum bonus payable under the bonus scheme from 25 per cent. to 40 per cent. of basic salary.

Rail Track Record Displays

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of British Rail stations displayed track record displays of punctuality and reliability as at July 1993.

Mr. Freeman: Track record displays appear at 231 of BR's 2,482 stations. Figures for punctuality and reliability performance are available on request from all staffed stations.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *506*, regarding existing contracts with his Department, if he will publish the terms of reference for each contract.

Mr. Norris: The existing contracts awarded over the past five years contain a wide variety of types of work. They will not normally be let against simple terms of reference, but if the hon. Member has a particular interest in any one of the cases listed in my answer of 31 January, I will be happy to respond.

Tankers

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many reported incidents of tankers breaching areas to be avoided around Shetland there have been since 5 January; and if he will give details of each incident.

Mr. Norris: The Department has received one report since the area to be avoided off the Shetland Islands was extended on 28 November 1993. That report related to an 87,000 grt Singapore-registered tanker spotted on 30 January, when the ship was approximately 1 km south of Sumburgh head, travelling in a south-westerly direction. The Department has asked the Singapore authorities, as the responsible flag state, to investigate the incident.

Consultancies

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *506*, regarding prospective contracts with his Department, if he will publish the terms of reference for each contract.

Mr. Norris: Consultancy contracts are not let against simple terms of reference, they are let taking account of specification and conditions which need to be established to understand the scope of the work involved. If the hon. Member has a particular interest in any one of the cases listed in my answer of 31 January, I will be happy to respond.

Aircraft Landing Charges

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *385*, on aircraft landing charges, if he will provide figures on the same basis but for summer off-peak rates.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The information requested, which has been provided by the CAA, is shown in the tables:

Aircraft type	*Maximum take off weight*	*Seats*	*Passengers at 80 per cent. load factor*
747-200B	378	374	299
737-200	53	109	87
BAe 146-2	43	84	67

Note:
1. Charges are based on the assumption that the aircraft concerned meet ICAO chapter 3 noise standards and qualify for any noise rebates available at the airports concerned. The preceeding aircraft assumptions also apply.
2. All landing charges include Aerodrome Navigation Services charges.
3. All passenger charges include security charges and are based on charges for international services.

Comparison of summer off-peak airport charges
Total charges

	BAe 146-200			*737-200*			*747-200*		
	Landing	*Pax*	*Total*	*Landing*	*Pax*	*Total*	*Landing*	*Pax*	*Total*
Gatwick	£155	£130	£285	£174	£169	£343	£633	£580	£1,213
Stansted	£138	£141	£279	£191	£183	£374	£1,485	£628	£2,113
Manchester	£387	£691	£1,078	£476	£898	£1,374	£3,047	£3,086	£6,133
Birmingham	£507	£697	£1,204	£625	£905	£1,530	£4,460	£3,110	£7,570
East Midlands	£495	£753	£1,248	£611	£978	£1,588	£4,355	£3,361	£7,715

Charges per passenger

	BAe 146-200			*737-200*			*747-200*		
	Landing	*Pax*	*Total*	*Landing*	*Pax*	*Total*	*Landing*	*Pax*	*Total*
Gatwick	£2·31	£1·94	£4·25	£2·00	£1·94	£3·94	£2·12	£1·94	£4·06
Stansted	£2·05	£2·10	£4·15	£2·20	£2·10	£4·30	£4·97	£2·10	£7·07
Manchester	£5·77	£10·32	£16·09	£5·48	£10·32	£15·80	£10·19	£10·32	£20·51
Birmingham	£7·57	£10·40	£17·97	£7·19	£10·40	£17·59	£14·92	£10·40	£25·32
East Midlands	£7·39	£11·24	£18·63	£7·02	£11·24	£18·26	£14·56	£11·24	£25·80

Note: These charges are based on summer off-peak rates. However, the periods covered by these rates are different for each airport and the off-peak periods which apply for each airport are shown below.

Gatwick
Landing charges—1100-1659 and 1900-0559, 1 April to 31 October.
Passenger charges—1600-0529, 1 May to 30 September.

Stansted
Landing charges—Any time, 1 May to 31 October.
Passenger charges—1600-0659, 1 May to 30 September.

Manchester
Landing charges—Any time except 1400-1559, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 1 November to 30 April.
Passenger charges—Any time, 1 May to 31 October.

Birmingham
All charges—Any time of the day throughout the year.

East Midlands
Landing charges—Any time of the day throughout the year.
Passenger charges—Any time, 1 March to 31 October.

ENVIRONMENT

Deregulation

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which organisations were consulted by his Department, on each of the recommendations of the business deregulation task forces before they were agreed and action proposed in the DTI document "Deregulation: Cutting the Red Tape".

Mr. Gummer: Decisions were taken on the task forces' 130 recommendations for my Department in the normal way; interested bodies have been or will be consulted as appropriate.

Sewage

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to improve sewage treatment and disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom has the highest percentage connection rate to sewers among our European Community partners and is among the leaders regarding the provision of sewage treatment.

Improvements will result from the sewerage undertakers' large investment programmes to maintain and replace their assets and to meet statutory requirements.

Audit Commission

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the cost of the Audit Commission was for each year since 1989; what is the cost for the current year; what assessment he has made of performance and the results of the Audit Commission; and what value for money the Audit Commission has achieved.

Mr. Baldry: The Audit Commission has no direct cost to the Exchequer. The audit of local authorities and health service bodies and the undertaking of value for money studies is financed by fees from publicly funded bodies.

The operating costs of the commission have been as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	28·4
1989-90	33·9
1990-91	46·4
1991-92	61·6
1992-93	74·3
1993-94	[1]76·6

[1] Estimated.

NB. 1991-92 was the first full year that the commission appointed auditors to NHS bodies.

In 1992 the commission was subject to a financial management review by its sponsors: the Department of the Environment, the Department of Health and the Welsh Office.

Copies of the report of this review, which was published on 14 January 1993, and of the commission's annual reports and accounts are available from the Library.

Housing Act 1985

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many mortgage indemnity agreements he has approved under section 442 of the Housing Act 1985;

(2) how many local authorities have agreed to indemnify mortgages under section 442 of the Housing Act 1985; and how many properties have been indemnified.

Sir George Young: The Secretary of State approved a standard form of mortgage indemnity agreement in October 1988. This superseded earlier approved forms of agreement.

In the period 1 April 1986 to 30 September 1993, 48 English local authorities reported entering into mortgage indemnity agreements. The estimated total number of mortgages indemnified by local authorities during this period is some 2,500.

Building Regulations

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to know the outcome of the review of the extension of part M of the building regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend, the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on 20 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *840*.

Rural Development Commission

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the current major issues being examined by each department devoted to rural strategic policy planning in the Rural Development Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Rural Development Commission's strategy directorate has three policy branches which are currently considering the following major issues affecting or likely to affect rural areas of England:

(i) Rural Economy

The relationship between structural change in traditional rural industries and the need for new and diverse economic activity in rural areas.

(ii) Rural Services

Policies and practices affecting the provision of local services in rural areas and accessibility to them.

The impact of living in rural areas on particular groups of people eg women, young children, the elderly and the handicapped and their accessibility to jobs and services.

Policies affecting the voluntary sector in rural areas

(iii) Housing and Planning

The provision of affordable housing in rural areas.

Planning policy and development plans.

The needs of rural dwellers and rural businesses within a strategy for sustainable development.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many posts there are in the Rural Development Commission devoted to strategic rural policy planning; and if he will list the departments and their responsibilities and the grades of those posts.

Mr. Atkins: The Rural Development Commission has a small strategy directorate in which 11 staff are directly concerned with analysis and advice on strategic policy issues affecting rural communities and businesses in England. They are the Director, civil service grade 5, and three policy branches dealing with issues affecting

(a) the Rural Economy: (1 Grade 7, 1 HEO, 1 AO)
(b) Rural Services: (1 Grade 7, 1 HEO, 1 EO, 1 AO)
(c) Housing and Planning: (1 Grade 7, 1 HEO, 1 AO)

Local Government Finance

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the local authorities in receipt of standing spending assessment reduction grant for 1994-95 and *(b)* what is the amount in each case.

Mr. Baldry: The inforamtion requested was provided in special grant report (No. 9) laid before the House on 27 January 1994.

Public Inquiries

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what method the Government use to assess the weight of public opinion when considering whether or not to hold a public inquiry;

(2) what criteria are used by his department when assessing whether or not a project should be subject to a public inquiry;

(3) what he considers to be a sufficient number of complaints to make a subject worthy of a public inquiry.

Mr. Baldry: In deciding whether to hold a public local planning inquiry, each case is considered on its merits. All the relevant issues, including the complexity of a case and the weight of public opinion or complaints arising, are taken into account.

Hazardous Wastes

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the United Kingdom will ratify the UNEP Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom deposited its instrument of ratification for the Basel convention on 7 February. This means that the United Kingdom will become a party to the convention on 8 May. The EC will also become a party on 8 May.

The convention provides a framework for states to control shipments of hazardous waste. where these do occur, the onus is on the exporting state to ensure environmentally sound management of the wastes. Shipments are not allowed between parties and non-parties without specific agreements. Parties may ban imports of waste.

The Waste Shipments Regulation (259/93/EEC), which incorporates the obligations of the Basel convention, will apply on 6 May. The regulation will enable the United Kingdom to control more effectively waste imports and exports. The regulation covers shipments destined for the recovery operations, as well as those going for final disposal.

The United Kingdom is firmly committed to the objectives of the Basel convention. We have been making voluntary financial contributions to the running of the convention each year since 1990.

Planning Conditions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers he has to intervene to establish legal planning conditions in a dispute arising from amended planning permission expiring under the Town and Country Planning Act 1991.

Mr. Baldry: The Secretary of State has the power to call in planning applications—including applications to vary conditions previously attached to a planning permission—for his own determination by virtue of section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Secretary of State also has the duty to determine appeals made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

In exceptional circumstances, the Secretary of State has the power to make orders to revoke or modify planning permissions or to discontinue any use of land.

Senior Regional Directors

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the persons already appointed to the posts of senior regional directors, consequent to his decision to establish multi-departmental teams together with their biographical details and occupational experience; and what is the period of each appointment.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

Eastern:	John Turner
East Midlands:	Mark Lanyon
Merseyside:	John Stoker
North East:	Pamela Denham
North West:	Marianne Neville-Rolfe
South East:	Gillian Ashmore
South West:	Brian Leonard
West Midlands:	David Ritchie
Yorkshire and Humberside:	Jeremy Walker

Biographical notes:

Eastern

John Turner has been Deputy Chief Executive of the Employment service since 1989. He joined the Civil service in 1967, and after 14 years in the Department of Trade and Industry and its predecessor Departments working on industry sponsorship at home and abroad, he trasferred to the Department of Employment group and worked on training polices and programmes in the then Manpower Services Commission. He then served as Principal Private Secretary to Lord Young and Sir Norman Fowler and was then Head of Small Firms and Tourism Division.

East Midlands

Mark Lanyon has been DTI's Regional Director for Yorkshire and Humberside since April 1993. He is a graduate of the University of

St. Andrews, a chartered engineer and a member of the British Institute of Management. He joined the Civil Service in 1963, and has served in the DTI's South West Regional Office, and from 1982-85 as Regional Director in the West Midlands office. His career also includes working on programmes designed to spread best practice in advanced manfacturing technology and managerial methods, computer aided engineering, advanced robotics and manfacturing processes. Between 1990 and 1993, he was Assistant Director of Consumer Affairs at the Office of Fair Trading.

Merseyside
John Stoker has been Director of the Merseyside Task Force since 1992. He was educated at King Edward's School, Birmingham and Brasenose College, Oxford. He joined the Department of the Environment in 1973. He has served in the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Office, based in Leeds (dealing with housing affairs), and in London on housing policy and rates reform. He also served as a Civil Service Selection Board assessor and in the Cabinet Office. Since 1985 he has headed Divisions responsible for departmental organisation, housing (Estate Action), the preparation of the 1990 Environment White Paper (Our Common Inheritance) and the coordination of the department's financial programmes.

North East
Pamela Denham has been Regional Director for the Department of Trade and Industry in the North East since 1990. She was educated at Central Newcastle High School, and holds a doctorate in Physics from King's College, London. She joined the Civil Service in 1967, and has spent much of her career working in policy related to Industry—including international negotiations, Government assistance for research and development, and running programmes to encourage the application of best practice and new technology. She led the Quality Design and Education Division of the DTI from 1985-89, before a secondment in the Management and Development Group at the Cabinet Office.

North West
Marianne Neville-Rolfe is at present Chief Executive of the Civil Service College and Director of the Cabinet Office Top Management Programme. She was educated at St. Mary's Convent, Shaftesbury, and Oxford University. After seven years with the Confederation of British Industry including two years in Brussels, she joined the Department of Trade and Industry in 1973. Her jobs there have included dealing with selective financial assistance to industry, the promotion of major export projects, and most recently, responsibility for policy towards the Single European Market, including ensuring that business was fully informed of the implications and opportunities.

South East
Gillian Ashmore is currently on secondment from the Department of Transport to the British Railways Board working on railway privatisation. She joined the Civil Service in 1971 and has worked variously in the Departments of the Environment, Transport, Employment and Trade and Industry. On the Transport side, she has worked mainly in the public transport field. In the latter two Departments she was Deputy Director of the Enterprise and Deregulation Unit. Mrs. Ashmore has also been a non-executive director of P & O European Transport.

South West
Brian Leonard is Regional Director for the Departments of Environment and Transport in Newcastle. He was educated at Dr. Challoner's Grammar School in Amersham and the London School of Economics. He joined the Civil Service in 1974 and has worked in divisions dealing with the Government's public expenditure and private rented sector housing, and on secondment to a major housing association in London. In 1986/87, he served as Assistant Private Secretary to two Secretaries of State and in 1987/88 spent a year in North America on a Hubert Humphrey Fellowship to the University of Minnesota. On return he served as a Regional Controller for Housing in the London Regional Office and as head of the division responsible for local authority housing finance policy in England.

West Midlands
David Ritchie is Regional Director of the Departments of Environment and Transport in Newcastle. He was educated at Manchester Grammar School and St. John's College, Cambridge. He joined the Ministry of Transport in 1970 and he has had two spells in the joint Environment and Transport North West regional Office. He has also served in London dealing with Water Legislation and Housing association Policy.

Yorkshire and Humberside
Jeremy Walker has been regional Director of the Employment Department in Yorkshire and Humberside for the last five years, and leader of the Leeds and Bradford City Action Team since 1990. He joined the Department of Employment in 1971 after graduating from Birmingham University. He has also worked in the Cabinet office; on an exchange programme with the Australian Government; and in the Manpower Services Commission, where he headed up the Community Programme and the New Job Training Scheme during the 1980s.

The duration of these appointments will be up to three years in the first instance.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the job descriptions of the newly-appointed senior regional directors for urban regeneration; what variation there is between areas; and what specific duties will apply to that of the director for London.

Mr. Baldry: The duties of the new senior regional directors will be to implement Government policies in the English regions on behalf of the Department of Environment, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Employment—training, enterprise and education directorate—and Department of Transport; to ensure that the development of Government policies and programmes for the English regions are informed by local views and experience; and to contribute to Government policy formation for the regions. These duties will apply to all directors, including London, although the emphasis given to particular policies and programmes will differ from region to region to take account of local circumstances.

Housing

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *439*, whether sections 59 and 60 of the Housing Act 1985 are also applicable before any local authority duties arise for securing accommodation for persons asked to leave by family or relatives.

Sir George Young: Section 65 of the Housing Act 1985 provides that where a local housing authority is satisfied that a homeless applicant has a priority need and is not intentionally homeless the authority must secure accommodation for him.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *439*, if he will list the number of representations received about the operation of part III of the Housing Act 1985 which specifically referred to the House of Lords' decision in the case of Din v. London Borough of Wandsworth and to the operation of section 63 of the Act.

Sir George Young: The proposals in our consultation paper "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies" have not been formulated in response to specific representations.

Local Authority Tenants

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the companies commissioned in 1992-93 by his Department to carry out polling and market research of the views of council tenants; and if he will list the areas of research, the questionnaires used and report the results of the research.

Sir George Young: No companies were specifically commissioned to do so in 1992-93, but a number of the continuous general surveys carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, which provide housing information for my Department, include council tenants in the sample. Examples of these are:

The Survey of English Housing;
The Family Expenditure Survey;
The Omnibus Survey;
The General Household Survey.

All my Department's published research reports are placed in the House of Commons Library. Among those published in 1993 dealing with local authority housing are:

Crime Prevention on Council Estates;
Priority Estates Project Costs Effectiveness Study: Summary of Findings;
An Evaluation of Estate Based Housing Management;
An Evaluation of the First Year Experience of the Local Authority Reports to Tenants Regime.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of local authority tenants received a personal copy of an annual report about standards of local authority housing management performance in 1992-93.

Sir George Young: Section 167 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires local authorities to send every tenant an annual report on their housing management performance.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of local authority tenants had at July 1993 transferred to housing action trusts.

Sir George Young: Figures are not available for the number of tenants that have transferred to housing action trusts. However, the proportion of local authority dwellings which had transferred to housing action trusts at July 1993 was about 0·1 per cent.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of council house tenants had transferred their tenancy to a new landlord at July 1993.

Sir George Young: Between April 1988 and July 1993 nearly 119,000 dwellings were transferred out of local authority ownership as a result of large-scale transfers—LSVTs—tenants' choice and small-scale transfers. This represents about 2·75 per cent. of the council stock at 1 April 1988. A further 3,500 dwellings have transferred since July and another 25,000 should transfer by the end of March this year. The Department does not record the number of individual tenancies transferred to new landlords.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new rights were introduced for council tenants between July 1992 and July 1993 to simplify and strengthen their ability to get minor repairs affecting health, safety or crime prevention carried out by their landlord.

Sir George Young: The existing right to repair scheme was introduced under the Housing Act 1985 and came into effect on 1 January 1986. The new right to repair scheme is being introduced under the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 in place of the current scheme, from 1 April 1994. The new scheme will be more effective in ensuring that tenants get certain small urgent repairs affecting their health, safety or security, done quickly and at no expense to them.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of local authority tenants enjoyed delegated management as at July 1993.

Sir George Young: By July 1993, the Secretary of State for the Environment had approved 71 management agreements for tenant management organisations on local authority estates. These cover approximately 35,000 homes, representing about 0·9 per cent. of local authority dwellings.

Paignton Zoo

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make public his decision upon the recommendation of his inspector in respect of Paignton zoo under his reference SW/P/5183 and local planning authority reference 92/1161/0A.

Mr. Baldry: These proposals for a superstore and associated developments raise some complex issues. As soon as the inspector's report is received, the Secretary of State will write to the parties indicating his proposed timescale for the decision. The outcome will be made public at the earliest opportunity.

Housing Benefit Subsidy

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total amount of housing benefit subsidy otherwise payable to local authorities in England which was clawed back by negative entitlement under the housing revenue account subsidy formula in the last year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: The total amount of rent rebates paid to local authority tenants for 1992-93 was £3,477 million of which £2,982 million was funded directly by housing revenue account subsidy. The details appear in the table.

	1992-93 outturn £ million
Gross rent rebates	3,477
Housing subsidy negative entitlements	–495
Rebate element of HRA subsidy	2,982

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the change in the annual level of United Kingdom carbon dioxide emissions between the year 2000 and 2012, on the basis of current policies.

Mr. Atkins: It is not possible to estimate future changes in United Kingdom carbon dioxide emissions in 2000 and 2012 precisely. The analysis published in "Climate Change—the UK Programme" draws on the range of scenarios in energy paper 59. These suggest on the basis of past trends that United Kingdom emissions in 2000 could be between 3 million tonnes of carbon below and 19 million tonnes of carbon above the 1990 level; and in 2012 between 15 and 80 million tonnes of carbon higher than in 1990. The measures in the United Kingdom's programme should reduce emissions in 2000 by some 10 million tonnes of carbon, but it is not yet possible to assess what effect emissions reduction measures could have by 2012.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which major new policy commitments and initiatives announced in "Sustainable Development: the United Kingdom Strategy" have not already appeared in previous Government documents and ministerial speeches.

Mr. Atkins: The Government did not delay practical commitment to sustainable development until we were ready to publish our strategy document. Many policies were therefore well in place by 25 January. However, among the new announcements made in the strategy are the Government's panel on sustainable development, a United Kingdom round table on sustainable development and a citizens' environment initiative. Each chapter in sections 3 and 4 contains a summary of the way forward in that sector or topic area.

Secure Cycle Parking

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there is adequate provision for secure cycle parking in new developments.

Mr. Baldry: Last year we published a draft planning policy guidance note 13 (PPG13) on planning and transport issues. It suggested that local authorities should encourage the provision of secure cycle parking at public transport interchanges, including railway stations and park and ride facilities, to increase the opportunities to use cycles in combination with public transport and car sharing. Provision of secure cycle parking facilities should be sought in all major developments and in town centres, and encouraged at education institutions. We hope to publish the final version of the guidance within the next few months.

Construction Industry (Subcontracting)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to abolish labour-only subcontracting in the construction industry.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have no plans to abolish labour-only subcontracting.

North Yorkshire County Council

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of money allocated from Government funds in the last financial year for each department of North Yorkshire county council; and what comparable amounts will be provided in the next financial year.

Mr. Baldry: Central Government support—that is, revenue support grant and redistributed business rate income—is given in support of the provision of local services as a whole. It is not hypothecated to particular service departments. For 1993-94 central Government support to North Yorkshire county council is £283·4 million, of which revenue support grant is £135·3 million. For 1994-95 the corresponding figures are £290·5 million and £154·2 million respectively.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received on the issue of local government reorganisation since January 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available, except at disproportionate cost.

Minister for Local Government and Planning

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what areas under consideration by the Local Government Commission will be subject to special arrangements to ensure that the Minister for Local Government and Planning is not involved in decisions affecting local authorities in his constituency and those adjoining.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend, the Minister for Local Government and Planning, will not be involved in decisions on the Local Government Commission's recommendations for Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire. Whether or not he is involved in decisions on recommendations for Lancashire and Cumbria will depend on the nature of those recommendations.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost to date of the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 24 January 1994 at column *29*.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the reform of English local government to be completed.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The Local Government Commission has been directed to make final recommendations for change to local government structure, boundaries or electoral arrangements of the shire counties in England by the end of 1994. We expect to have completed implementation of any changes following from these recommendations by April 1997, subject to Parliament.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the average numbers of staff in each local authority in England who are engaged in work connected with his plans for the reform of local government.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* We have made no such assessment; this is a matter for individual authorities.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many members of his Department are engaged on work connected with his plans for local government reform.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* Numbers may vary from time to time, but the branch directly responsible for issues arising from the Local Government Commission's reviews has 12 members of staff at present. Staff elsewhere in the Department are involved as necessary.

Showmen Sites

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the provision of permanent sites for showmen in the west midlands following his refusal on 21 January of appeals by J. Owen and the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 2 February 1994]:* It is for local authorities in the west midlands to consider the needs of showpeople when preparing their development plans and determining planning applications. Guidelines relating to the provision of accommodation for showpeople are set out in Government circular 22/91.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Campsfield Detention Centre

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average total daily cost of detaining *(a)* an adult and *(b)* a child at the detention centre at Campsfield in Oxfordshire.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is commercially confidential and it would not be proper to disclose it.

Prison Conditions

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in the United Kingdom, indicating which have slopping out; what is his definition of overcrowding; and which prisons are currently overcrowded.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Roland Boyes, dated 8 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about slopping out and overcrowding.

The attached table lists Prison Service establishments in England and Wales, indicating those at which there is slopping out or overcrowding. The Prison Service does not have responsibility for prisons in other parts of the United Kingdom.

There are 31 establishments where there is still some element of slopping out but in many cases this involves very small numbers. At the end of December 1993, 89 per cent. of prisoners had full access to night sanitation facilities and this will rise to over 95 per cent. by the end of 1994.

A Prison Service establishment is said to be overcrowded when the number of prisoners held in it is higher than its certified normal accommodation (CNA).

Establishments with slopping out or overcrowding on 4 February 1994

Establishment	*Cells without sanitation*	*Population exceeding CNA (per cent.)*
Acklington	0	0
Albany	0	0
Aldington	0	0
Ashwell	0	0
Askham Grange	0	0
Aylesbury	210	0
Bedford	0	133
Belmarsh	22	0
Birmingham	18	130
Blakenhurst	0	0
Blantyre House	0	0
Blundeston	0	0
Brinsford	0	102
Bristol	102	119
Brixton	179	114
Brockhill	0	103
Bullingdon	7	0
Bullwood Hall	0	0
Camp Hill	0	0
Canterbury	0	133
Cardiff	0	129
Castington	0	0
Channings Wood	0	0
Chelmsford	0	147
Coldingley	0	0
Cookham Wood	0	0
Dartmoor	167	0
Deerbolt	0	0
Dorchester	0	141
Dover	0	0
Downview	0	0
Drake Hall	0	0
Durham	202	131
East Sutton Park	0	0
Elmley	5	0
Erlestoke	60	0
Everthorpe	10	0
Exeter	9	141
Featherstone	0	0
Feltham	15	0
Finnamore Wood	0	0
Ford	0	0
Frankland	0	0
Full Sutton	0	0
Garth	0	0
Gartree	12	0
Glen Parva	0	0
Gloucester	0	117
Grendon	0	0
Guys Marsh	0	0
Haslar	0	0
Hatfield	0	0
Haverigg	0	0
Hewell Grange	0	120
Highdown	0	0
Highpoint	0	0
Hindley	0	0
Hollesley Bay	11	0
Holloway	0	0
Holme House	0	0
Hull	0	142
Huntercombe	0	0
Kingston	0	0
Kirkham	0	0
Kirklevington	0	0
Lancaster	0	0
Lancaster Farms	0	0
Latchmere House	0	0
Leeds	508	139
Leicester	0	168
Lewes	130	126

Establishment	Cells without sanitation	Population exceeding CNA (per cent.)
Leyhill	0	0
Lincoln	88	136
Lindholme	0	0
Littlehey	0	0
Liverpool	390	144
Long Lartin	0	0
Low Newton	0	131
Maidstone	0	0
Manchester	0	0
Moorland	1	0
Morton Hall	0	104
The Mount	0	0
New Hall	0	0
North Sea Camp	0	0
Northallerton	0	106
Norwich	15	0
Nottingham	0	0
Onley	0	0
Parkhurst	40	0
Pentonville	200	121
Portland	156	0
Prescoed	0	0
Preston	346	141
Pucklechurch	0	107
Ranby	0	0
Reading	0	0
Risley	0	0
Rochester	21	0
Rudgate	0	0
Send	0	0
Shepton Mallet	0	115
Shrewsbury	0	176
Spring Hill	0	0
Stafford	0	0
Standford Hill	4	0
Stocken	0	0
Stoke Heath	0	0
Styal	0	112
Sudbury	0	0
Swaleside	0	0
Swansea	0	116
Swinfen Hall	0	0
Thorn Cross	0	0
Thorp Arch	0	0
Usk	0	0
The Verne	0	0
Wakefield	36	101
Wandsworth	288	102
Wayland	0	0
Wellingborough	0	109
Werrington	0	0
Wetherby	0	0
Whatton	5	0
Whitemoor	0	0
Winchester	0	0
The Wolds	0	102
Woodhill	0	0
Wormwood Scrubs	333	123
Wymott	0	0

Prisoner Accommodation

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to use Army camps and prison ships for accommodating prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange to a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Roland Boyes, dated 8 February 1994.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about prison ships and Army camps. The Prison Service is considering a number of options, including marine detention facilities and Army camps, as part of its contingency planning. The aim is to identify means for coping with any emergency where the prison population exceeds the available accommodation. There are no current plans to use either option.

Prison Violence

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of violence between prisoners took place in each year since 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Roland Boyes, dated 8 February 1994.

VIOLENCE BETWEEN PRISONERS

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many incidents of violence between prisoners took place in each year since 1990.

The information you have requested is given in the attached table.

Prison adjudications where inmate found guilty[1] of assault on an inmate or fighting, England and Wales, 1990-1993

Offence	Year 1990	1991	1992	1993[1]
Assault on an inmate[2]	1,917	1,944	2,060	2,344
Fighting[3]	5,915	5,644	5,865	6,397

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] Includes attempting, inciting or assisting an assault on an inmate.
[3] Includes inciting or assisting fighting.

Source: Statistics of offences against prison discipline and punishment, England and Wales, 1990 (Cm 1651), 1991 (Cm 2066), and 1992 (Cm 2411).

Drugs Prevention Initiative

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made with his Department's drugs prevention initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I am publishing today the drugs prevention initiative's third annual progress report, which sets out an encouraging record of community-based drugs prevention activity in the 12 months 1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993, particularly in the 20 areas with local drugs prevention teams. I have placed a copy of the report in the Library.

European Elections (Voting)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to inform EC nationals resident in the United Kingdom of their right to vote in the European elections; and what arrangements will be made to allow EC national to register on the electoral roll to enable them to vote in the European elections.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Birmingham,

Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 2 February at column *703*. Application forms for Community citizens to apply for inclusion in the electoral register will be made available once the European Parliamentary Elections (Changes to the Franchise and Qualifications of Representatives) Regulations 1994 have been approval by Parliament.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases in the last year for which figures are available the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board paid out compensation where a conviction had not been secured.

Mr. Maclean: I regret that this information is not available. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board does not collate information in such a way as to distinguish cases in which there has been a conviction for the crime giving rise to the claim for compensation.

Forged Passport

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent deportation of a woman who arrived at Gatwick airport to meet a flight as a sponsor and was found to have a forged passport.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 15 December 1993 a Jamaican woman was recognised by police officers at Gatwick airport and arrested on suspicion of being in breach of the immigration laws. She was interviewed under caution in the presence of a solicitor. In the light of the information available, she was judged to be an illegal entrant and was detained as such. She subsequently signed a notice that she wished to leave for Jamaica as soon as possible and did so on 22 December.

DNA Genetic Fingerprint Database

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for a national DNA genetic fingerprint database; whether the database will be held on the police national computer; and whether the database will include personal data which relate to individuals who have committed no crime.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 3 February that the Forensic Science Service and the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory are to carry out a pilot study on the running of a national DNA database. The pilot study will be completed in March 1994 and it will include the development of the necessary IT software and hardware for a national database.

No decisions have yet been taken on who will, in the long term, run the national database. The national intelligence database will contain only DNA records of stains from unsolved crimes and of convicted criminals but of no one else.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles were convicted of offences in Gloucestershire in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1992 is given in the table. Data for 1993 will not be available until the autumn.

Number and percentage of juveniles[1] convicted at all courts in Gloucestershire police force area by type of offence 1992

Type of offence	*Juveniles*		*All ages*[2]
	Number	*Per cent.*	
Indictable	236	8	2,916
Summary non-motoring	74	2	4,410
Summary motoring	36	0	9,728
Total	346	2	17,054

[1] Persons aged 10 and under 17 years.
[2] =100 per cent.

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the rate of re-offending by juveniles who have *(a)* been placed in secure accommodation and *(b)* been placed in alternative private residential homes or schools.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not available centrally.

Prisoners' Compact

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those prisons that, as at July 1993 *(a)* operated a prisoners' compact explaining the facilities available to prisoners whilst in prison and what was expected from them and *(b)* did not operate a prisoners' compact.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 8 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking him to list those prisons that, as at July 1993 *(a)* operated a prisoners' compact explaining the facilities available to prisoners whilst in prison and what was expected of them and *(b)* did not operate a prisoners' compact.

Listed below are those establishments which in June 1993 were operating prisoner compacts similar to the type described in the question:

Blantyre House
Brinsford
Bristol—(Pilot scheme in one wing)
Canterbury—(Unconvicted wing and Resettlement wing)
Cardiff—(Remand wing)
Deerbolt—(Pilot scheme)
Drake Hall
Erlestoke—(Education Department)
Haslar
Kirklevington Grange
Leyhill
Lindholme—(One wing)
Low Newton
Manchester—(Education Department)
Moorland
Swinfen Hall
Thorn Cross
Thorpe Arch
Werrington
Wetherby

Compacts were also being experimented with at the following establishments:

Bullwood Hall
Downview
Frankland
Hull

Latchmere House
Morton Hall
North Sea Camp
Norwich
Rudgate
Swaleside
Usk/Prescoed
Wakefield
Whitemoor
Wolds

Inspectorate of Constabulary

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inspectors the inspectorate of constabulary had in May 1993; and how many of these were lay inspectors.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In May 1993, there were seven inspectors of constabulary and one chief inspector of constabulary in Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. There were no lay inspectors in post at that time.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has held with the Data Protection Registrar on the applicability of each data protection principle to the definition of record in clause 43(4) of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Officials met with representatives of the Data Protection Registrar on 20 January to discuss the data protection issues arising from those clauses in the Bill which are concerned with the taking and retention of body samples. The views of the Data Protection Registrar will be taken fully into account during the passage of the Bill.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of remand prisoners brought to trial (i) between July 1992 and 30 June 1993 and (ii) 1 July 1991 and 30 June 1992 *(a)* had spent more than 56 days in custody since their first appearance at a magistrates court and *(b)* had spent more than 70 days from first appearance before magistrates to committal in the Crown court.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The readily available information, which is collected in sample weeks in February, June and October of each year for indictable offences—including either way—is given in the following table:

Table 1 Period from first listing to completion in magistrates courts, for defendants remanded in custody throughout their proceedings, for indictable offences, by type of proceedings

England and Wales — *Number and percentage*

Type of proceedings	*October 1991 to June 1992*[1]			*October 1992 to June 1993*[1]		
	Number in sample	*More than 56 days Per cent.*	*More than 70 days Per cent.*	*Number in sample*	*More than 56 days Per cent.*	*More than 70 days Per cent.*
Summary trial						
Guilty plea	254	11	6	255	7	4
Not guilty plea	83	22	13	77	25	13
Plea not recorded	27	30	12	17	24	24
All summary trials	364	15	8	349	12	7
Committal proceedings						
Full committal	100	71	50	91	54	35
Paper committal	617	37	19	532	18	10
All committal proceedings	717	42	24	623	23	14
Other proceedings	65	14	2	82	5	4
All proceedings	1,146	32	17	1,054	18	11

[1]Based on proceedings completed in sample weeks of February, June and October of each year.

Name Badges (Police Officers)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those police services in Great Britain in which uniformed police officers on the beat *(a)* wear and *(b)* do not wear name badges.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information is not available in the form requested. Name badges are worn by some or all officers in the following police forces in England and Wales:

Bedfordshire
Cheshire
Cleveland
Devon and Cornwall
Dyfed-Powys
Essex
Greater Manchester
Kent
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
South Wales
South Yorkshire
Suffolk
Thames Valley
West Mercia

National Alliance of Women's Organisations

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about funding of the National Alliance of Women's Organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the three months ended 31 January 1994 35 letters containing representations about the funding of the National Alliance of Women's Organisations were received in the Home Office. As I made clear on 2 February at column *703*, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson), there are insufficient resources to fund this organisation in 1994-95.

Firearms Permits

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firearms permits there are currently in force in *(a)* Blyth Valley and *(b)* south Northumberland.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information is not available on the number of firearm and shotgun certificates currently in force in Blyth valley and south Northumberland. I understand, though, from the Northumbria police that the number of firearm and shotgun certificates currently in force in the south-west and south-east Northumberland police districts is as follows:

District	*Firearm certificates*	*Shot gun certificates*	*Total*
South West Northumberland	502	1,269	1,771
South East Northumberland	533	1,311	1,844

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the subjects on which his Department formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Howard: Next steps agency executives are usually asked to reply to parliamentary questions about the day-to-day operational matters of their agency and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in their agency's framework document.

DNA Fingerprints

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it his policy that all reasonable steps are taken to destroy the DNA genetic fingerprints of those who have committed no crime;

(2) what is his policy on whether personal data representing a DNA genetic fingerprint and which relate to individuals who are present at the scene of crime can be retained by the police indefinitely.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend's policy on the taking and use of DNA samples by the police mirrors as closely as possible the existing, tried and tested regime for the taking of fingerprints. At present fingerprints and samples must be destroyed if the person from whom they were taken is cleared or not proceeded against.

There are practical problems in the destruction of material generated in the processing of DNA profiles. These problems arise where the samples relating to one case are processed together to reduce experimental distortion; and with computer records where total erasure may be impractical. It is also important to ensure that records remain intact for any subsequent inquiries into alleged miscarriages of justice.

The important principle is that information from unconvicted suspects should not be retained on the intelligence database and should not be used against them either in evidence or for the purposes of investigating offences. My right hon. and learned Friend has undertaken to introduce an amendment to clause 42 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to clarify the circumstances in which information derived from samples taken from unconvicted suspects should be able to be retained but protected from use in evidence or in the investigation of offences.

Crime Detection

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what are the crime detection rates for each police authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole for each year since 1987;

(2) what are the crime detection rates for the latest convenient period for each police authority in England and for England as a whole.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is published in table 2.11 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1992", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he commissioned a survey of data users' view of the European Commission's data protection directive separate from the independent and comprehensive survey of data users commissioned by the European Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The European Commission has asked member states for their assessment of the costs of implementing the directive. It was necessary to seek data users' views in order to respond to this request.

Deputy Lords Lieutenant

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the deputy lords lieutenant in England and their dates of appointment.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A comprehensive record of the names and dates of appointment of the 1,870 deputy lieutenants in England is not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. I am having placed in the Library the addresses of the 46 lieutenancy offices in England, from which the information in respect of local deputy lieutenants may be obtained.

Juries

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures were introduced between July 1992 and June 1993 to allow juries to go home at the end of the working day.

Mr. Maclean: No such measures were introduced. It is already possible for a jury to separate up to the time at which it is directed to consider its verdict. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill will allow a court, where it thinks fit, to permit a jury to separate once the jury has begun its deliberations.

Deregulation

Mr. Hepple: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which organisations were consulted by his Department, on each of the recommendations of the business deregulation task forces before they were agreed and action proposed in the DTI document, "Deregulation: Cutting the Red Tape".

Mr. Howard: Each of the task force recommendations agreed, or agreed in principle, by the Government has been or will be the subject of appropriate consultation with interested parties.

Ministers (Travel)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Secretary of State since 27 May 1993.

Mr. Howard: These costs are met from a larger budget within which there is no specific allocation to individual Ministers. Information about the cost of internal travel by car is not readily available. The cost of my internal travel by other means is £1,793 since 27 May 1993. The cost of overseas travel for the same period is £3,553.

Deportation (Physical Restraints)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the use during deportations of *(a)* handcuffs, *(b)* arm restraints, *(c)* leg restraints, *(d)* bodybelts and *(e)* tape was authorised by his Department's guidelines prior to the joint Home Office/Metropolitan police review of deportations published on 12 January.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Arrangements were introduced in April 1993 requiring private security firms to seek prior authority from at least inspector level of the Immigration Service for the use of handcuffs, save in unforeseen emergencies where an essential need arises on safety or security grounds. Arrangements for obtaining authority at a more senior level for the exceptional use of leg restraints, the only other form of restraint which might be used by the private sector, were introduced following the events surrounding the death of Mrs. Joy Gardner.

The Home Office issued a circular of guidance in 1992 to all chief officers of police on the appropriate use of handcuffs following arrest. This would include cases in which a person has been arrested prior to deportation. The circular was prepared in close consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers, self defence committee.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Data Protection Tribunal.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Data Protection Tribunal currently consists of:

Chairman
J. A. C. Spokes, QC

Deputy Chairman
Professor A. L. Diamond
Rear-Admiral J. H. T. Walters, CB

Members
Professor T. F. Carberry, OBE
Mr. A. B. Cowling
Mrs. K. Foss
Mr. J. Hanson, OBE
Professor W. W. Holland
Mr. B. Kelly
Mr. G. Lanchin
Mr. A. Lawrence
Mr. P. E. Lumb
Mr. P. R. Oglesby, CB
Sir Leonard Peach
Mr. D. L. Perrot
Mr. L. A. Plowman, CBE
Mr. A. W. Pragnell, CBE
Mr. J. C. Richards, MBE
Mr. J. M. Ross
Mr. V. Ross
Dr. M. Smith
Mr. E. H. Thomas
Mr. N. J. F. Watson
Professor G. J. Zellick

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the office of the Data Protection Registrar.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Data Protection Registrar is Mr. Eric Howe, CBE.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Board on Restricted Patients.

Mr. Maclean: The current members are:
Her Honour Judge Valerie Pearlman, Chairman;
Mrs. Lindsey Addyman, JP;
Mr. Malcom Bryant (Chief Probation Officer, Berkshire);
Dr. Derek Chiswick (Consultant Forensic Science Psychiatrist, Royal Edinburgh Hospital);
Dr. James Higgins (Consultant Forensic Science Psychiatrist, Scott Clinic, Liverpool);
Commander Sally Hubbard (Assistant Inspector of Constabulary);
Mr. Michael Lindsey (Deputy Director of Social Services, Shrosphire);
Ms Rosy Mannion (Solicitor)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to all boards of visitors to penal establishments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am arranging for details of the current membership of the board of visitors for each prison establishment in England and Wales to be placed in the Library.

Psychotherapy (Offenders)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what funding his Department provides for psychotherapy of offenders and ex-offenders *(a)* whilst in custody and *(b)* after release;

(2) what is *(a)* the average cost and *(b)* the average length of a course of psychotherapy for offenders;

(3) how many persons *(a)* in prison and *(b)* on probation have been given courses of psychotherapy in each of the last five years;

(4) what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of psychotherapy of offenders in reducing reoffending behaviour.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Robert Maclennan dated 8 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the provision of psychotherapy for offenders and ex-offenders.

All psychotherapy rests on the assumption that problems with an origin in earlier damaging experiences are capable of correction through a new and different personal relationship with a trained therapist. There are various styles of such treatment including individual psychotherapy and group psychotherapy.

In the Prison Service group psychotherapy is employed at HM Prisons Grendon and Wormwood Scrubs, and HM Young Offender Insititution Glen Parva. At HMP Grendon research undertaken by Gunn and Robertson (A Ten Year Follow-up of Men Discharged from Grendon Prison) and Genders and Player (Grendon – A Study of a Therapeutic Community within the Prison System) confirms that attitudinal changes to take place in inmates undergoing therapy. For example, Genders and Player claimed that within six months, 71% had abandoned the conventional inmate pecking order, 68% could talk to prison officers about personal matters, and that after 12 months 60% were able to disclose if illicit activities were taking place. All felt less isolated and less directed. In addition prisoners had an insight into their own problems and a greater understanding of others.

Nevertheless until recently there has been no evidence of a reduction of recidivism by prisoners released from Grendon, although there was evidence that those who reoffend committed offences of a lesser order. However, research yet unpublished (Cullen 1992) indicates that prisoners released from Grendon over the last five years have in fact reoffended proportionally less often then the prison population as a whole. Similarly a study by Jones in 1988 (The hospital annexe: a preliminary evaluation report) at the Wormwood Scrubs annexe showed that those completing the course of therapy had a reconviction rate significantly lower than those who had failed to complete the treatment.

A combination of group psychotherapy and individual psychotherapy has been employed at the C Wing Special Unit at HM Prison Parkhurst for the last two years. Whilst this work has not yet been formally evaluated there has no doubt been a significant change in the attitude in many of the men undergoing therapy, exemplified by their willingness to come to terms with past traumas and to diplay a greater degree of self-confidence.

Psychotherapy is also carried out in establishments on an individual basis by visiting consultant psychiatrists. However, because of the constraints of doctor/patient confidentiality, it is impossible to ascertain what proportion of such sessions could be considered psychotherapeutic; although it is likely that all such sessions will contain some element of this type of treatment.

The treatment of sex offenders within the Prison Service falls into two broad categories, medical or educational, depending on whether treatment consists of a form of psychotherapy or is based on a cognitive behaviour approach. For the former, facilities exist in Her Majesty's Prison Grendon and the Wormwood Scrubs Annexe, where therapy is conducted through group and one to one sessions involving psychiatrists, psychologists, and other special staff; and at HMYOI Glen Parva which provides similar programmes for young offenders. Therapy or treatment is also provided at many establishments on an individual basis according to the clinical needs of the prisoners.

The second category of treatment is being facilitated by the Prison Service sex offender programme which was introduced in 1992 and targeted initially at prisoners who receive sentences of four years or more. The programme, which is educational rather than medical in character is divided into two main sub-programmes.

A core programme, which tackles offenders distorted beliefs about relationships;
and
an extended programme for those who represent the greatest risk.

At present there are seven prisons acting as assessment centres, 13 providing core programmes and seven providing extended programmes. In addition, two establishments offer concentrated core programmes for high risk inmates serving less than four years.

In 1992-93 there were 16,737 prisoners referred to visiting consultant psychiatrists, compared with 17,583 in 1991-92 and 13,396 in 1990-91.

I regret that the exact number who have undergone psychotherapy, the cost of such treatment and that proportion of the psychiatric budget apportioned to psychotherapy is not collected centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Fraud

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many employees were judged to be guilty of fraud in his Department in each year since 1989; and how many were dismissed.

Mr. Howard *[pursuant to his reply, 2 February, c. 713]:* The Director General of the Prison Service has now written to the hon. Member.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Menzies Campbell, dated 8 February 1994:

Further to your recent Parliamentary Question, the Home Secretary has asked me to give you details of those members of Prison Service staff judged guilty of fraud in each year since 1989, and the numbers of those who have been dismissed.

The information is as follows:

1989—One member of staff convicted and dismissed.
1990—One member of staff convicted and dismissed.
1991—None.
1992—Two members of staff convicted: one resigned, one dismissed.
1993—Two members of staff convicted and dismissed.
1994—One member of staff convicted: still under consideration.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juvenile offenders were placed by local authorities last year in private residential homes or schools such as Bryn Melyn in Wales.

Mr. Bowis: I have been asked to reply.

Information available centrally about the number of children and young people accommodated compulsorily by local authorities relates to the legislation under which they are held and not to offences committed or alleged.

The most recently held information relates to the period 14 October 1991 to 31 March 1992 and is based on valid information received from 90 local authorities. It is estimated that, in England, between 40 and 50 children or young people who were subject to a care order in criminal proceedings and between 30 and 40 who were on remand were accommodated compulsorily by local authorities in private residential homes or schools in this period.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Post Boxes

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what consultations took place about the design of post boxes in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Ray Powell: Following consultation between officials of the House and the Post Office, which had agreed to commission and bear the cost of new post boxes, advice was sought on their practicability and design from the relevant Committees of both Houses and professional advisers. The introduction of the new boxes followed a limited trial period and an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Dining Rooms (Bookings)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee if he will ensure that all bookings of private dining rooms in the Palace of Westminster are published each month.

Mr. Colin Shepherd *[holding answer 26 January 1994]:* No.

Smoking

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will report progress regarding a policy on smoking in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Beith *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* Following the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on this subject on 14 June last, the Commission has discussed policy on smoking in the House, and has concluded that this is a matter primarily for individual Departments of the House, for the relevant Domestic Select Committees, and for mutual agreement between the occupants of offices. The Library, Finance and Administration, and Refreshment Departments have taken action to formalise voluntary no smoking arrangements for their staff.

There has been no change in the arrangements which prohibit or curtail smoking in certain parts of the House used by Members. In addition, Rooms A, C and D of the Members' Library have been designated no smoking areas and the Catering Committee has agreed to the establishment of no smoking areas or arrangements in all Refreshment Department outlets.

In addition, the Refreshment Department has established, in consultation with relevant staff representatives, a mandatory no smoking policy to meet statutory requirements for its storage, production and service areas.

The Administration Committee has smoking policy on its agenda for consideration in the near future.

Departmental Select Committees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many departmental select committee reports there have been since 1979; and how many have been debated in the House on a substantive motion.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given to him by my predecessor on 13 June 1989 at column *358* and 11 November 1991 at column *365*, which give the information up to the end of Session 1990-91. During Sessions 1991-92 and 1992-93, departmental Select Committees published 109 reports and 58 special reports. One was debated on a substantive motion; many others have been debated in other ways, including debates on Estimates days and other occasions when reports were cited on the Order Paper as relevant to proceedings in the House. Information on all such debates is published in the Select Committees section of the sessional returns.

Sitting Days

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many working days the House sat; and how many it was in recess in each of the last 20 calendar years.

Mr. Newton: The table sets out the number of sitting and non-sitting days in the 20 years from 1974 to 1993. The number of non-sitting days does not include weekends or bank holidays.

Calendar years	*Sitting days*	*Non-sitting days*[1]
1974	151	[2]102
1975	178	75
1976	190	64
1977	159	94
1978	170	83
1979	146	[2]107
1980	173	81
1981	177	76
1982	175	78
1983	154	[2]99
1984	171	83
1985	171	82
1986	166	87
1987	150	[2]103
1988	173	81
1989	176	77
1990	176	77
1991	165	88
1992	148	[2]106
1993	165	88
Average	167	87

[1]Weekends and bank holidays are assumed to account for 112 days each year.
[2]General election year.

Members' Salaries

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members are drawing the new salary which came into force on 1 January.

Mr. Newton: Five hundred and fifty one right hon. and hon. Members are currently drawing the new full parliamentary salary and 92 right hon. and hon. Members are drawing the new reduced parliamentary salary payable to Ministers and office holders, both of which came into force on 1 January 1994.

EDUCATION

Student Debt

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the value of the average debt incurred by students concluding their courses.

Mr. Boswell: The information is as follows:

Course completed at end of academic year 1992-93	*Average (mean) debt outstanding* £
Commercial borrowing:	
[1]Younger students (aged 26 or less at start of course)	430
Student loans:	
[2]All students	440

[1]*Source:* Student Income and Expenditure Survey 1992-93
[2]*Source:* Student Loans Company

Information on average commercial borrowing by older students is not currently available: hence the two figures should not be added.

Student Loans Company

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the annual running cost of the Student Loans Company.

Mr. Boswell: United Kingdom grant-in-aid for 1993-94 for the running costs of the Student Loans Company is £16·105 millions. This includes contributions from the Scottish Office Education Department and the Department for Education, Northern Ireland.

Assisted Places

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average cost of assisted places in each local education authority in 1991-92.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) on 17 January at column *410*.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of dismantling the HMI office network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: This is a matter for Ofsted. I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

Departmental Regional Offices

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will provide an estimate of the costs of establishing regional offices of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The Department has no plans to establish regional offices.

Sixth Forms

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the local education authorities which maintain sixth forms in schools and colleges of lesser size than the minimum recommended in the 1985 White Paper, "Better Schools", Cmnd 9469.

Mr. Boswell: The local education authorities in England which in January 1993 were maintaining some secondary schools with sixth forms with fewer than 150 pupils are as follows:

Avon
Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Bexley
Birmingham
Bolton
Bradford
Brent
Bromley
Buckinghamshire
Calderdale
Cambridgeshire
Camden
Cheshire
Cleveland
Cornwall
Coventry
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Devon
Doncaster
Dorset
Dudley
Durham
Ealing
East Sussex
Enfield
Essex
Gateshead
Gloucestershire
Greenwich
Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham
Hampshire
Haringey
Havering
Hereford and Worcester
Hertfordshire
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Islington
Kent
Kingston upon Thames
Kirklees
Knowsley
Lancashire
Lambeth
Leeds
Leicestershire
Lewisham
Lincolnshire
Liverpool
Manchester
Newcastle upon Tyne
Newham
Norfolk
North Tyneside
North Yorkshire
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
Nottinghamshire
Oldham
Oxfordshire
Redbridge
Rochdale
Rotherham
St. Helens
Sandwell
Sefton
Sheffield
Shropshire
Solihull
Somerset
Southwark
Staffordshire
Stockport
Suffolk
Surrey
Sutton
Tameside
Tower Hamlets
Trafford
Waltham Forest
Wakefield
Walsall
Wandsworth
Warwickshire
Westminster
West Sussex
Wiltshire
Wirral
Wolverhampton

Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what outstanding moneys were owed by the organisation Choice in Education to the Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. as at February 1993; for what purpose the money was originally transferred; and why it was outstanding;

(2) which staff employed by Choice in Education had salaries paid from Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. funds; when such payments were made; and when Choice in Education was recharged.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no responsibility for accounting arrangements concerning those activities of the Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. which are not grant aided. The centre's auditors have certified that Government grants have been used for purposes approved by my right hon. Friend. No part of any Government grant to the centre was used to fund Choice in Education.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what weaknesses in the financial systems operated by the Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. were identified by his Department's internal report of February 1993.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. has addressed the weaknesses in financial systems mentioned in the Department's internal report. The auditors' report on the company's accounts for 1992-93 include clear statements that following improvements in its systems the centre is maintaining adequate financial controls and that Government grant was used for the intended purposes.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what ex gratia payments have been made by the Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd.; and for what reasons.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend is not aware of any ex gratia payments made by the Grant Maintained Schools Centre Ltd. other than elements of redundancy payments to a small number of staff.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on 2 February at column *738*.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education who are the members currently appointed to the School Teachers' Review Body.

Mr. Robin Squire: The current members of the School Teachers' Review Body are:

Mr. John Gardiner
Mrs. Brigita Amey
Mr. Alan Cox CBE
Mr. Philip Halsey CB LVO
Mr. Mike Harding
Mrs. Gill Rostron
Mrs. Anna Vinton

School Inspections

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many contracts for the inspection of schools have been let this year in each local education authority; and, of these, what proportion have been let to an inspection team *(a)* from the same local education authority and *(b)* from another local education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: The arrangements for inspecting schools under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, including the awarding of contracts to registered inspectors, are a matter for Ofsted. I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of *(a)* primary schools in England and *(b)* secondary schools in England Ofsted expects to inspect in the academic year 1993-94.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many school inspections have now been published by the Office for Standards in Education; and how many of these resulted in an overall assessment of *(a)* good, *(b)* satisfactory and *(c)* unsatisfactory.

Mr. Robin Squire: The arrangements for inspecting schools under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 are a matter for Ofsted. I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Members.

Administration and Support Services

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects the Audit Commission to publish comparative tables on efficiency of administration and support services in the different local education authorities.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

The Audit Commission will publish national comparisons of performance in 1995 across a broad range of services, including the provision of an educational service. Before then, each local authority will publish details of its own performance in a local newspaper circulating in its area.

Further Education Funding Council

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what are the responsibilities of the property controller of the Further Education Funding Council;

(2) how many hours per week the new property controller will work in the Further Education Funding Council; and what remuneration and allowances he will be given.

Mr. Boswell: The new head of property services at the Further Education Funding Council will be responsible for leading a team of professionally qualified building advisers and support staff who advise the council on capital policy matters and provide guidance and assistance to colleges on estate management and the development of accommodation strategies. His appointment is full time and is on civil service terms appropriate to a grade 6 special appointment on a fixed-term contract.

Examination Results

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many complaints were received about the accuracy of the data published by his Department about the public examination results achieved by schools, further education and sixth form colleges in the 1992-93 academic year.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has received 146 complaints. Investigation of these complaints has indicated 47 errors for which the Department or its contractors were responsible; 34 errors for which the school or college was wholly or partly responsible; 11 errors for which no responsibility was attributable; and 54 instances where the complaint was unsubstantiated. Fewer than 1 per cent. of schools and colleges had incorrect entries in the tables as a result of an error by the Department or its contractors.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost of advertising grant-maintained schools in the national press *(a)* in total and *(b)* in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total expenditure on advertisements designed to make factual information about grant-maintained schools available to parents, governors and schools is around £400,000, of which £200,000 relates to the 1992-93 financial year and around £200,000 to the current financial year.

Disabled Student's Allowance

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for education what has been the financial allocation through the disabled student's allowance by the local education authorities in England and Wales to students with disabilities in higher education in each year since 1990-91 to *(a)* students studying in Scotland and *(b)* students studying in England and Wales; and how many individual students this represents.

Mr. Boswell: Returns from LEAs in England and Wales show that the gross value of disabled students' allowances made by them as part of mandatory awards was £869,000 in the 1990-91 academic year and £1,960,000 in 1991-92, the latest year for which figures are available. These two figures are not directly comparable because the data collected for 1990-91 were incomplete. Disabled students' allowances form part of the student's total maintenance requirement. The net grant payable may be lower once his resources have been taken into account. Mandatory awards are made to students who are domiciled in England and Wales in respect of their attendance on courses in the United Kingdom. Information on the number of students in receipt of disabled students' allowances and their places of study is not collected centrally.

Parents Charter

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the companies commissioned by his Department in 1992-93 to carry out polling and market research about the views of parents of school pupils in the course of preparing an updated parents charter; and if he will list the areas of research, the questionnaires used and the groups questioned.

Mr. Robin Squire: Research on a draft text and design of the parents charter was carried out in 1993-94. The identity of the company commissioned to carry out the research is commercial in confidence.

As is usual in qualitative research, the research was conducted through group discussions rather than via a questionnaire. The research covered the readability and content of the text, and its relevance and value for parents. It also looked at the effectiveness of the design and layout, and the preferred distribution route to parents. The research groups were a representative mix of parents, reflecting a number of socio-economic categories, both urban and rural areas, and different geographical regions.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the subjects on which his Department or its predecessors formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Robin Squire: The chief executive of the Teachers' Pensions Agency has, under the terms of the agency's framework document, responsibility to deal directly with parliamentary questions on day-to-day operational matters and on those matters for which the Chief Executive has delegated authority.

Nursery Education

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what extra resources will be made available for the financial years 1994-95 and 1996-97 to assist education authorities with the provision of classes for three to five-year-olds in maintained primary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The local government finance settlement for 1994-95 takes account of the broad range of pressures on local authorities, including the projected number of pupils aged under five in maintained schools, as published in the Department's annual report. The settlement reflects the fact that it is up to each local authority to decide what provision to make for children aged under five.

Religious Education

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the names of those who made submissions in response to the draft circular on religious education and collective worship x/94, published in October 1993; and when he expects to publish the results of his consultation.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has received 327 submissions in response to the draft circular on religious education and collective worship: 108 from LEAs or standing advisory councils on religious education; 62 from church or religious groups; 134 from educational groups; and 23 from other groups and individuals. Individual submissions received are treated as sent in confidence. It would therefore be inappropriate for my right hon. Friend to list the names of those who sent them, or to publish them. The comments received were taken into account in the final circular 1/94, published on 31 January.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provisions he will make for the teaching of humanism as part of religious education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Religious education concerns the development of children's knowledge, understanding and awareness of religious beliefs and practices; the encouragement of respect for those holding different beliefs; and the development of the ability to make reasoned and informed judgments about religious and moral issues.

Humanism is not a religion and should not be taught in religious education lessons as if it were. A syllabus may, however, include teaching about people, such as humanists, who do not believe in God but nonetheless have a code of moral values, or give examples of secular equivalents to practices which have a religious background such as the marriage service or the taking of an oath. The detailed content of an agreed syllabus for religious education is decided by a local agreed syllabus conference.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has had regarding the publication of the model syllabuses for religious education.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend, has received 24 letters from members of the public since the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) published its draft model syllabuses for religious education on 25 January. The SCAA has invited comments on the models during a consultation period of two months.

National Curriculum

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many changes have been made to the national curriculum since the guide to the national curriculum was published in 1991; how many revised versions of the guide have been published since then; and if the current version is up to date.

Mr. Robin Squire: The second edition of the "Parent's Guide to the National Curriculum", published in June 1992, contained two changes to the curriculum on which the Government were consulting at the time the first edition was published. This current version does not reflect the changes to key stage 4 resulting from the Dearing report, which have not yet been given statutory effect.

Choice of School

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of parents had received by July 1993 *(a)* a written report on their child's progress in school and *(b)* a reminder of their right of appeal and how to use it in cases where the local education authority or school governors refuse them a place for their child in the school of their choice.

Mr. Robin Squire: Under the current reporting regulations schools are required to send a written report to all parents on their child's progress at least once in every school year. It is for individual schools to decide when to do so. All admission authorities are required by law to remind parents of their right of appeal when informing them of a decision not to allocate a place for their child at their preferred school.

SCOTLAND

Land Disposal

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conditions are attached to the disposal of Exchequer-funded land and buildings by further education colleges in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The conditions will allow further education colleges to retain the proceeds of sale of Exchequer-funded land and buildings without reference to the annual supply procedures, within specified limits agreed by the Secretary of State. These conditions are among those set out in an amendment to the financial memorandum between the Department and each FE college board of management, a copy of which I will be placing in the Library.

Betterment Levy

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about continued collection of betterment levy imposed by the Land Commission Act 1967.

Sir Hector Monro: It is no longer cost effective to continue pursuing collection of the betterment levy. In the 1992-93 financial year, five amounts of the levy and interest totalling £39,125·56 were written off. There remain five cases outstanding in Scotland totalling £7,880·59 and I have decided that these should be written off also.

War Crimes Act

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on whether any charges are to be made in Scotland under the War Crimes Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate issued the following statement on 3 February 1994:

"A specialised Crown Office Unit was formed in May 1991 to investigate allegations that persons living in Scotland were responsible for war crimes committed during the Second World War.

Extensive and thorough investigations of these allegations were carried out by the staff of the Unit in the United Kingdom and overseas. The results of these enquiries were reported to Crown Counsel.

After careful consideration Crown Counsel have decided that, as matters stand, there is not at present sufficient available evidence for a criminal prosecution in any of the cases reported to them.

Since no war crimes cases remain under active investigation in Scotland, a specialised unit will not be maintained. As with all serious enquiries, however, it will remain open to the criminal authorities to resume their investigations, should fresh evidence be brought to their attention. Any new allegations will, of course, be treated on their merits and investigated as their circumstances require."

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the subjects on which his Department or its predecessors formerly answered parliamentary questions directly but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Lang: I normally ask the chief executives of the executive agencies for which I am responsible to reply to

parliamentary questions on subjects covering operational matters carried out by them under the terms of their framework document. Such replies are then published in the *Official Report*.

Barrhead Regeneration Strategy

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the projects which *(a)* have been completed, *(b)* are under way, *(c)* are legally committed and *(d)* are planned under the Barrhead regeneration strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The following information has been provided by Renfrew district council, which chairs the Barrhead regeneration working party:

Projects completed

1. The landscape and environmental improvements at Main Street, Cochrane Street, Levern Water, Glen Street areas.
2. Corridor enhancement at the Barrhead/Hurlet Road.
3. Surveys and reports on traffic shopping, and housing conditions in the town centre and townscape/floorscape study.
4. Tenemental refurbishment at Walton Street, Henry Street/George Street and Main Street.
5. New build housing developments at Henry Street/George Street, and John Street.

Projects underway

1. Further landscape and environmental improvements at Main Street, Glen Street, Levern Water.
2. Main Street widening and realignment.
3. Further townscape/floorscape studies, and floodlighting study.
4. Tenemental refurbishment at Mill Street/Cross Arthurlie Street, and Barnes Street.

Projects planned

1. Further landscape and environmental improvements in the town centre/Levern Water area.
2. Commercial Improvement Area Grant scheme for property improvement.
3. Public car park at Carlibar Road.
4. Further tenemental refurbishment at Cross Arthurlie Street, Cochrane Street.
5. Further new build housing at Glen Street, Cochrane Street, Carlibar road, Cross Arthurlie Street.
6. Women's Centre, Main Street.
7. Land acquisition at Cochrane Street, Glen Street, Cross Arthurlie Street.

Barrhead was designated in May 1993 as a smaller urban renewal initiative, led by Scottish Homes. An action plan, building on the achievements already made, is currently being prepared.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing how much *(a)* has been spent, *(b)* is legally committed and *(c)* is planned by (i) Renfrewshire Enterprise, (ii) Strathclyde regional council, (iii) Renfrew district council, (iv) Scottish Homes, (v) the private sector, (vi) other Scottish Office agencies or departments and (vii) other organisations on the Barrhead regeneration strategy since its inception.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The following information has been provided by Renfrew district council, which chairs the Barrhead regeneration working party:

Money spent

Project	*Renfrew District Council* £,000	*Renfrewshire Enterprise* £,000	*Strathclyde Regional Council* £,000	*Scottish Homes* £,000	*The Scottish Office* £,000	*Private Sector* £,000	*Total* £,000
Landscape/Environmental improvements	118	365	—	—	—	—	483
Surveys/Studies	11	21	4	—	—	—	36
Tenement Refurbishment and new build housing	—	—	—	11,900	—	—	11,900
Totals	129	386	4	11,900	—	—	12,419

Money legally committed

Project	*Renfrew District Council* £,000	*Renfrewshire Enterprise* £,000	*Strathclyde Regional Council* £,000	*Scottish Homes* £,000	*The Scottish Office* £,000	*Private Sector* £,000	*Total* £,000
Landscape/Environmental improvements	210	80	—	—	—	—	290
Surveys/Studies	10	5	—	—	—	—	15
Roadworks	—	—	2,200	—	—	—	2,200
Totals	220	85	2,200	—	—	—	2,505

Money planned to be spent (subject to approval/completion of procedures)

Project	*Renfrew District Council* £,000	*Renfrewshire Enterprise* £,000	*Strathclyde Regional Council* £,000	*Scottish Homes* £,000	*The Scottish Office* £,000	*Private Sector* £,000	*Total* £,000
Landscape/Environmental improvements	160	160	—	—	—	—	320
Tenement Refurbishment and new build housing	—	—	—	6,000	—	12,000	18,000
Commercial Property Improvements	38	—	—	—	112	150	300
Public Car Park	—	—	100	—	—	—	100

Project	Renfrew District Council £,000	Renfrewshire Enterprise £,000	Strathclyde Regional Council £,000	Scottish Homes £,000	The Scottish Office £,000	Private Sector £,000	Total £,000
Women's Centre	—	—	88	—	264	—	352
Land Acquisition	170	—	—	—	—	—	170
Totals	368	160	188	6,000	376	12,150	19,242

Catholic Education

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Scotland when he last met representatives of the Roman Catholic Church to discuss the provision of primary and secondary education in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My officials met representatives of the Catholic Education Commission in Glasgow on 28 September 1993 to discuss this issue. My right hon. Friend and I have since corresponded with the Church authorities on a number of occasions and we have indicated our willingness to meet them to discuss matters further.

Disabled Students

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Scotland what has been the financial allocation through the disabled students allowance by the Scottish Office Education Department to students with disabilities in higher education in each year since 1990-91 to *(a)* students studying in Scotland and *(b)* students studying in England and Wales; and how many individual students this represents.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the tables.

a. Disabled students undertaking higher education courses in Scotland

Academic year	Disabled students' allowance payments £	Number of students
1990-91	102,476	74
1991-92	214,724	162
1992-93	291,860	188
1993-94	250,635	175

b. Disabled students undertaking higher education courses outwith Scotland

Academic year	Disabled students' allowance payments £	Number of students
1990-91	14,145	7
1991-92	22,278	11
1992-93	41,893	16
1993-94	29,293	12

Notes:
[1] The above figures include postgraduate students.
[2] Academic year 1993-94 is up to 3 February 1994 only.

Schools (Audiology Services)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the provision of audiology services in schools within *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Renfrew Division.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Audiology services in schools may be provided both by health boards and education authorities. The level and location of such services are wholly for the decision of the bodies concerned. Responsibility for the provision of educational audiology services for any part or parts of an education authority's area therefore lies with that authority. The Secretary of State has no power to intervene.

Proxy Votes

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make the application form to vote by post or proxy due to disability or physical incapacity available in braille.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the number of people living in homes of multiple occupation in Scotland; what regulations govern this type of shared accommodation; what plans he has to bring forward new legislation, regulations and controls; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the number of people living in houses in multiple occupation is not held centrally. The 1991 census showed that 10,435 people were living in accommodation which is not self-contained.

Housing authorities have powers to make orders applying the code of management contained in the Housing (Management of Houses and Buildings in Multiple Occupation) (Scotland) Regulations 1964, and to introduce licensing schemes for houses in multiple occupation under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Order 1991. The Government will continue to monitor the use of these powers and is not planning to amend the statutory provisions. HMOs are also covered by secondary legislation which can be introduced for various specific purposes, including fire safety.

Foxes

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much he has allocated to fox destruction clubs in the past five years; what criteria are applied in the distribution of this funding; what methods the funded clubs use to destroy foxes; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The information on grant allocated to fox destruction clubs in the past five years is as follows:

	£
1988-89	47,649
1989-90	58,981
1990-91	47,566
1991-92	59,846
1992-93	60,400

Grants are paid to 31 clubs throughout Scotland to meet 50 per cent. of the approved cost of carrying out systematic fox control within a clearly defined area of adequate size. Group activity by farmers through these clubs has proved effective in reducing lamb losses.

Fox clubs use legal methods to dispatch foxes.

Electoral Register

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many citizens living overseas have applied to be registered to vote in elections in each parliamentary constituency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information about applications by overseas electors to be included in the electoral registers are not held centrally.

Information about the number of overseas electors included in the 1992 and 1993 electoral registers is published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in "1993 Electoral Statistics", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Similar data for the 1993 and 1994 registers is expected to be published in the summer.

Homosexuals

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines have been recently issued by the Lord Advocate to procurators fiscal, sheriffs and judges concerning consenting homosexual relationships among males aged 16 years or more; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate does not issue guidelines to sheriffs and judges. Since December 1991 procurators fiscal have been directed by the Lord Advocate to report to the Crown Office for Crown Counsel's consideration cases of consensual homosexual acts where both of the participants are over 16 years but one or both are under 18 years.

Where both the participants are over 18 years but one or both are under 21 years and there are circumstances pointing to exploitation, corruption or breach of trust, the direction to procurators fiscal is that prosecution would be appropriate and that such cases need not be reported to the Crown Office unless none of those circumstances is present but the procurator fiscal considers that there are other circumstances which would justify proceedings.

Cancer

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of women in the eligible target group have been screened for breast cancer in the last three years in Scotland; how many women have breast cancer; and how many women died from breast cancer in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* Seventy-one per cent. of women invited in the eligible target age group have attended for screening by the Scottish breast screening programme in the last three years.

Figures are not available for the number of women with breast cancer. The number of new registrations of invasive cancer of the breast and the number of deaths from invasive cancer of the breast in Scotland is as follows:

	Number of new registrations	*Number of deaths*
1989	2,742	1,356
1990	2,944	1,250
1991	3,092	1,278
1992	—[1]	1,250

[1] Figures not yet available.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of women in the target group have had a cervical cancer smear test in Scotland within the last five years; how many women in Scotland have cervical cancer; and how many women died of cervical cancer.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* Eighty per cent. of the eligible target population in Scotland have attended for a cervical smear within the last five years.

Figures are not available on the number of women with cervical cancer but the number of new registrations of invasive cancer of the cervix and the number of deaths from invasive cancer of the cervix is as follows:

Year	*Number of new registrations*	*Number of deaths*
1987	461	188
1988	460	191
1989	376	205
1990	494	162
1991	458	175
1992	[1]—	183

[1] Figures not yet available.

Organic Farming

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many applications he has received to date for assistance under the aid scheme to assist farmers in Scotland wishing to convert to organic production methods, which he announced in August;

(2) what is the estimated expenditure in the current financial year in respect of aid to those wishing to convert to organic production methods in Scotland; and what is the estimated expenditure in 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The proposed organic aid scheme is not yet open for applications. It is part of the Scottish agri-environment programme currently with the EC Commission for approval. Subject to approval by Parliament and the Commission, planned expenditure on the Scottish agri-environment programme is expected to be in the region of £11 million in 1995-96.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received since the August

announcement on the agri-environment programme about the exclusion of current organic producers from the aid scheme proposed for organic production methods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* Since the August announcement about a proposed organic aid scheme, 22 representations have been received about the position of existing organic producers. Existing producers are not excluded from the scheme provided they have further land to convert. The scheme is designed to encourage farmers to convert to more environmentally friendly farming methods, not as a subsidy for existing organic producers.

Criminology Researchers

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on the granting of permission to criminology researchers to interview prisoners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* I have asked the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service, Mr. E. W. Frizzell, to reply.

Letter from Mr. E. Frizzell to Mr. John McFall, dated 7 February 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the policy on the granting of permission to criminology researchers to interview prisoners.

All requests for access to prisons for the purposes of conducting research are dealt with by Scottish Prison Service Headquarters. A substantial number of these involve requests to interview prisoners or have prisoners complete questionnaires.

The merits of such requests are considered against a number of criteria: relevance to the programme of Ministerially approved and published criminological research priorities; congruence with the interests of the Scottish Prison Service; the possible security implications of the proposed work; the value of the research to the advancement of criminological understanding; and the likely cost in terms of staff time and possible disruption which the research may have on the operations of specific establishments. In addition, a professional commentary on the methodology of the research proposal is supplied by criminologists from the Central Research Unit of The Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

Access is granted only in those cases where the research proposal satisfies some or all of these criteria. If granted access, researchers must sign an undertaking that they will adhere to the code of ethical guidelines of their profession or discipline (eg the British Psychological Society or the Social Research Association) and, if appropriate, receive approval from the Ethics Committee of the local Area Health Board. It is a requirement of any access that all prisoners approached are given the opportunity to decline to be interviewed and that all material gained during the interview is confidential and will be treated anonymously.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Hospital Trust.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The current membership of the Scottish Hospital Trust is:

Mr. G. M. Murray FFA *(Chairman)*
Mr. J. R. Gibson FFA
Mr. G. A. Hepburn ACMA, ACIS
Mr. J. B. Hume MA
Mrs. M. A. Jeffcoat FCCA
Mr. J. T. Laurenson MA FCA
Mr. J. M. Watherston CA

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the State Hospital Management Committee.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The information is as follows:

Chairman
Mr. Philip Hamilton-Grierson

Non-executive members
Dr. Barbara Ballinger
Mrs Nan Burnett
Mr. Bob Davis
Mrs. Heather Jenkins
Mr. Archie McCunn
Dr. Andrew Zealley

Executive members
Mr. Dick Manson
Dr. Janice Duncan
Mrs Ruth Whitty

Housing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will release additional funds to local authorities to enable them to replenish their housing stock; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* Substantial resources totalling some £405 million have been made available to local authorities for capital investment in public sector housing in 1993-94. I will announce the housing capital allocations for 1994-95 shortly. These allocations are generally not earmarked for specific purposes and it is for local authorities themselves to determine their own policies and priorities for meeting local housing needs.

NHS Trusts (Ayrshire)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement listing the current executive and non-executive directors on the boards of *(a)* the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust, *(b)* the South Ayrshire Trust and *(c)* the Community Health Care Trust; and which bodies nominated these individuals for membership of the trust boards.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* Appointment of executive directors is a matter for the trust boards themselves and particulars of individuals appointed are not held centrally. The current non-executive directors are listed below. None of them was nominated for appointment by an organisation.

North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust
Mr. James Grier
Mr. Keith Tulloch
Mrs. Kim Donald
Mrs. Angela Dunbar
Mr. Alan Stewart

South Ayrshire NHS Trust
Mr. Harold Currie
Mrs. Dorothy MacLellan
Mr. William Mowat
Mrs. Ann Wilson
Mr. Graeme McKinstry

Ayrshire and Arran Community Health Care NHS Trust
Mr. Ian Allison
Mr. David Gall
Mr. W. Scott McConnell
Mr. Robert Johnston
Dr. Susan Kinnaird

Mr. Raymond Gilmour

Mr. Gordon McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his consideration of the application for the prerogative of mercy submitted on behalf of Raymond Gilmour, Her Majesty's Prison Saughton.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The detailed inquiries into the petitions submitted on Mr. Gilmour's behalf, referred to my reply to the hon. Member on 7 December 1993, have now been completed. My right hon. Friend will respond to the petitions shortly and will also write to inform the hon. Member of his decision.

Defective Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make available additional funding to local authorities and owner-occupiers to deal with the structural problems associated with Orlit and Whitsun-Fairhurst type houses; if he will ring-fence this expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Substantial resources totalling some £405 million have been made available to local authorities for capital investment in public sector housing in 1993-94. I will announce the housing capital allocations for 1994-95 shortly. These allocations are generally not earmarked for specific purposes and it is for local authorities themselves to determine their own policies and priorities for meeting local housing needs including the need to deal with Orlit and Whitsun-Fairhurst type houses.

Additional housing capital allocations are made available to local authorities in respect of expenditure incurred by them in the provision of reinstatement grants or repurchase from eligible owners of Orlit and Whitsun-Fairhurst houses.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to amend the provisions of legislation relating to housing defects; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no plans to amend the provisions of the housing defects legislation. Under these provisions assistance has been available to eligible owners of defective houses for a 10-year period. In Scotland that period ends on 30 November 1994 and all applications must be submitted by that date.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what special financial provision he currently makes available to local authorities and owner-occupiers to deal with the structural problems associated with Orlit and Whitsun-Fairhurst type houses; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Substantial resources totalling some £405 million have been made available to local authorities for capital investment in public sector housing in 1993-94. Resources are not allocated specifically for work on any one type of house. It is for individual authorities to determine their own policies and priorities for investment in their own housing stock, including the need to tackle the structural problems found in Orlit and Whitson-Fairhurst houses.

Eligible owners of Orlit and Whitsun-Fairhurst houses can require local authorities to repurchase or give grant to make good the house. Supplementary capital allocations are issued to local authorities each year to meet in full their expenditure liabilities.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary State for Scotland if he will visit the Paisley, South constituency to assess the problems of Orlit and Whitsun-Fairhurst type houses.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit Paisley, South. Responsibility for the repair and maintenance of council housing lies with local authorities and my right hon. Friend has no powers to intervene in individual cases.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the options for dealing with housing with structural defects, such as those of Orlit and Whitsun-Fairhurst design; what plans he has to fund research into potential solutions; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has made no such assessment. Designated defective houses may either be demolished or repaired. PRC Homes Ltd., a subsidiary of the National House Building Council, is responsible for validating schemes of repair and it is for the building industry to devise schemes to meet specific requirements.

WALES

Secondary School Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what specific investments have been made in new funding for secondary school buildings by the Welsh Office in 1993; and what is proposed for 1994.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Under the voluntary aided schools capital building programme, in addition to the funding for routine repair and maintenance schemes, three secondary schools received funding for new school buildings and improvements to existing buildings in 1993-94. In the same period, under the grant-maintained schools capital building programme, in addition to the formula-related capital grant which such schools receive, six secondary schools received funding for new school buildings and improvements to existing buildings. I hope to announce successful applications for grant for new starts for both the voluntary aided and grant-maintained sectors in 1994-95 shortly. Grant has also been allocated to eight secondary schools under the technology schools initiative, including one grant-maintained school and to one technology centre.

Building works at LEA-maintained schools are the responsibility of individual authorities and it is for each to decide on the level of spending, within the overall resources made available, on each service including education and thereafter on which school.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) which of the public appointments for which he is responsible require advance notice to and consultation with the Chief Whip's office; and which appointments made since 1979 have been so notified and consulted upon;

(2) which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Redwood: It is not the practice of Her Majesty's Government to answer parliamentary questions about discussions and consultations between Departments and offices of Government relating to public appointments.

Residential and Nursing Homes

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many residential and nursing homes there are in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As at 31 March 1993 there were 675 local authority and registered private and voluntary residential homes for the elderly, physically disabled and visually disabled. At the same date there were 380 registered private nursing homes.

Ministers (Travel)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by the Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Secretary of State since 27 May 1993.

Mr. Redwood: The Secretary of State's travel costs are not budgeted separately from those of other Ministers. Expenditure on internal and overseas travel are not recorded separately nor is the Secretary of State's foreign travel identified separately when he travels with a party. The Department's identifiable expenditure on the Secretary of State's travel since 27 May 1993 was £15,861. The Secretary of State has been on one overseas trip to Hong Kong, Japan and the United States of America promoting Wales as a centre for investment and has travelled regularly and extensively throughout Wales.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of whether Wales social services departments are interpreting satisfactorily the guidelines on occupational pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Guidance on the assessment of an individual's ability to pay for services is contained in the charging for residential accommodation guide. I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that social services departments in Wales are not interpreting these guidelines satisfactorily.

Sitting Services

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of sitting services provided by local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not collected centrally.

Respite Care

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the adequacy of respite care provision in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for local and health authorities to determine the need for respite care facilities in their areas and to procure it accordingly. Additional resources of £1,200,000 will be available to local authorities in Wales in 1994-95 to assist in the development of domiciliary, day and respite care.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of specifically designated respite care beds in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the number of beds by specialty is collected centrally on the basis of specialties recognised by the Royal Colleges. Respite care is not one of these recognised specialties and hence the information requested is not available.

Continuing Care Beds

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of continuing care beds in Wales, by each health authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the number of beds by specialty is collected centrally on the basis of specialties recognised by the royal colleges. Continuing care is not one of these recognised specialties and hence the information requested is not available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policies he proposes to ensure that carers have a statutory right to separate arrangements and to respite care services.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is impossible to separate the needs and rights of carers from those of the people for whom they care. In every case, the assessment of needs —including the need for respite care—must take full account of the interests of both and indeed section 8(1) of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 requires a local authority, when assessing the needs of a disabled person living at home and receiving a substantial amount of care on a regular basis from an informal carer, to take account of the ability of that carer to continue to provide that support.

Elderly Carers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he will take to relieve the financial burdens on elderly carers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Community Care

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the acceptability of national minimum standards for care in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is the responsibility of local authorities to manage the implementation of community care. We will continue to monitor progress closely and offer guidance and direction as is considered necessary.

Nursing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the use of nursing banks and agencies in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are nursing banks to meet the staffing needs of most hospitals in Wales. Nurses attached to the banks are frequently former members of staff who because of personal circumstances no longer work regularly. Nursing agencies are not widely used in Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many intensive care nurses are employed in each of the major hospitals of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Detailed breakdowns of the number of nursing staff employed by health authorities and NHS trusts into occupational groups such as that requested are not available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessment he has made of whether there are sufficient *(a)* cardiac intensive care nurses and *(b)* general paediatric intensive care nurses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he is taking to obtain more intensive care trained nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for individual health authorities and NHS trusts to determine their staff requirements for the intensive care they provide. Currently in Wales there are no major difficulties with the recruitment of nurses and intensive care units are staffed to their establishments.

Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he will next meet the Welsh Housing Consultative Council; and if he will discuss with them the publication of the House Condition Survey.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My officials wrote to the Council of Welsh Districts on 10 January to establish whether it had any agenda items for a meeting of the Welsh Housing Consultative Committee.

Wind Farms

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received since 1991 *(a)* for and *(b)* against proposals for wind farm developments in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have received 91 representations in favour of developments, two of which included petitions with 10 and 60 signatures respectively, and 275 representations against developments, one of which included a petition with 897 signatures.

Co-operatives

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to encourage the development of retail, wholesale and manufacturing co-operatives.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office offers a range of assistance to new and existing businesses including co-operatives. There is also a Wales co-operative development and training centre which receives funding from the Welsh Development Agency and from the training and enterprise councils through the business start-up scheme.

Nursery and Primary School Spending

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the levels of spending per nursery and primary school pupil for the last available year for each education authority in Wales, and for Wales as a whole.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is given in table 14.18 of "Statistics of Education and Training in Wales: Schools' No. 2, 1994," a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Postal and Proxy Votes

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available in braille the application form to vote by post or proxy due to disability or physical incapacity.

Mr. Redwood: This is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Helwick Bank

Mr. Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange for the deposit in the Library of *(a)* the 1992 and 1993 Helwick bank hydrographic and beach profile surveys and *(b)* the H. R. Wallingford report on the potential impact of the dredging of Helwick bank.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The initial Helwick bank hydrographic and beach profile survey was deposited in the Library of the House in July 1993. I will deposit both the summer 1993 hydrographic and beach profile survey and the H. R. Wallingford report, "Wave and Sand Transport Studies" as soon as possible.

Schools Inspectorate

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish details of the total cost of the administration of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools for each year since 1990-91.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales—OHMCI—was established as a separate Government Department in September 1992. Prior to that date, when Her Majesty's inspectors of schools formed part of the Welsh Office, administration costs were not separately identified. Administration costs after September 1992 are a matter for OHMCI.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish details of the expenditure incurred by the Welsh Office to inform schools regarding application for grant-maintained status.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The day-to-day costs involved in providing schools with information about grant-maintained status are met out of the Department's running costs and it is not possible to disaggregate them.

It is, however, possible to identify two specific initiatives as they involved the use of outside contractors. In October 1992 three booklets on the grant-maintained arrangements were issued to all schools in Wales. The cost of producing and distributing these was £23,900. In October and November last year three conferences on grant-maintained status were arranged for heads and governors of schools. The cost of these has still to be finalised.

Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of organisations representing housing co-operatives to discuss funding and strategy; what is his policy regarding the development of housing co-operatives; what criteria he applies when determining financial assistance to housing co-operatives; what plans he has to encourage the development of housing co-operatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I expect Housing for Wales and local authorities to consider proposals for such schemes on their merits in the context of local housing strategies and available resources.

Dinas Dinlle Beach

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received in respect of Dinas Dinlle beach, Gwynedd; what steps he is taking to ensure the safety and cleanliness of all beaches in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No such representations have been received by my right hon. Friend. In common with the large majority of bathing waters on the Welsh coastline identified under the EC bathing waters directive, Morfa Dinlle—which includes the beach at Dinas Dinlle—consistently meets its mandatory standards. Dwr Cymru is currently engaged in a £230 million remedial works programme to ensure that all EC identified bathing waters in Wales meet these standards. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, district councils have a duty to ensure that all public amenity beaches are kept clear of litter and refuse above the mean high water mark.

Mink Farm, Llanybydder

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answers of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *181*, and 31 January, *Official Report*, column *524*, in respect of a mink farm at Llanybydder, Dyfed, established in February 1988, what reasons were given for the withdrawal of the application for a licence; and on what grounds the mink farm was allowed to operate without a licence.

Mr. Redwood: No reasons were given for the withdrawal of the licence application. The mink farm was allowed to operate pending a decision on the licence application.

Hip Replacements

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what percentage of hip replacement operations carried out in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic centre, Rhydlafar, Cardiff, in the last three years have required revision operations;

(2) what percentage of hip replacement operations using the Zimmer implant carried out *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic centre, Rhydlafar, Cardiff, in the last three years have required revision operations;

(3) what percentage of hip replacement operations using the Johnson and Johnson implant carried out *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic centre, Rhydlafar, Cardiff, in the last three years have required revision operations;

(4) what percentage of hip replacement operations using the BioMet implant carried out *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic centre, Rhydlafar, Cardiff, in the last three years have required revision operations.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Rural Planning

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current major issues being examined by each department devoted to rural strategic policy planning in *(a)* the Development Board for Rural Wales and *(b)* the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: *(a)* The DBRW's corporate plan identifies the following strategic issues which will impact on its policy in the medium term:

—impact of the recession
—agricultural change and the impact of CAP
—the closure of Trawsfynydd power station
—future European priorities
—environmental improvement, especially the Board's sites and property
—partnership with other public bodies
—private sector involvement in property development
—Newtown housing transfers

More generally the board will also take account of the impact of other policies which might affect rural areas in co-operation, where appropriate, with other agencies such as the Welsh Development Agency and the Rural Development Commission.

(b) The Welsh Development Agency's rural development programme for 1994-95 will continue to support the rural economy by targeting resources at specific rural locations, working in partnership with other organisations, and identifying new economic opportunities. The agency will continue to become involved in European Commission initiatives specifically designed for rural areas, and will continue to support sectoral initiatives.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many posts there are on *(a)* the Development Board for Rural Wales and *(b)* the Welsh Development Agency devoted to strategic rural policy planning; and if he will list the departments and their responsibilities and the grades of those posts.

Mr. Redwood: The development and marketing departments of the Development Board for Rural Wales, which employ some 55 professional staff, have the main responsibility for strategic rural policy planning. However, a number of other board staff have some involvement in the development of its rural policies, but this is not separately identifiable or measurable. The Welsh Development Agency also has a number of staff with responsibilities for strategic rural planning, although some have other responsibilities too.

I have asked the chief executive of the DBRW and the chief executive's office at the WDA to write to the hon.

Member with details of the grades and responsibilities of the posts involved. Copies of the replies will be placed in the Library of the House.

South Glamorgan Health Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost to public funds of *(a)* the dismissal and subsequent exoneration of Alan Crew as unit general manager of the Cardiff Royal Group of Hospitals and *(b)* the suspension on full pay and preparation of, and withdrawal of, disciplinary proceedings against consultant orthopaedic surgeon and director of the Welsh Office treatment centre, Mr. Ian Mackie; and whether South Glamorgan health authority has sought any additional contingency funds assistance from his Department to cover these costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: These are matters for South Glamorgan health authority to handle as employer. The authority has not sought any additional financial assistance in respect of either case.

University of Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and the chairman of the Welsh Higher Education Funding Council in relation to the winding-up of the University of Wales review.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Arable Areas

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in how many cases payments to farmers and landowners under the arable area payments scheme have been withheld or recovered in Wales; what is the amount of money withheld or recovered in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Every case in which payments may be withheld or recovered is examined very carefully and applicants have an opportunity to comment before a final decision is taken. This means that it is possible to provide only very provisional figures at this stage. Some 30 payments have so far been reduced or withheld entirely, but there are further cases still under consideration. These figures exclude penalties for late applications and adjustments made following corrections notified by the applicant under the special arrangements which applied in 1993 for dealing with genuine errors. The total amounts withheld in individual cases vary considerably.

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy in the Library of each annual audit and any quinquennial value for money or other extraordinary audit of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales and Heartbeat Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The summarised accounts of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales, which on its establishment on 1 April 1987 took over responsibility for Heartbeat Wales, are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General each year and are laid before the House.

Lloyds Bank

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of Lloyds bank to discuss their proposal to close their Welsh headquarters and move the administration to Taunton.

Mr. Redwood: I like to maintain contact with the banks and hope to be able to meet Lloyds bank shortly to discuss a range of matters.

HEALTH

Respite Beds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of respite beds for *(a)* elderly people, *(b)* people with a mental illness and *(c)* people with learning difficulties in each year since 1979.

Mr. Bowis: Places for respite care are not separately identified on the routine statistical returns. The closest available information concerns local authority-arranged short-term placements but these figures include not only residents receiving respite care but those admitted for other reasons, such as assessment, emergency and phased care.

Paediatricians

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* consultant paediatricians, *(b)* specialist trained paediatric nurses and *(c)* hospital nurses have been employed in the Trent region in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

Hospital nurses, qualified nurses in paediatric area of work and consultant paediatricians—Trent region at 30 September 1988 to 1992, excluding agency and locum staff

Whole-time equivalents	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Consultant paediatrics/ paediatric neurology	60	60	60	70	70
Qualified paediatric nursing staff	840	910	960	1,020	1,020
Hospital nurses	31,930	31,900	31,910	31,660	29,530
Project 2000	—	—	—	—	1,090
Community nurses	4,210	4,150	4,140	4,190	4,160
Hospital midwives	1,650	1,650	1,710	1,630	1,600

Notes

1. All figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Qualified paediatric nursing staff include some who may not be registered RSCNs.
3. Project 2000 nursing statistics supplied by Trent RHA.
4. Community nursing staff includes those in primary health care—such as health visiting, district nursing, school nursing etc—and community midwives.

Patient Transport Service

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will investigate the extent to which the specification on which the tendering procedure for the patient transport service contracts in North Staffordshire was based matches the existing level of PTS;

(2) if she will investigate whether the specification on which the successful bid for the passenger transport service

contract in North Staffordshire is based takes precise account of high-dependency cases transported between different clinics and units; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to carry out an investigation. The issue of the patient transport service contract for north Staffordshire is being resolved through local conciliation.

London Hospitals

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which London hospitals she has visited during the last 12 months; and what were the dates and times of her visits.

Dr. Mawhinney: Details of ministerial visits to hospitals in London during the last 12 months are shown in the table.

Minister	*Hospital*	*Date*
Minister for Health	St. Bartholomew's Hospital	21 January 1993
Minister for Health	Royal London Hospital	24 February 1993
Minister for Health	Eastman Dental Hospital	3 March 1993
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health	St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington	1 April 1993
Secretary of State	Greenwich District Hospital	19 April 1993
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health	Hammersmith Hospital	5 May 1993
Minister for Health	Guy's Hospital	13 July 1993
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Lords	Royal Marsden Hospital	23 July 1993
Secretary of State	Whittington Hospital	24 August 1993
Secretary of State	Chelsea and Westminster Hospital	22 September 1993
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health	West Middlesex Hospital	3 November 1993
Secretary of State	St. Mark's Hospital	6 December 1993
Minister for Health	St. Thomas's Hospital	9 December 1993
Minister for Health	Guy's Hospital	9 December 1993
Secretary of State	Homerton Hospital	20 December 1993

GP Prescriptions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was, in each NHS region, the number, value and value per head, of *(a)* all GP prescribed prescriptions and *(b)* GP prescriptions prescribed generically for the years 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available is shown in the tables.

The number, net ingredient cost, NIC, and the net ingredient cost per head of population for all and generic prescriptions[1] England 1991[4]

	All prescriptions			*Generic prescriptions*		
	Items (million)	*NIC (£ million)*	*NIC (£) per head*	*Items[2] (million)*	*NIC[3] (£ million)*	*NIC (£) per head[3]*
Northern	28·7	177·6	57·43	12·5	28·5	9·22
Yorkshire	33·6	196·5	53·39	13·5	26·9	7·30
Trent	41·6	248·3	52·27	17·0	35·1	7·38
East Anglia	16·6	105·6	50·70	6·0	12·2	5·84
North West Thames	25·6	167·9	48·11	10·1	21·3	6·09
North East Thames	30·1	190·5	50·32	11·8	24·2	6·40
South East Thames	29·8	185·1	49·96	11·8	24·3	6·56
South West Thames	21·6	145·4	48·87	8·5	18·7	6·28
Wessex	23·4	151·8	51·61	9·3	19·3	6·57
Oxford	17·7	120·5	47·08	6·7	14·4	5·61
South Western	28·4	181·8	52·15	11·5	22·9	6·57
West Midlands	45·8	274·1	52·06	18·0	35·2	6·68
Mersey	23·7	142·6	59·02	9·3	17·0	7·06
North Western	39·9	232·3	58·35	15·7	28·9	7·26
England	406·5	2,519·8	52·27	161·7	328·8	6·82

[1] The figures include all prescriptions dispensed in the family health services authorities by community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors, and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.
[2] Prescription items written generically.
[3] Prescription items dispensed generically.
[4] Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys 1992 based mid-year estimates for 1991 and 1992 population have been used for rates per head.

The number, net ingredient cost and the net ingredient cost per head of population for all and generic prescriptions England 1992

	All prescriptions			*Generic prescriptions*		
	Items (million)	*NIC (£million)*	*NIC (£) per head*	*Items[2] (million)*	*NIC[3] (£million)*	*NIC (£) per head[3]*
Northern	29·8	199·0	64·23	13·7	28·1	9·06
Yorkshire	34·7	220·5	59·62	14·8	26·7	7·21
Trent	43·6	281·1	58·86	18·7	34·0	7·12
East Anglia	17·6	121·6	58·22	6·5	11·9	5·70
North West Thames	26·8	191·2	54·57	11·1	20·5	5·84
North East Thames	31·6	221·6	58·33	12·8	25·3	6·65
South East Thames	31·4	210·7	56·74	12·9	23·4	6·30
South West Thames	22·6	167·0	55·98	9·3	17·6	5·90
Wessex	24·5	171·7	58·06	10·4	18·8	6·35
Oxford	18·7	136·7	52·97	7·4	14·0	5·41
South Western	29·9	206·6	58·99	12·7	22·2	6·33
West Midlands	48·0	308·9	58·54	20·0	34·7	6·57
Mersey	24·7	161·5	66·95	10·2	17·0	7·05
North Western	41·4	259·8	65·16	17·4	28·6	7·17
England	425·1	2,858·0	59·08	177·8	322·5	6·67

[1] The figures include all prescriptions dispensed in the family health services authorities by communities pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors, and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.
[2] Prescription items written generically.
[3] Prescription items dispensed generically.
[4] OPCS 1992 based mid-year estimates for 1991 and 1992 population have been used for rates per head.

Bjork-Shiley Heart Valves

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the serial numbers and types of Bjork-Shiley convexo-concave valves are recorded as part of a patient's medical history.

Mr. Sackville: The content of medical records is a matter for local decision.

Community Care, Housing and Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the 10 local authorities participating in the study of community care, housing and homelessness undertaken by the NHS management Executive.

Mr. Bowis: This is one of a number of special studies being carried out jointly by the social services inspectorate and the NHS Management Executive as part of the Department of Health's programme of monitoring community care implementation. The Department of the Environment is jointly involved in this study.

The 10 local authorities being visited are:

Bradford
Camden
Dudley
Durham
Haringey
Hounslow
Nottinghamshire
Suffolk
Wandsworth
West Sussex

The special studies are based on social services authorities, but each of the 10 studies involves social services, health and housing agencies.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the outcome of discussions held with the Data Protection Registrar relating to the use of copyright legislation to protect the privacy of individuals whose personal data are contained in medical records; what discussions were held on whether copyright legislation would prevent the use of medical records for other purposes by another Department of State; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: There have been no discussions with the Data Protection Registrar relating to the use of copyright legislation to protect the privacy of individuals whose personal data are contained in medical records. The confidentiality of personal data in medical records is protected by the common law, health professionals' ethical responsibilities and, in the case of computerised data, the Data Protection Act 1984.

The only discussions with the Data Protection Registrar regarding copyright have been about the use of Crown copyright to ensure national health service numbers are used only for NHS purposes.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made of whether the personal data to be contained in an NHS administrative register are more sensitive than the personal data contained in community charges registers were; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what plans she has to protect personal data to be contained in NHS administrative registers in the same way as the Government afforded protection to personal data contained in community charge registers; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Security and confidentiality of personal data to be held in the national health service administrative register will be carefully protected. Measures to secure this are being developed and tested. Data will be available only to those who need to know it for NHS purposes, and the Data Protection Act 1984 will be complied with.

Section 64 Funding

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many applications were received for section 64 funding for the financial year commencing 1 April; and how many were refused;

(2) which organisations have received section 64 funding for the financial year commencing 1 April; and how much has been allocated to each one.

Mr. Bowis: A total of 472 applications were received for possible support commencing 1 April 1994. They are still being processed.

Performance Standards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of all contracts between district health authorities and provider units as at July 1993 set specific performance standards.

Dr. Mawhinney: The NHS management executive expects the NHS to improve the quality of services provided to patients through standard setting. However, details of contracts are not monitored centrally.

Waiting Times

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether she will require NHS hospitals and trusts to publish maximum waiting times from receipt of a general practitioners referral to admission as well as from first out-patient appointment to admission;

(2) what proportion of NHS hospitals and trusts had, at July 1993, published their current maximum admission times for each specialty; and which hospital or trust had the longest and shortest waiting time at 1 April 1993 in each specialty.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on waiting times for in-patient and day-case treatment by specialty and by district health authority and trust is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England", which is published twice yearly. The latest published figures are for March and September 1993 and copies are available in the Library.

Information on waiting times to first out-patient appointment is not yet collected.

Ambulance Response Times

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what proportion of cases an emergency ambulance arrived within 14 minutes in an urban area and within 19 minutes in a rural area in 1992-93.

Me. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Percentage of emergency responses within patients charter standard—95 per cent.—1992-93

	Per cent.
Rural ambulance services	96·9
Urban ambulance services[1]	94·1

[1]This excludes information on the London ambulance service.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last received a submission from the North Staffordshire district health authority in respect of a request to lower the Orcon standard for north Staffordshire; what were the reasons for the decision on this; and if she will place a copy of her reply in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: Ministers have received no such submission.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the Orcon standard for accident and emergency service in respect of *(a)* the West Midland ambulance trust and *(b)* the Staffordshire ambulance trust for (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The national patients charter standards for these two trusts in both years are:

West Midlands ambulance trust—14 minutes
Staffordshire ambulance service—19 minutes

The reason for the difference is that the first standard relates to an urban area, and the second to a rural area.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people had been on hospital waiting lists in England in total, and in each specialty on 1 July 1992 and on 1 July 1993 for *(a)* three months or less, *(b)* six months or less, *(c)* 12 months or less, *(d)* 24 months or less or *(e)* over 24 months.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on waiting times by specialty for in-patient and day-case treatment is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England". This is published twice yearly for March and September and copies are available in the Library. Information is given in time bands of zero to five months, six to 11 months, 12 to 23 months and 24 months and over.

Provisional waiting time figures in annual time bands are published quarterly. These show that in England at 30 June 1992 there were 843,210 patients waiting less than a one year, 925,695 waiting less than two years and 1,244 waiting over two years. At 30 June 1993 there were 952,023 waiting under one year, 1,017,488 waiting under two years and only 275 waiting over two years, all of whom were waiting for specialised infertilty treatment at a London hospital.

Selected Items

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what considerations underlie her policy not to hold information centrally in respect of the new selected items that have been made available to the national health service; if she will make it her policy in future to hold a list centrally; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under the selected list scheme, drugs may be removed from prescription at national health service expense on the advice of an independent, expert committee. Drugs and other substances which are to be added to the list of items which may not be prescribed under the national health service are listed in statutory instruments.

Patients Charters

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the health authorities in England which at July 1993 had published local patients charters containing detailed information on local health services, including quality standards and maximum waiting times;

(2) how many *(a)* national health service trusts and *(b)* directly managed provider units had (i) published or (ii) not published charters containing detailed information on quality standards and maximum waiting times as at July 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health authorities, national health service trusts and directly managed units are not required to publish local charters, although many have done so.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of national health service authorities have published reports on the performance of individual local hospital and ambulance services against patients charter rights and standards in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: All district health authorities have published patients charter annual reports for 1992-93.

Dental Treatment

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what rights the patient has by way of complaint if a dentist refuses to treat a patient under the national health service, and then the private treatment is unsatisfactory.

Dr. Mawhinney: Unsatisfactory private treatment is a matter between the dentist and his patient. It is not covered by the national health service complaints procedure.

Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on paediatric speech and language therapy by each NHS purchaser *(a)* in absolute terms and *(b)* as a proportion of their total speech and language therapy budget, in the most recent financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Bowis: Expenditure on speech and language therapy services in England has increased by 184 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79 to £60·4 million in 1991-92; expenditure on paediatric and adult services cannot be separately identified. Some 66 per cent. of new episodes of treatment commenced in 1991-92 were with children aged from birth to 15 years.

Mentally Ill People

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the changes in the number of beds in mental hospitals and hospitals for people

with learning disabilities *(a)* in the South Birmingham health authority area, *(b)* in the West Midlands health authority area and *(c)* in England in each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: The information requested is contained in the annual publication "Bed Availability for England", financial year 1992-93. Copies of this publication are available in the Library.

Care Plans

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of social services clients had an individual care plan on *(a)* 1 April 1992 and *(b)* 1 April 1993.

Mr. Bowis: This information should be held by social services departments of local authorities.

NHS Complaints

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of NHS complaints received between 1 April 1992 and 31 March 1993 were dealt with within *(a)* one week, *(b)* one month, *(c)* three months and *(d)* more than three months.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 7 February at column *43*.

Operations (Cancellation)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients had their operations cancelled on the day they were due to arrive in hospital in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally. Information is, however, collected on performance against the patients charter standard on twice cancelled operations, and is available in the NHS management executive annual report 1992-93, copies of which are in the Library.

Chemical Entity Products

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what considerations underlie her policy not to hold information centrally in respect of the new chemical entity products made available to the national health service since February 1993 that would have been covered by the selected list scheme; if she will make it her policy in future to hold a list centrally; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: All drugs, including those containing a new chemical entity, must be licensed by the Medicines Control Agency before they may be prescribed for patients under the national health service. Once a product is licensed it is the manufacturer who decides when to bring it on to the market. Manufacturers do not need to notify the Department of this decision.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue guidelines to local authorities to prevent juvenile offenders from being sent abroad during their punishment.

Mr. Bowis: We intend to issue guidance shortly.

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he issues to social services departments to ensure that juveniles in their care attend at court hearings on the day they are due to appear.

Mr. Bowis: Volume 1 of the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations makes it clear that it is the responsibility of a local authority to ensure that any juvenile remanded to local authority accommodation is produced in court at the date, place and time specified by the court. A copy of the guidance and regulations is available in the Library.

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many local authorities use private residential homes in the treatment of juvenile offenders;

(2) if he will provide a breakdown by local authority of the number of young offenders in *(a)* council-run secure accommodation and *(b)* private residential homes or schools at the latest available date.

Mr. Bowis: Information available centrally about the number of children and young people accommodated compulsorily by local authorities relates to the legislation under which they are held and not to offences committed or alleged.

The numbers in secure accommodation at 31 March 1992 who were admitted on remand or detained or subject to a care order in criminal proceedings are given in table A.

Numbers of children and young people who were accommodated compulsorily by local authorities in private residential homes or schools at 31 March 1992, and were on remand or detained or subject to care order in criminal proceedings, are given in table B. Only local authorities that submitted valid data for the period ending 31 March 1992 and had at least one child accommodated in this way at 31 March 1992 are listed.

Table A: number of children in secure accommodation at 31 March 1992, admitted subject to a care order in criminal proceedings, remanded or detained, by local authority and legal status

	Subject to care order made in criminal proceedings	*Remanded Section 23, CYPA[1] 1969*	*Remanded to LA accommodation*	*Detained Section 38(6) CYPA[1] Act 1984*	*Detained S53 CYPA Act 1933*
England	15	4	69	1	81
Avon	1	—	3	—	9
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	2
Cheshire	—	—	4	—	2
Coventry	—	—	5	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	2	—	1
Devon	1	—	1	—	4
Durham	7	3	6	—	8
East Sussex	—	—	1	—	—
Hammersmith	—	1	6	—	6

	Subject to care order made in criminal proceedings	Remanded Section 23, CYPA[1] 1969	Remanded to LA accommodation	Detained Section 38(6) CYPA[1] Act 1984	Detained S53 CYPA Act 1933
Hampshire	—	—	5	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	—	—	1
Lancashire	2	—	4	—	23
Leeds	2	—	7	—	15
Lincolnshire	—	—	1	1	1
Liverpool	1	—	3	—	1
Newham	—	—	4	—	—
Northumberland	1	—	2	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	1	—	4
Oxfordshire	—	—	3	—	—
Salford	—	—	5	—	2
Southwark	—	—	5	—	2
St. Helens	—	—	1	—	—

[1] Children and Young Persons Act.

Table B
Number of children looked after at 31 March 1992 in private residential accommodation and schools, subject to a care order in criminal proceedings or remand

Local authorities	Criminal care orde.	Remand
Total[1]	24	6
Bedfordshire	1	—
Birmingham	2	1
Coventry	1	—
Derbyshire	—	1
Devon	1	—
Dorset	1	—
Gateshead	1	—
Greenwich	—	1
Havering	1	—
Hereford and Worcester	1	—
Lambeth	—	1
Lancashire	1	—
Newham	2	—
Oxfordshire	—	1
Sheffield	1	—
Somerset	2	—
South Tyneside	1	—
Staffordshire	3	—
Stockport	1	—
Suffolk	—	1
Tameside	1	—
Wiltshire	1	—
Wolverhampton	2	—

[1] The total of the 90 authorities with validated returns.

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to change the guidance his Department issues to local authorities regarding the placement of young offenders.

Mr. Bowis: Current guidance to local authorities derives from a number of sources. It is kept under review to reflect changing circumstances.

Orthodontic Treatment

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice her Department gives to health authorities about the provision of orthodontic treatment and the recruitment of orthodontists in the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: The planning and provision of dental treatment including orthodontic treatment is a matter for district health authorities to undertake jointly with family health services authorities. Recruitment is a matter for local decision. Much orthodontic treatment is provided by general dental practitioners who are independent contractors.

Departmental Press Release

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *377*, what is the significance of the reference number H93/1145 heading the Department of Health press release of 31 December entitled "Your Health Matters More in '94."

Mr. Sackville: There is not any significance. A technical problem early in 1993 meant the first press releases could not be consecutively numbered from H93/1. The number of the first press release in 1993, H93/472, continued from 1992. The number of the last press release in 1993, the 675th, was H93/1145.

Cannabinol

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will seek a report from the Committee on Safety of Medicines concerning the alleged therapeutic uses of cannabinol; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We are aware of recent claims about the therapeutic value of cannabinoids in the treatment of multiple sclerosis and other conditions.

The Medicines Control Agency would seek the advice of the Committee on the Safety of Medicines on the receipt of an application for a licence to treat these conditions with cannabinoids.

Care in the Community Grant

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when she expects to have completed her examination on the need for damping the alterations to the grant for care in the community for the Isle of Wight;

(2) when she expects to respond to the Department of the Environment Minister's letter about the effect of the care in the community grant for 1994-95 for the Isle of Wight;

(3) when she will make a response to the deputation on the grant for 1994-95 for care in the community in the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Bowis: I have carefully considered the representations made by the Isle of Wight county council in response to its indicative allocation of the special transitional grant for 1994-95. I understand that similar representations were made to Ministers at the Department of the Environment. I have concluded that the distribution method announced on 2 December 1993 remains the most sensible and appropriate, and in the best interests of community care across the country as a whole. This decision was notified in writing to the hon. Member and to the Isle of Wight county council on 2 February 1994.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what her calculations reveal on the effect of the standard spending assessment for care in the community in 1995-96 as a result of the alterations in the grant for 1994-95 for the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Bowis: The personal social services element of the standard spending assessment for the Isle of Wight for 1994-95 has been set at £14·12 million, an increase of almost 18 per cent. over the current year. The figures for 1995-96 will be announced in due course.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those local authorities who find themselves in a similar position to the Isle of Wight with their grant for 1994-95 for care in the community.

Mr. Bowis: None. Care in the community is partly financed by the personal social services element of the standard spending assessment, partly by the special transitional grant and partly by decisions within each local authority as to priorities for spending of its overall spending assessment.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the hon. Member for Isle of Wight will receive copies of the literature promised by the officials at the meeting with the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), showing the Department's intention to alter the grant for the care in the community in 1994-95 and the effect it will have on a community like the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Bowis: Officials wrote, as promised, to the director of social services for the Isle of Wight on 22 December. A copy of that letter has been sent to the hon. Member.

Upper-limb Disorders

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate her Department has made of the number of people with work-related upper limb disorders; if she has commissioned any research into these disorders and their cause, or will be doing so; what medical advice she has about their cause; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has no such estimates and would seek to be advised by the Department of Employment, to whom the hon. Member has addresed a similar question.

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, MRC, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. We understand that the MRC is not currently supporting any research specifically into work-related upper limb disorders, but is always willing to consider scientifically based sound proposals for research. The prospects for funding of research into work-related upper limb disorders will, therefore, depend on the nature of any applications received.

There is no medical consensus on whether work-related upper limb disorders are a single syndrome or a collection of differing conditions; nor is there general agreement on their cause or treatment.

Mammography

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) in which circumstances the national health service allow for mammography for women aged under 50 years; and what instances of mammography being refused for women of this age group have been drawn to her attention;

(2) in how many health authorities women in the 35 to 50 years age group are provided with free national health service mammograms upon request.

Mr. Sackville: Women under 50 will not be invited for routine screening for breast cancer; younger women at special risk may be offered mammography if referred by their general practitioner as will women with symptoms. This is a clinical decision and not one in which we would wish to interfere. No instances of mammography being refused have been drawn to our attention.

NHS Authorities (Membership)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all the chairs and members who serve concurrently on more than one NHS authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: Chairmen and non-executive members of national health service authorities may not serve concurrently on more than one such authority, excepting family health services authorities chairmen who may be appointed as a member of a regional health authority. Executive members of NHS authorities may serve on more than one authority. These appointments are a matter for the authorities themselves.

Elderly Persons' Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number of places available in local authority elderly persons' homes for each year since 1979.

Mr. Bowis: The information available is shown in the table.

Number of places in staffed local authorities homes catering primarily for elderly people and young physically disabled people, England

As at 31 March	*Elderly and younger physically disabled people*	*Elderly people*	*Younger physically disabled people*
1979	113,592	[1]—	[1]—
1980	114,103	[1]—	[1]—
1981	114,921	[1]—	[1]—
1982	115,493	[1]—	[1]—
1983	115,913	[1]—	[1]—
1984	116,430	[1]—	[1]—
1985	116,080	[1]—	[1]—
1986	115,609	[1]—	[1]—
1987	114,189	112,360	1,829
1988	112,422	110,598	1,824
1989	109,194	107,386	1,808
1990	105,380	103,601	1,779
1991	97,853	96,137	1,716
1992	86,676	85,037	1,639

[1] Not available.

Note: The decrease in places in 1991 and 1992 reflects the transfer of local authority homes to the independent sector and rationalisation.

Latero Flora

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, columns *324-25*, when she now expects the Medicines Control Agency to complete its investigation into the American-imported product Latero Flora and its active ingredient bacillus laterosporus.

Mr. Sackville: Following its earlier undertaking to stop promoting Latero Flora as a medicinal product, the supplier has now told the Medicines Control Agency that it ceased trading in the product three weeks ago. The agency will continue to work with other agencies to monitor the situation and protect public health.

Westcountry Ambulance Services Trust

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total annual budget of the Westcountry ambulance services trust.

Mr. Sackville: In 1993-94 the trust's income is planned to be £23·8 million.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names and salaries of the chairman and non-executive directors of the Westcountry ambulance services trust.

Mr. Sackville: The chairman of the Westcountry ambulance services trust is Mr. James Pease-Watkin who receives an annual remuneration of £17,145.

The non-executive directors are Mrs. Betty Collard, Mr. Justin Luttrell, Mrs. Hilary Bucklar, Mr. Patrick Egan and Lt. Colonel Robert Perkins OBE. All non-executive directors receive an annual remuneration of £5,000.

Nurses Grading

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps have been taken to ensure monitoring takes place of the ethnic status of nurses appealing against their nurse clinical gradings;

(2) if she will provide statistics on the ethnic status of nurses appealing against their gradings and their rate of success.

Mr. Sackville: There are no plans to monitor centrally the ethnic status of nurses appealing against their grading. Under the clinical grading structure staff are graded according to the duties and responsibilities of the post occupied. Any staff who are unhappy with the grading of their post are able to challenge the employing authority's decision.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of *(a)* HIV and *(b)* rectal gonorrhoea in the age groups 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 years and over were notified to her Department in each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: Laboratory reports of HIV infections newly identified in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are made to the Public Health Laboratory Service AIDS centre at the communicable diseases surveillance centre. The number who were of the ages shown at the time their HIV infection was diagnosed is given for each year since 1987. The 1993 figures may not be complete.

Age (years)	*Number of HIV infections reported*						
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
16	3	4	0	2	0	1	1
17	4	1	5	11	5	3	4
18	11	14	9	12	11	7	15
19	23	15	21	13	21	18	11
20	39	30	22	31	38	35	20
21	60	29	31	36	36	58	36
22+	1,898	1,400	1,499	1,932	2,205	2,125	2,093
TOTAL	2,038	1,493	1,587	2,037	2,316	2,247	2,180

Laboratory reports of rectal gonorrhoea are routinely received by the HIV/STD division at the communicable disease surveillance centre. The number who were of the ages shown at the time of report are shown broken down by sex for each year since 1989. Data are unavailable for 1988 and 1987. The 1993 figures may not be complete.

Number of rectal gonorrhoea isolates reported

	Age (Years)								
	16	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20*	*21*	*22*	*23+*	*Total*
1989									
Female	4	4	3	3	2	4	1	20	41
Male	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	23	24
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Totals	4	4	3	3	3	4	1	44	66
1990									
Female	2	2	4	1	5	2	1	18	35
Male	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	103	106
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Totals	2	2	4	3	5	2	2	122	142

	Age (Years) 16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23+	Total
1991									
Female	1	5	4	8	4	3	2	17	44
Male	0	1	2	2	4	3	4	97	113
Totals	1	6	6	10	8	6	6	114	157
1992									
Female	2	3	6	8	2	4	1	14	40
Male	0	0	1	2	0	3	3	27	36
Totals	2	3	7	10	2	7	4	41	76
1993									
Female	1	5	2	1	4	1	1	12	27
Male	0	0	1	1	5	7	3	26	43
Totals	1	5	3	2	9	8	4	38	70

Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *599*, whether a person may serve concurrently as a chair or non-executive director of a trust of NHS authority board and a shadow trust board.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the percentage of ethnic minority non-executive directors of NHS trusts, health authorities and family health services authorities in each year since 1990-91.

Dr. Mawhinney: Three per cent. of people currently appointed to national health service authorities and trusts in a non-executive capacity are from ethnic minorities. We are aiming to increase this proportion to 4 per cent. by September 1996. Information for earlier years is not available.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to decrease funds to general practitioner fundholders who do not meet waiting list targets.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. Fundholders are expected to comply with patients charter standards in the same way as district health authorities, and are proving extremely effective in improving waiting times.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *198*, what financial capital allocation each regional health authority will receive in 1994-95; and what is the aggregate capital allocation to national health service trusts in each regional area.

Mr. Sackville: The division of the regional capital planning totals announced on 7 December 1993 between regional health authorities and national health service trusts is set out in the table. Regions have now been notified of their capital allocations, and trusts their external financing limits, for 1994-95.

	RHA (£ millions)	NHS trusts (£ millions)	Total (£ millions)
Northern	24·694	75·768	100·462
Yorkshire	5·193	111·934	117·127
Trent	4·798	143·074	147·872
East Anglia	2·749	61·765	64·514
North West Thames	35·287	62·432	97·719
North East Thames	19·812	91·988	111·800
South East Thames	[1]–1·143	116·386	115·243
South West Thames	7·815	78·254	86·069
Wessex	15·500	81·381	96·881
Oxford	6·722	66·928	73·650
South Western	[1]0·000	106·657	106·657
West Midlands	22·000	140·940	162·940
Mersey	16·500	60·009	76·509
North Western	4·038	125·932	129·970
England	163·965	1,323·448	1,487·413

[1]Receipts from asset sales equal or exceed regional planned capital expenditure.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the number and percentage of invalidity benefit recipients who are in receipt of other sources of income by source and average amount of such other income.

Mr. Scott: Information on the number of invalidity benefit recipients who are in receipt of other sources of income is not available. Estimates of the percentage of invalidity benefit recipients who are in receipt of other sources of income and the average amount of such income are in the table.

Source	Percentage of invalidity benefit recipients	Average amount per week[1] £
Investment	52	18
Occupational pensions	38	60
Non income-related benefits (exc. invalidity benefit)[2]	78	11
Community Charge and Housing Benefits[3]	37	17
Income Support and family credit[3]	7	40

Source	Percentage of invalidity benefit recipients	Average amount per week[1] £
Net earnings[4]	8	37
Other[5]	7	13

Source: 1990 and 1991 Family Expenditure Surveys
Notes:
[1] January 1991 prices.
[2] Christmas bonus, child benefit, industrial injuries disablement pension, invalidity care allowance, disability living allowance, attendance allowance, war disablement pension.
[3] Figures relate to "benefit units" rather than to individuals. Benefit units containing two invalidity benefit recipients are counted twice.
[4] Average is "inflated" by a small number who receive payments from former employers.
[5] Children's income, income-in-kind, income from absent spouse etc.

Benefit Levels

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish the level in real terms of each benefit in 1979, or at time of introduction if later, and at present;

(2) what is the current level of each benefit; and what it was in 1979, or at the time of introduction, if later, in constant prices.

Mr. Burt: The information for the main social security benefits is in the table.

Level of benefit in 1993 or time of introduction, at 1993 prices

Benefit	April 1993 £	Rate in 1979 or introduction, at April 1993 prices £
Retirement pension single person	56·10	54·37
Retirement pension married couple	89·80	87·04
Unemployment benefit (personal benefit)	44·65	43·17
Unemployment benefit (Dep. Adult increase)	27·55	26·72
Invalidity benefit	56·10	54·37
Attendance allowance (higher rate)	44·90	43·40
Mobility allowance	[1]—	28·00
Disability living allowance (Care component higher rate)	44·90	[2]43·91
Disability living allowance (mobility component higher rate)	31·40	[2]30·69
Child benefit (first child)	10·00	9·33
Child benefit (subsequent children)	8·10	9·33
One parent benefit	6·05	5·83
Supplementary benefit (couple with 2 children aged 7 and 11)	[1]—	95·14
Supplementary benefit (pensioner couple)	[1]—	82·06
Income support (couple with 2 children aged 7 and 11)	115·85	[3]111·31
Income support (pensioner couple)	95·25	[3]89·24
Family income supplement	[1]—	29·42
Family credit (one child under 11)	53·25	[3]50·29

[1] Indicates benefit replaced.
[2] Introduced April 1992.
[3] Introduced April 1988.
Note: The amounts relating to pensioners under the age of 80 have been given.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many benefit claimants there were, excluding unemployment-related claimants, in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1993.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table. Figures relate to benefit recipients and unless otherwise stated have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Some claimants receive more than one benefit. It has not been possible to exclude unemployment-related claims except in the case of supplementary benefit/income support and unemployment benefit itself.

Benefit recipients

Benefit	1979	1993
Attendance Allowance	286,000	890,000
Child Benefit	7,190,000	6,855,000
Child Special Allowance	[1]825	[1]99
Rent Rebate[3]	1,205,000	[2]2,961,000
Rent Allowance[3]	220,000	[2]1,217,000
Rate Rebate[3]	3,065,000	Not applicable
Community Charge Benefit[3]	Not applicable	[2]6,254,000
Disability Living Allowance	Not applicable	1,167,000
Disability Working Allowance	Not applicable	[1]3,165
FIS/Family Credit	81,000	487,000
Guardians Allowance	4,000	2,000
Supplementary Benefit/ Income Support	2,288,000	3,671,000
Industrial Death Benefit	31,000	22,000
Industrial Disablement Benefit	198,000	[2]204,000
Invalidity Benefit	610,000	[2]1,439,000
Invalid Care Allowance	6,000	[2]189,000
Maternity Allowance	105,000	[2]11,000
Mobility Allowance	138,000	Not applicable
One Parent Benefit	381,000	877,000
Pneumo, Byssinosis and misc.	2,000	[2]1,000
Reduced Earnings Allowance	148,000	[2]157,000
Retirement Pension	8,806,000	10,084,000
Sickness Benefit	430,000	[2]138,000
Severe Disablement Allowance	Not applicable	[2]302,000
Widows Benefit	452,000	337,000
Workmans Compensation	5,000	[2]1,000
War Pension	367,000	[2]260,000
HNCIP/NCIP	162,000	Not applicable

[1] Exact figures.
[2] 1992 data.
[3] Figures relate to benefit units.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff from *(a)* the Benefits Agency medical service and *(b)* the Benefits Agency will be required to process claims for incapacity benefit; and how many of these staff will be qualified medical practitioners.

Mr. Scott: The estimated staffing consequences for the introduction of incapacity benefit appear in the financial memorandum accompanying the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill. Further refinement of these figures will depend upon decisions still to be taken by Parliament.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimates his Department has as to the time it will take to process claims for the two thirds of claimants who will have their claims for incapacity benefit referred to the Benefits Agency medical service.

Mr. Scott: Until details of the new objective medical test are agreed we cannot produce precise estimates for how long each reference will take. Because cases will be

referred while benefit is being paid, we do not expect any worsening of the overall clearance time for claims on account of the introduction of incapacity benefit.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what effect the receipt of the allowance for VAT will have upon retirement pensioners' entitlement to housing benefit.

Mr. Burt: For those in receipt of retirement pension at the standard basic rate, the extra help for VAT of 50p for a single pensioner and 70p for a pensioner couple will not affect housing benefit entitlement. Those on a modified basic retirement pension, who receive proportionally less help with VAT, will see some increase in their housing benefit entitlement. Couples, where each partner receives the standard rate pension in their own right, will see some decrease in their housing benefit entitlement but will gain by more than the 70p overall.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the average cost of housing benefit payments to *(a)* tenants of local authorities, *(b)* tenants of housing associations and *(c)* tenants of private landlords in the latest year for which the information is available.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 3 February 1994.

Parliamentary Ombudsman

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what effect the privatisation of parts of social security administration will have on the rights of a citizen to make a complaint of maladministration to the parliamentary ombudsman.

Mr. Hague: The jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is unaffected where administrative functions of a Department are carried out by private contractors.

One Place Service

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what percentage of the population is served by local offices offering a single point of contact for help and information;

(2) what action his Department has taken in response to his one-stop consultation paper.

Mr. Burt: Following overwhelmingly positive responses to the one-stop discussion paper, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 9 September a national programme whereby all Benefits Agency district offices will provide a one-place service.

The one-place programme will mean that customers will be able to:

obtain advice and information on all benefits from their local Benefits Agency office;

lodge a claim for any benefit at a local office, (regardless of where that benefit is processed) report a change of circumstance, receive reliable advice about the claim to benefit from that local office.

The Benefits Agency has issued to all its managers a national customer service definition so that staff are clear about the level and scope of service to be delivered.

The Benefits Agency has 159 districts with over 470 outlets. The national customer service definition will ensure that all customers will be able to receive a one-place service throughout the country by July 1994.

Although there are no figures available as to the number of Benefits Agency district offices already providing this service, work is under way to establish the current position and ensure that this level of service will be in place by July 1994.

Pensioners

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number and proportion of pensioners on benefits in *(a)* London and *(b)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available.

Asbestosis

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases of industrial injuries disablement benefit have been granted in each of the last five years for *(a)* people with primary carcinoma of the lung associated with asbestosis and *(b)* people with bilateral diffuse pleural thickening of the lungs associated with asbestosis (i) in the United Kingdom and (ii) by region.

Mr. Scott: Information is not collected in the precise format requested. The available information is given in the table and relates only to medical assessments made by special medical boards in Great Britain.

Special Medical Boards
Number of cases, analysed by special medical board, assessed as having 14 to 100 per cent. disablement relating to prescribed diseases D8 and D9

	D8[1]	D9[2]
1992		
All boards	52	123
Cardiff	7	12
Swansea	0	4
Glasgow	4	16
Stoke	9	7
Sheffield	3	32
Manchester	11	4
Newcastle	8	23
London	10	25
1991		
All boards	51	115
Cardiff	5	14
Swansea	5	4
Glasgow	7	15
Stoke	4	6
Sheffield	6	32
Manchester	10	10
Newcastle	8	17
London	6	17
1990		
All boards	56	104
Cardiff	11	7
Swansea	4	2
Glasgow	8	11
Stoke	4	5
Sheffield	4	23
Manchester	13	14
Newcastle	5	24
London	7	18

[1] D8=Primary carcinoma of the lung.
[2] D9=Bilateral diffuse pleural thickening.
Note: Based on 100 per cent. sample.
Information is not available for years prior to 1990.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for industrial injuries disablement benefit from people with asbestos-related diseases have been refused in each of the last five years *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* by region.

Mr. Scott: The information is not collected in the precise format requested. Available information is in the table and relates only to medical assessments made by special medical boards in Great Britain.

Special Medical Boards
Number of cases, analysed by Special Medical Board, of asbestos-related diseases not diagnosed, or diagnosed at less than the applicable percentage (prescribed diseases D1 and D3 1 per cent., D8 and D9 14 per cent.[1])

1992	D1[2,3]	D3[4]	D8[5]	D9[6]
All boards	758	58	191	278
Cardiff	17	7	22	35
Swansea	14	2	5	7
Glasgow	199	11	23	29
Stoke	14	4	12	11
Sheffield	59	6	32	42
Manchester	135	11	44	40
Newcastle	243	4	13	42
London	77	13	40	72

1991	D1[2,3]	D3[4]	D8[5]	D9[6]
All Boards	1,317	50	189	279
Cardiff	36	5	21	43
Swansea	7	1	6	8
Glasgow	159	7	25	17
Stoke	11	6	13	17
Sheffield	62	6	24	46
Manchester	95	7	41	19
Newcastle	891	6	27	73
London	56	12	32	56

1990	D1[2,3]	D3[4]	D8[5]	D9[6]
All Boards	637	54	237	256
Cardiff	35	4	21	43
Swansea	6	2	8	5
Glasgow	126	1	25	28
Stoke	15	5	13	9
Sheffield	67	10	26	35
Manchester	102	16	50	37
Newcastle	232	5	50	57
London	54	11	44	42

1989	[2,3]D1	[4]D3	[1,3]D8	[1,6]D9
All boards	473	39	117	136
Cardiff	31	4	16	19
Swansea	4	0	3	1
Glasgow	92	2	15	9
Stoke	14	3	5	10
Sheffield	63	4	17	28
Manchester	97	7	24	27
Newcastle	106	5	10	16
London	66	14	27	26

1988	[2,3]D1	[4]D3	[1,3]D8	[1,6]D9
All boards	486	39	155	120
Cardiff	43	3	25	25
Swansea	5	1	6	4
Glasgow	112	4	15	8
Stoke	12	0	8	5
Sheffield	37	2	11	9
Manchester	101	10	23	17
Newcastle	104	3	36	9
London	72	16	31	43

Note: Based on 100 per cent. sample.
[1]Only refers to 0 per cent. cases for 1988 and 1989 due to different method of data collection at that time.
[2]Asbestos industry only.
[3]D1=Pneumoconiosis.
[4]D3=Diffuse mesothelioma.
[5]D8=Primary carcinoma of the lung.
[6]D9=Bilateral diffuse pleural thickening.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what have been the annual costs of industrial injuries disablement benefit payments for asbestosis-related cases in each of the last five years.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for assistance from the independent living fund have been turned down during the current financial year on the grounds that the value of the applicant's existing care package totals £500 or more; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the director of the independent living (1993) fund that 11 applications to the fund have been turned down on those grounds.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* successful applications for assistance were made to the independent living fund during the current financial year, *(b)* individuals receiving help from the independent living fund under the previous arrangements continued to receive help during the current financial year and *(c)* unsuccessful applications for help were made to the independent living fund in the current year; and if he will break these figures down by local authority.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the director of the independent living (1993) fund that, as at 1 February, 187 successful applications had been made to the fund. A further 311 applications have been unsuccessful. At the same date, 19,137 former clients of the independent living fund were receiving payments from the independent living (extension) fund.

A breakdown of the figures at 1 February by local authority is not yet available. The table shows the breakdown of applications as at 31 December 1993.

Local authority	Successful cases	Unsuccessful cases
Avon	5	4
Bedfordshire	1	2
Berkshire	2	3
Buckinghamshire	6	1
Cambridgeshire	0	1
Cheshire	0	6
Cleveland	0	5

Local authority	Successful cases	Unsuccessful cases
Cornwall	0	1
Cumbria	4	3
Derbyshire	5	1
Devon	2	2
Dorset	1	1
Durham	1	4
East Sussex	0	3
Essex	7	4
Gloucester	3	0
Hampshire	3	2
Hereford and Worcester	0	2
Hertfordshire	2	4
Humberside	1	2
Isle of Wight	1	1
Kent	0	0
Lancashire	1	3
Leicestershire	2	0
Lincolnshire	2	2
Norfolk	1	4
Northamptonshire	1	1
Northumberland	0	2
North Yorkshire	1	3
Nottinghamshire	0	4
Oxfordshire	2	2
Shropshire	4	3
Somerset	2	0
Staffordshire	0	2
Suffolk	4	2
Surrey	5	0
Warwickshire	1	0
West Sussex	0	1
Wiltshire	0	0
Greater Manchester		
Wigan	0	0
Bolton	0	0
Bury	0	1
Rochdale	0	0
Salford	1	1
Manchester	0	0
Oldham	2	6
Trafford	0	0
Stockport	0	0
Tameside	0	1
West Midlands		
Wolverhampton	1	3
Walsall	1	1
Dudley	1	0
Sandwell	2	0
Birmingham	0	2
Solihull	1	2
Coventry	0	1
Merseyside		
Sefton	0	0
Liverpool	0	6
St. Helens	0	4
Knowsley	0	1
Wirral	0	1
South Yorkshire		
Barnsley	0	0
Doncaster	0	1
Sheffield	3	1
Rotherham	1	0
Tyne and Wear		
Newcastle	1	2
North Tyneside	0	1
Gateshead	0	0
South Tyneside	0	0
Sunderland	1	1
West Yorkshire		
Bradford	1	0
Leeds	1	0
Calderdale	1	0
Kirklees	0	0
Wakefield	0	2
Wales		
Clwyd	11	7
Dyfed	2	0
Gwent	0	1
Gwynedd	1	7
Mid-Glamorgan	2	0
Powys	0	0
South Glamorgan	1	2
West Glamorgan	0	0
N. Ireland		
Northern area	0	2
Southern area	0	6
Eastern area	1	4
Western area	0	7
Scotland		
Highland	0	1
Grampian	0	0
Tayside	1	0
Fife	2	3
Lothian	2	3
Central	3	0
Borders	0	0
Strathclyde	7	7
Dumfries and Galloway	1	0
Orkneys	0	0
Shetlands	0	1
W. Isles	0	1
London Central		
Camden	4	5
Greenwich	2	1
Hackney	3	4
Hammersmith	0	6
Islington	0	1
Kensington	2	4
Lambeth	4	2
Lewisham	0	1
Southwark	2	4
Tower Hamlets	0	0
Wandsworth	0	1
Westminster	1	1
City	0	0
Outer London		
Barking	1	1
Barnet	0	1
Bexley	0	1
Brent	2	1
Bromley	0	0
Croydon	0	0
Ealing	0	1
Enfield	0	0
Haringey	1	2
Harrow	1	1
Havering	2	1
Hillingdon	1	1
Hounslow	1	0
Kingston	3	0
Merton	1	0
Newham	0	0
Redbridge	1	0
Richmond	1	0
Sutton	1	0
Waltham Forest	1	0

Mortgages

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his current assessment of the number of people in receipt of direct assistance with their mortgage payments.

Mr. Burt: There are 562,000 cases with mortgage interest included in the assessment of benefit.

Source: Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry February 1993.

Note: The number of claimants has been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Family Benefits

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentages of children aged *(a)* under five years, *(b)* five to 11 years and *(c)* 12 to 15 years live in families receiving (i) income support and (ii) family credit; and what were the comparable figures in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available in the precise form requested as income support and family credit were not introduced until April 1988. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Numbers and proportions of children in families receiving income support

Year	Under five years	Per cent.	Five to 11 years	Per cent.	12-15 years	Per cent.
1993	1,139,000	30·1	1,291,000	25·9	540,000	20·3
1992	1,062,000	28·1	1,166,000	23·4	476,000	17·9
1991	949,000	25·3	1,019,000	20·5	400,000	15·4
1990	829,000	22·4	860,000	17·5	355,000	13·8
1989	830,000	22·6	829,000	17·2	371,000	14·0
1988	820,000	22·7	853,000	18·0	419,000	15·1

Numbers and proportions of children in families receiving family credit

Year	Under five years	Per cent.	Five to 11 years	Per cent.	12 to 15 years	Per cent.
1993	282,000	7·5	425,000	8·5	230,000	8·6
1992	253,000	6·7	368,000	7·4	192,000	7·2
1991	229,000	6·1	317,000	6·4	160,000	6·1
1990	217,000	5·9	284,000	5·8	139,000	5·4
1989	216,000	5·9	261,000	5·4	131,000	5·0

Notes:

1. Figures rounded to nearest thousand and percentages are correct to one decimal place.
2. 1993 percentages based on population figures for mid-1992.
3. Family credit figures are not available for 1988.

Source:

Income Support Statistical Enquiry, February 1993.
Income Support Statistical Annual Enquiries, May 1988-1992.
Family Credit 5 per cent. Sample of Awards, June 1989-1992.
Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the total number of families with children in receipt of *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* disability working allowance include a qualifying child for child support purposes.

Mr. Burt: This information is not available centrally.

Unemployed Volunteers

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what proposals he has to encourage unemployed people to offer their services as volunteers and to improve the conditions for doing so;

(2) what representations he has received from the National Association of Voluntary Bodies on the need for further improvements in conditions for unemployed volunteers in receipt of benefits.

Mr. Burt: The Government strongly support opportunities for volunteering and provide a variety of advice and opportunities for the unemployed who wish to do so. Publicity leaflets outline the advantages to unemployed people who wish to undertake voluntary work and point out that as volunteers they can now be allowed 48 hours notice before taking up a job opportunity.

Community action will this year provide 50,000 opportunities for unemployed people to do work of benefit to the community. Participants receive an allowance equivalent to £10 per week more than their weekly benefit rate.

Additionally, the benefit rules contain a more generous provision for this treatment of earnings received by people such as retained fire fighters, lifeboatmen and others who volunteer for forms of special service to the community.

No recent representations have been received from the National Association of Voluntary Bodies.

National Association of Pension Funds

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make public the National Association of Pension Funds submission in response to the Government's Green Paper on social security reforms of September 1985.

Mr. Hague: Publication is a matter for the National Association of Pension Funds.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what benefits savings were made in the first nine months as the result of the collection of child support maintenance; and what plans he has to revise the targets for the Child Support Agency, in particular those for benefit savings, number of applications and completed assessments, following the recent changes in the rules.

Mr. Burt: For the period from April to December 1993, benefit savings of £214·5 million have so far been reported. This figure does not represent the total amount of savings achieved because some will be scored retrospectively.

The policy changes will have an effect on the agency's achievements against targets this year, but it is too early to be precise about the impact. We do not intend to revise the targets at this stage in the year.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate both the income from Child Support Agency fees and the Child Support Agency running costs for the first nine months of its operation, both the expected income from Child Support Agency fees and running costs in each year from 1993-94 to 1997-98; and what plans he has to increase the fees from April 1994 or at any point during this year.

Mr. Burt: A provisional figure for the agency's total expenditure for the period April 1993 to December 1993 is £70 million. The money collected from fees in this period was £756,000. This reflects the fact that the assessment process is taking longer than expected. The latest information currently available for 1994-95 and 1995-96 is in the table. Information on 1996-97 and revised estimates for 1994-95 and 1995-96 will be available in the DSS departmental report 1994, to be published in March.

A routine review of fee levels will take place in October 1994. There are no plans to increase the fees from April 1994.

Child Support Agency: Financial Provision

£ million

	1994-95	*1995-96*
Total planned expenditure	135	136
Fees	12	19

Source: DSS Departmental Report 1993.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the estimated cost of introducing a £5, £10 or £15 disregard on income support for parents with care in receipt of child support maintenance as from, *(a)* April 1994, *(b)* October 1994 and *(c)* April 1995.

Mr. Burt: The full-year costs of a £5, £10 and £15 disregard, assuming one third of lone parents to be receiving maintenance, are in the table. This proportion is broadly in line with what we expect the Child Support Agency to achieve in 1994-95.

Cost £ million

Disregard	*£5*	*£10*	*£15*
April 1994	100	200	300
October 1994	100	210	310
April 1995	110	210	320

Note:
Estimates based on forecast increase in lone parents in receipt of Income Support, rounded to nearest £10 million.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) which of the public appointments for which he is responsible require advance notice to and consultation with the Chief Whip's office; and which appointments have been so notified and consulted upon since June 1992;

(2) which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not the practice of Her Majesty's Government to answer parliamentary questions about discussions and consultations between Departments and offices of Government relating to public appointments.

Council Members (Schools)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the schools attended by each member of the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Waldegrave: According to their respective entries in "Who's Who", the schools attended by the members of the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster were Winchester: the Duchy Attorney General, Mr. Timothy Lloyd QC, Ampleforth: the Duchy Receiver General, Major Sir Shane Blewitt KCVO, Eton: the Vice Chancellor of the County Palatine, the hon. Mr. Justice Morritt: and Sir Michael Bunbury Bt, Stowe: Sir Simon Towneley KCVO, Gresham's: Professor Christopher Howes CB, and Charterhouse: Mr. J. R. Sclater.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Human Genome Research.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Advisory Committee on Human Genome Research is chaired by Professor William D. P. Stewart FRS, chief scientific adviser, Office of Science and Technology, and its members are as follows:

Professor Thomas Blundell FRS,
Director-General, Agricultural and Food Research Council;
Sir Walter F. Bodmer FRS,
Director-General, Imperial Cancer Research Fund;
Professor Sydney Brenner FRS,
Department of Medicine, University of Cambridge;
Dr. Peter Doyle CBE,
Director of Research and Technology, Zeneca Pharmaceuticals plc;
Professor Malcolm A. Ferguson-Smith FRS,
Department of Pathology, University of Cambridge;
Dr. Trevor Jones FPS FRSC,
Director of Research, The Wellcome Foundation Ltd;
Dr. Bridget Ogilvie ScD FIBiol Hon FRCPath,
Director, The Wellcome Trust;
Professor Michael Peckham FRCP FRCPGlas FRCR,
Director of Research and Development, Department of Health;
Dr. George Poste,
Research and Development Chairman, SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuticals;
Sir Dai Rees FRS,
Secretary, Medical Research Council;
Dr. Geoffrey Robinson,
Chief Adviser on Science and Technology, Department of Trade and Industry;
Sir Richard Sykes,
Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive, Glaxo Holdings plc.

Crown Bodies (Inspection and Enforcement)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he proposes that Crown bodies be fully brought within the regulatory provisions on inspection and enforcement which apply to others.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizen's charter said that public services should not, through Crown immunities, be shielded from inspection and enforcement on such matters as health and safety regulations. It will take time, however, to bring all existing legislation into line. As legislative opportunites arise, Crown bodies are being brought within the regulatory provisions which apply to others, falling short of exposing the Crown itself, as opposed to negligent employees, to criminal prosecution. Meanwhile, Crown bodies are expected to behave as if they were bound by the regulations.

As a result of food safety and environmental legislation in recent years, if a Crown body is found to be falling below standards, enforcement authorities can go back to the courts for a declaration of non-compliance, which would be followed by immediate corrective action.

The Health and Safety Executive will be sharpening procedures for serving Crown notices for infringement of health and safety legislation and will be considering the implications of removing Crown immunity.

In addition, the Home Office has recently completed a review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971. The question of Crown immunity is one of many aspects being considered.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* My private office does not have a paper shredding machine. Within my Department, including agencies, there are nine shredding machines. COI and HMSO, which are separate departments for which I am responsible, have 50 shredders and nine compactors between them.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the National Enterprise Board.

Mr. McLoughlin: The members currently appointed to the National Enterprise Board, are:

Mr. I. Harvey
Mr. R. Kathoke
Dr. J. Morton
Sir R. Riley

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Monitoring Committee on Misleading Price Indications.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Monitoring Committee on Misleading Price Indications was stood down on 7 May 1993.

Manufacturing (Assistance)

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to assist the manufacturing industries in the north-west region.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Manufacturing industries in the north-west will continue to benefit from a large part of the region retaining assisted areas status. Companies in those areas are eligible for financial assitance under schemes such as regional selective assistance and regional enterprise grants.

Manufacturing industry in the region will also benefit from objective 2 areas which allow for improvements in infrastructure. The north-west has a number of areas designated by the EC, including west Cumbria as far south as Barrow, large parts of east Lancashire, the greater and more industrial part of Greater Manchester, the smaller industrial part of west Lancashire, Widnes and Runcorn, Ellesmere Port and Neston. Of course, objective 1 scheduling has already been designated for the Merseyside county.

Parcelforce

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to make a statement about the future of Parcelforce.

Mr. McLoughlin: I cannot yet say when my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will be able to make a statement about Parcelforce; the future of the business is still being considered, alongside the main Post Office review. We are, however, still firmly of the view that Parcelforce belongs in the private sector, because it is a business which competes with private sector parcels companies for the very large majority of its services.

Underwriting Costs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has yet received the results of the Office of Fair Trading study of underwriting costs.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading advises me that he has recently received the results of the independent research which he commissioned on this subject. He is currently considering this before deciding what action he should take, if any.

Deregulation

Mr. Heppell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which organisations were consulted by his Department on each of the recommendations of the business deregulation task forces before they were agreed and action proposed in the DTI document, "Deregulation: Cutting the Red Tape".

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Each of the task force recommendations agreed or agreed in principle by the Government has been or will be the subject of appropriate consultation with interested parties.

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the consumer representatives on the advisory panel and task forces on deregulation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The deregulation advisory panel and the seven business deregulation task forces were set up specifically to convey the views of business and did not therefore include any consumer representatives.

Malaysia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade *if he will quantify* the long-term project support given by the Export Credits Guarantee Department to Malaysia towards each of *(a)* the Pergau dam project, *(b)* defence and defence-related contracts and *(c)* other projects, in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Needham: In 1990-91 and 1991-92 the Export Credits Guarantee Department issued guarantees worth £945 million in support of United Kingdom export projects with Malaysia. Of this total £417 million related to the Pergau dam project and £458 million to defence business.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" relating to the Malaysian arms deal are held in his Department.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 1 February 1994]:* My Department does not hold any files marked "Not for NAO eyes" relating to the Malaysian arms deal.

Ministerial Visits Abroad

Mr. Tim Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which countries visited by Trade and Industry Ministers since June 1987 have subsequently placed orders for arms.

Mr. Needham: Given the strength and competitiveness of the United Kingdom defence industry I would expect orders to have been placed by most countries visited; exports would not be licensed to certain countries where it is thought inappropriate or where there are internationally agreed embargoes. It would not be possible to provide a detailed answer except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the overseas visits that have been made by Trade and Industry Ministers since June 1987; and what was the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Needham: Information on all overseas visits by all Trade and Industry Ministers for any purpose since June 1987 could only be made available at disproportionate cost. The following Trade and Industry Ministers have made trade promotion visits overseas to date in the financial year 1993-94.

The President of the Board
Mexico/Argentina—June 1993
Japan/Australia—January 1993

The Minister for Trade
Ireland—July 1993
Czech Republic—September 1993
Qatar/UAE—April 1993
Turkey—July 1993
Hong Kong/Korea—April 1993
Thailand/Indonesia/Singapore—June 1993
Japan/Malaysia—September 1993
China/Taiwan/Hong Kong—October 1993
Singapore/Malaysia/Indonesia—November-December 1993
India—November 1993

The Minister for Energy
Kazakhstan—September-October 1993
Thailand/Malaysia/Indonesia—September 1993

The former Minister, the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh)
Slovenia—March 1993
Ghana—April 1993

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology
Zimbabwe/Tanzania—October 1993
Brazil—September 1993

Baroness Denton
Singapore—September 1993

Lord Strathclyde
China—October 1993

Auditors' Supervisory Bodies

Mrs. Browning: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has received the second annual reports of the recognised supervisory bodies for company auditors under part II of the Companies Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have received the second annual reports of all the recognised supervisory bodies for company auditors, and have placed copies in the Library. My Department will be discussing the contents of the reports with the bodies.

Post Office

Mr. Bayley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he intends to introduce a new independent regulator to advise him on issues affecting the interests of Post Office customers;

(2) when he expects to introduce measures to allow him to set the performance standards for the Post Office.

Mr. McLoughlin: The precise method of implementation of these commitments, which were set out in the citizens charter, is under consideration in the wider review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office. Both require primary legislation and would be included in any legislation arising from the review. The review is still continuing.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the subjects on which his Department or its predecessors formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are 10 DTI agencies: Accounts Services Agency, Companies House, Insolvency Service, Laboratory of the Government Chemist, National Engineering Laboratory, National Physical Laboratory, National Weights and Measures Laboratory, Patent Office, Radiocommuncations Agency and Warren Spring Laboratory. The chief executives of these are usually asked to reply to parliamentary questions about the day-to-day operational matters of their agency and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in their agency's framework document.

Champagne

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many bottles of champagne were imported from France in each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham: Information on imports of champagne is not available in terms of bottles. The available information is given in the following table:

Year	*Million litres*
1979	7·18
1980	6·43
1981	6·04
1982	5·93
1983	7·52
1984	9·12
1985	11·41
1986	12·40
1987	14·38
1988	15·48
1989	18·04
1990	16·12
1991	10·58
1992	11·10

Tied Housing

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the advantages and disadvantages of the tied house system.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Between 1986 and 1988 the Monopolies and Mergers Commission undertook an extensive study of the supply of beer in the United Kingdom, in particular the tied house system, which assessed its benefits and adverse effects.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 17 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *985*, under which safeguards provisions the transfers of plutonium to the United States took place; what notification of the plutonium exports was given in advance to the safeguards authorities; and what information he has on plutonium exported to the United States between 1963 and 1979

Mr. Eggar: Plutonium sent under the defence agreement with the United States is not consigned there under safeguards. Any transfers of military plutonium are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. Following the announcements by President Johnson and Mr. Krushchev that their Governments were reducing their planned production of fissile materials for weapons purposes, my right hon. Friend the then Prime Minister advised the House on 21 April 1964, at column 1098, that he had been informed by the United States Government that they had no intention of using for weapons purposes any of the plutonium produced in the reactors of the generating boards and consigned under the Defence agreement. In 1984 the United States Government confirmed that this plutonium had not been used in weapons and that it was their policy not to so use it. This confirmation was reported to Parliament by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Energy on 9 April 1984, at column 6. I have nothing to add to these statements.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the witnesses to be called in public session before the Scott inquiry to date; what has been the total cost incurred by the inquiry; and what proportion of these costs have been taken up in expenses paid to witnesses for the provision of copies of documentation or travel costs to attend the inquiry by invitation.

Mr. Needham: The following witnesses have appeared to date in public session before the Scott inquiry:

4 May 1993—Sir Richard Luce, formerly Minister of State, FCO
5 May 1993—Mr. Hart, ECGD
5 May 1993—Mr. Bryars, ECGD
10 May 1993—Mr. Sandars, MoD
11 May 1993—Lt. Col. Glazebrook, MoD
12 May 1993—Lt. Col. Glazebrook, MoD
21 June 1993—Lt. Col. Glazebrook, MoD
22 June 1993—Lt. Col. Glazebrook, MoD
17 May 1993—Sir Adam Butler, formerly Minister for Defence Procurement
19 May 1993—Mr. Channon, formerly Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
24 May 1993—Sir Hal Miller, M.P.
27 May 1993—Sir Patrick Mayhew, formerly Attorney-General (now Secretary of State for Northern Ireland)
11 June 1993—Mr. Collins, FCO
15 June 1993—Sir Stephen, Egerton FCO
28 June 1993—Mr. Patey, FCO
30 June 1993—Mr. James, Eagle Trust PLC
30 June 1993—Mr. Fellgett, HM Treasury
7 July 1993—Mr. Vereker, FCO
15 July 1993—Mr. Higson, formerly FCO
19 July 1993—Sir David Miers, FCO
20 July 1993—Sir David Miers, FCO
27 July 1993—Mr. Blackley, FCO
13 September 1993—Mr. Gore-Booth, FCO
14 September 1993—Mr. Gore-Booth, FCO
15 September 1993—Mr. Young, FCO
20 September 1993—Mr. Renton, formerly Minister of State, FCO
21 September 1993—Mr. Mellor, formerly Minister of State, FCO
22 September 1993—Mr. Waldegrave, formerly Minister of State, FCO (now Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster)
23 September 1993—Mr. Waldegrave, formerly Minister of State, FCO (now Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster)
12 October 1993—Mr. Waldegrave, formerly Minister of State, FCO (now Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster)
19 October 1993—Mr. Fuller, FCO
20 October 1993—Mr. Lamport, FCO
25 October 1993—Mr. Haswell, FCO
6 October 1993—Mr. McDonald, MoD
7 October 1993—Mr. McDonald, MoD
26 October 1993—Mr. McDonald, MoD
28 October 1993—Mr. McDonald, MoD
1 November 1993—Mr. Barrett, MoD
2 November 1993—Mr. Barrett, MoD
3 November 1993—Mr. Barrett, MoD
4 November 1993—Mr. Barrett, MoD
8 November 1993—Mr. Sherrington, FCO
22 November 1993—Mr. Beston, DTI
23 November 1993—Mr. Beston, DTI
24 November 1993—Mr. Beston, DTI
25 November 1993—Mr. Beston, DTI
26 November 1993—Mr. Beston, DTI
17 December 1993—Mr. Beston, DTI
30 November 1993—Mr. Steadman, DTI
1 December 1993—Mr. Steadman, DTI
8 December 1993—Baroness Thatcher, formerly Prime Minister
13 December 1993—Mr. Clark, formerly Minister for Defence Procurement and Minister for Trade
14 December 1993—Mr. Clark, formerly Minister for Defence Procurement and Minister for Trade
15 December 1993—Mr. Clark, formerly Minister for Defence Procurement and Minister for Trade
11 January 1994—Mr. Baker, formerly Home Secretary
12 January 1994—Lord Howe, formerly Foreign Secretary
17 January 1994—Mr. Major, Prime Minister
21 January 1994—Mr. Bevan, Cabinet Office
25 January 1994—Mr. Hurd, Foreign Secretary
26 January 1994—Mr. Petter, DTI
28 January 1994—Mr. Coolican, DTI

The direct cost incurred by the inquiry to date has been about £700,000.

Expenses paid by the inquiry to witnesses, for the provision of copies of documentation or travel costs, total to date about £400.

Most of the costs of providing documentation to witnesses and meeting travel expenses is met directly by the Departments in which the witnesses served.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contracts his Department or the energy technology support unit has placed with academic or independent research institutions since 1990 into the public acceptability of renewable energy technologies.

Mr. Eggar: The following 21 contracts have been placed since 1990 with academic institutions and independent consultants into, and associated with, the issues of public acceptability of renewables:

Titles

Template for Community Involvement/Consultation in the Development of Waste to Energy Projects.
Community Appraisal Relating to Hampshire County's Waste Strategy.
Farmers Current Attitudes to Energy Forestry in GB.
Community Forests Integrated Review Energy Capability.
Market Survey Investigating Conservatory Energies.
Public Attitude Survey at Delabole.
Video Production: Visual Impact of Wind Farms.
Provision of Advice on Planning Policy Guidance.
Provision of Advice on Impact of non-conforming Developments.
Preparation of Summary Report on Landscape Impact.
Mynddy Cemmaes Windfarm Impact assessment.
Cemmaes Wind farm Impact Study—Phase I.
The Visual Impact of Windfarms Lessons from the UK NFFO.
Landscape Impact Assessment for Wind Turbine Development.
Design Prediction Model for Wind Turbine Noise.
Assessment and Prediction of Wind Turbines Noise.
Systematic Comparison of Predictions and Experiment on Noise.
Preparation of a Wind Annex for Planning Policy Guidance.
An Investigation of the Levels of Electromagnetic Emissions.
Renewable Energy—Public Awareness and Attitudes (two surveys).

Power Transmission Lines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has received from the National Radiological Protection Board in regard to its evaluation of extra low frequency electric and magnetic field effects of electricity transmission.

Mr. Eggar: The National Radiological Protection Board publishes its findings through HMSO. The latest relevant publication is the board statement on restrictions on human exposure to static and time varying electromagnetic fields and radiation, published in March 1993, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Pensions

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he plans in respect of guaranteeing post-privatisation pension improvements and on the power for him to relieve the trustees of their fiduciary responsibilities should he instruct them to act in the national interest.

Mr. Eggar: Discussions between my Department and the trustees of the British Coal pension schemes on proposed arrangements for guaranteeing payment of index-linked pensions after privatisation are continuing.

Newsagents

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received from the National Federation of Retail Newsagents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: This body is to meet my officials shortly, prior to submitting written representations as part of the statutory consultation process on an order which I have proposed under the Fair Trading Act 1973 in relation to the wholesale supply of national newspapers to retailers in England and Wales. The proposed order follows a Monopolies and Mergers Commission report which identified certain practices of newspaper wholesalers as being against the public interest. I will carefully consider their views, along with all the other representations I receive during the consultation period which runs until 31 March.

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what safeguards he intends to introduce to ensure a fair and level playing field to ensure the continuation of the home delivery service in respect of newsagents.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have announced a consultation period until March 31 on my proposed order under the Fair Trading Act 1973 relating to the supply national newspapers in England and Wales. I am prepared to consider any representations that the industry wishes to make to me as part of this process on home delivery, or on other issues.

Foreign Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in which EU countries *(a)* the national law or *(b)* shareholder restrictions prohibit the takeover or buyout of major manufacturing companies by foreign firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The treaty of Rome prohibits any member state from discriminating against bidders from other EU countries, except in very limited circumstances, for example where there are national security considerations.

Other restrictions, in the form, for example, of differential voting rights and cross-shareholdings, are a common feature of continental corporate structures, although they tend to operate against all hostile takeover approaches, not just those from foreign companies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to encourage the sale of manufacturing capacity to foreign firms.

Mr. Needham: We shall continue to maintain our successful open and liberal policies towards both inward and outward investment and will not seek to impose arbitrary restrictions which only serve to distort the market.

Electricity

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will use his powers under the Electricity Act 1989 to amend the Electricity Supply Regulations 1988 in order to effect the standardisation of electricity supplies.

Mr. Eggar: Amended regulations will come into force on 1 January 1995.

British Companies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a list of British companies in which a controlling interest has been sold since 1979 for more than £50 million.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The information in the form requested is not readily available. However, the Central Statistical Office, CSO, bulletin on "Acquisitions and Mergers within the UK", available in the Library of the House, provides some details on, inter alia, expenditure of acquisitions and mergers within the United Kingdom. A summary of table 4 of the latest bulletin, dated 16 November 1993, is as follows:

Size distribution of acquisitions and mergers within the United Kingdom
Total acquisitions and mergers

Year	*Expenditure over £100 million* *number acquired*	*Expenditure over £10 million and up to £100 million* *number acquired*
1986	21	119
1987	30	192
1988	44	172
1989	40	181
1990	18	89
1991	17	63
1992	7	64
1993 Q1	4	15
Q2	1	25
Q3	2	22

Source: Table 4, CSO bulletin, "Acquisitions and Mergers within the UK".

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *406*, what is the perceived barrier to trade which will be removed by the standardisation of electricity supplies.

Mr. Eggar: That manufacturers and suppliers are presently obliged to make or stock equipment of a different specification if they wish to export within the EC.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of *(a)* the competitive advantage which will accrue to countries within the European Community whose electricity equipment already uses the nominal voltage of 230/400 volts by the standardisation of electrical supplies, and *(b)* the competitive disadvantage which will occur to those manufacturers which do not.

Mr. Eggar: A number of EC countries now use 230/400 volts as the nominal voltage and the rest are changing or are in the process of doing so by 1995. Consultations with manufacturers in this country and their representative trade associations have clearly indicated that considerable advantages will be realised through rationalised product ranges and thus reduced production costs together with uniform safety standards and harmonised certifying procedures throughout the European Community as a whole. Manufacturers outside the EC who do not adopt similar standards will be at a disadvantage when trading within the EC.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessments he has made as to the costs of the standardisation of electrical supplies to manufacturers of electrical equipment; and what consultations he held with the manufacturers before he accepted the new standards.

Mr. Eggar: The assessment of costs to manufacturers of electrical equipment of the proposed standardisation of supply voltage was made through a formal exercise. Consultations were carried out during 1992 with electrical equipment manufacturers in this country and through the major trade associations. Cost reductions of up to 5 per cent. were predicted in the event of the new standard being adopted.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *408*, what proportion of the organisations representing *(a)* the United Kingdom electricity companies, *(b)* equipment manufacturers and *(c)* consumers consulted were opposed to changes in the reduction of voltage supplies.

Mr. Eggar: Those organisations who responded adversely to a reduction of supply voltage were:

(a) Electricity supply companies—none
(b) Equipment manufacturers—less than 10 per cent.
(c) Consumer organisations—no firm views.

Weights and Measures Laboratory

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will specify the amounts received by the National Weights and Measures Laboratory from outside work during the financial year 1992-93 and the first six months of the current period, broken down by industrial sector.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The National Weights and Measures Laboratory received the following income from outside work during the financial year 1992-93 and in the first six months of the current period:

	1992-93 *£*	*1993*[1] *£*
Income from local authorities	93,887	10,501
Income from manufacturers of weighing and measuring equipment	394,901	257,015
Total income	488,788	267,516

[1] 1 April 1993 to 30 September 1993

Most income from local authorities comes in the second half of the financial year.

Nuclear Review

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the terms of reference of the nuclear review.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *759*.

Redundant Mineworkers Scheme

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to continue the British Coal redundancy package for miners after April.

Mr. Eggar: I have informed British Coal that the Government are prepared to provide funding for the current redundancy terms for industrial workers where redundancies are proposed before 30 April 1994, and for so long as the consultations with the unions on any such proposal continue.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's Office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *770*.

Patent Office

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the Patent Office.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The consultants' work on this review, which I announced on 30 June 1993, has been completed. I am now considering both the findings in their report and the various points which have been raised by interested parties during the course of the review. I hope to announce our conclusions in the light of the review in the fairly near future.

DEFENCE

Bosnia

11. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the deployment of British forces with UNPROFOR in central Bosnia.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Kingdom continues to play a major role in providing personnel and equipment as part of UNPROFOR in Bosnia. The Army battalion group—currently 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards and its support units—is deployed on humanitarian aid and refugee escort duties. In spite of considerable difficulties from fighting and obstruction on the ground, it is carrying out a very successful operation, with great skill and courage, which has helped to save many thousands of lives, and of which we can all be justly proud.

23. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current military situation in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Fighting continues among the different factions in Bosnia, although the winter weather has occasioned some decrease in hostilities. British forces continue to face considerable risks in carrying out their important humanitarian tasks, which they are discharging with courage and distinction. We keep the situation on the ground under regular review.

24. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of United Kingdom service personnel currently serving in Bosnia.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given earlier to the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

25. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future deployment of United Kingdom forces in Bosnia.

26. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on future deployment of troops in Bosnia.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Members to the answer given earlier to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Cyprus

12. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future of Britain's military presence in Cyprus.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom's military presence in Cyprus comprises about 4,500 service and civilian personnel in two sovereign base areas and a separate contribution of over 400 troops to the United Nations Force in Cyprus—UNFICYP. We have no plans to withdraw from either commitment in the foreseeable future, although we keep all our commitments under review.

Defence Industries

13. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has provided to defence industrialists about his plans to help the defence industries adapt to reduce defence expenditure levels.

Mr. Aitken: My Department is in frequent contact with our defence industries to keep them well informed about our future equipment requirements and our planned defence expenditure levels.

Brazil

14. **Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on United Kingdom defence exports to Brazil.

Mr. Aitken: The Brazilian Government have recently announced their decision to place a £150 million order with Westland for nine Super Lynx helicopters and extensive Lynx upgrade work. This is an important success for the United Kingdom in a market where we have a long tradition of supplying defence equipment.

Nuclear Materials

15. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current stockpile of nuclear materials under the control of his Department.

Mr. Aitken: My Department does not hold significant stocks of fissile material other than those required for our operational needs.

Trident

16. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the fourth Trident submarine to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The fourth Trident missile submarine will complete around the turn of the century assuming the present Government remain in office. Construction work is progressing well.

Technology Foresight

17. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of his development and procurement budget will be directed to using the results of the technology foresight exercise when they become available.

Mr. Aitken: My Department is playing a full part in the technology foresight exercise and will take full advantage of its results in the future defence programme wherever appropriate.

Nuclear Warheads

18. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sub-strategic nuclear warheads are currently held by each of the former Soviet republics.

Mr. Hanley: We believe that all former Soviet sub-strategic nuclear weapons have been withdrawn to Russia. Between 11,000 and 12,000 may currently remain, but many of these are unlikely to be fully operational.

Efficiency Savings

19. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the scope for efficiency savings in his Department.

Mr. Aitken: Since 1988, when our efficiency programme began, improvements have been made which are now worth some £1·8 billion a year. The "Front Line First" study is currently looking for ways to make substantial further efficiency savings and reductions in support and administrative costs.

Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital

20. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital, Woolwich.

Mr. Hanley: My Department plans to withdraw from the Queen Elizabeth military hospital, Woolwich by March 1998 and discussions are well under way as to procedures and price for the sale of the hospital to the Greenwich Healthcare trust.

Defence Contracts (Kuwait)

21. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the value of United Kingdom defence contracts in Kuwait in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: It is not Government policy to release details of the value of defence contracts placed by specific countries. However, in 1993 the Government of Kuwait placed a significant order for Warrior armoured fighting vehicles manufactured by GKN Defence.

Troop Deployment (Germany)

22. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current number of troops deployed in Germany; at what cost; what were the comparable figures for five and 15 years ago in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The current strength of the Army in Germany is around 31,500. The estimated expenditure against the British Army of the Rhine budget for 1993-94 is £1,330 million.

The strength of the Army in Germany on 1 April 1988 was 55,700 and on 1 April 1979 was 55,000. We are unable to provide comparable costs for these years as they were compiled on a different basis.

Deregulation

27. **Mr. Sykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress within his Department's deregulation unit.

Mr. Aitken: My Department is playing a full part in the deregulation initiative. As a non-regulatory Department the Ministry of Defence has focused its efforts on relieving unnecessary administrative burdens on its suppliers; streamlining contract procedures, and improving communications with industry.

Defence Exports (Kuwait)

28. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on United Kingdom defence exports to Kuwait.

Mr. Aitken: The United Kingdom signed a memorandum of understanding on defence procurement with Kuwait on 2 December 1992. In August 1993 an order for Warrior armoured fighting vehicles from GKN Defence was secured and we look forward to further orders for United Kingdom manufactured defence equipment in due course.

Royal Irish Regiment

29. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the current complement of part-time members of the Royal Irish Regiment.

Mr. Hanley: For security reasons it is not our practice to disclose the complement of any regiment in the British Army. However, as at 31 December 1993 the strength of the part-time element of the Royal Irish Regiment—Home Service—was 110 officers and 2,400 soldiers. A recruitment campaign for the part-time element of the regiment is currently under way.

C–130J

30. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the C–130J will enter into service with the British armed forces.

Mr. Aitken: The C–130J is one of several options being considered as part of a programme to refurbish or replace up to half the RAF fleet of Hercules aircraft. We hope to be in a position to decide on the way ahead later this year.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek to obtain from his United States counterpart a copy of the report "Management and Disposition of Excess Weapons Plutonium", prepared for the United States Department of Defence by the committee on international security and arms council of the National Academy of Sciences.

Mr. Aitken: My officials have already requested a copy of this report.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans for the future of search and rescue services at Portland.

Mr. Hanley: There are no current plans to alter the existing arrangements for the provision of search and rescue at Portland.

Ministers (Travel)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the overseas visits that have been made by Defence Ministers since June 1987; and what was the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Hanley: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Homosexuality

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he has made since his statement of 17 June 1992, *Official Report*, column 990, in deciding whether he will introduce legislation this year to decriminalise homosexuality in the armed forces.

Mr. Hanley: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer of 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *532*.

Partnership for Peace

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the development of future relations between the Visegrad countries and the WEU following the adoption by NATO of the partnership for peace policy.

Mr. Hanley: Discussions have taken place between the Western European Union Permanent Council and representatives from central and eastern Europe, including the Visegrad countries, following the agreement reached at the 22 November WEU ministerial meeting on the possibility of an enhanced relationship with WEU for these countries. Any such relationship would be complementary and compatible with the links developed through NATO's "Partnership for Peace".

Falkland Islands Garrison

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the objective of the current garrison in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Hanley: As long as Argentina maintains its claim to the Falkland Islands, the United Kingdom needs to maintain appropriate forces there. The objective of these forces is to deter possible aggression against the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich islands and, if necessary, permit reinforcement through Mount Pleasant airfield.

Tornado-helicopter Accident

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 November, *Official Report*, column 239, on the accident involving a civil helicopter and an RAF Tornado, when he now expects to be able to publish the military aircraft accident summary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins).

T80U Tank

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, column *901*, what were the terms of the gift of the Russian T80U tank and by whom it was donated; and if the evaluation took place with a view to possible procurement for use in the British Army.

Mr. Aitken: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Gentleman on 3 February, *Official Report*, column *901*.

Germany

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the savings to the defence budget of *(a)* a total withdrawal of the Royal Air Force and *(b)* a withdrawal of Tornado squadrons from Germany.

Mr. Hanley: There are no current plans for a total withdrawal of the Royal Air Force from Germany or for the withdrawal of the Germany-based Tornado squadrons. It would not, in any case, be the practice to publish assessments of the costs or savings which might arise from speculative changes in the Defence forward programme.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the military purpose currently being served by the deployment of the Royal Air Force in Germany.

Mr. Hanley: The RAF in Germany makes an important contribution to the collective defence of the North Atlantic Alliance. By contributing highly capable air forces to each category of NATO's new multinational force structure, the United Kingdom collaborates with other allies to assure the security of Allied Command Europe, providing forces for the full range of the alliance's missions.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with the German Defence Minister on a total or partial withdrawal of the Royal Air Force from Germany.

Mr. Hanley: None.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by station *(a)* the units and *(b)* the

aircraft currently deployed in Germany, together with the number of members of the Royal Air Force and their dependants.

Mr. Hanley: There are four Tornado GR1 squadrons, one RAF Regiment squadron and a signals unit at RAF Bruggen; two Harrier squadrons, two RAF Regiment squadrons, and one mixed Chinook/Puma squadron at RAF Laarbruck. HQ 2 Group and its supporting units and a signals unit are located at RAF Rheindahlen. An Air weapons range is based at RAF Nordhorn and there is an RAF hospital at RAF Wegberg. Currently there are some 6,000 RAF personnel in Germany. Figures for the number of their dependants are not held centrally.

Falkland Islands (Mines)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement of the latest situation regarding the removal of mines from the Falkland Islands; how many military and civilians have been killed or wounded by mines; what assistance the Argentine Government are giving in the process of clearing mines, what monetary compensation the Argentine Government are supplying; and how many Argentine *(a)* civilian and *(b)* military workers are involved in the process.

Mr. Hanley: Immediately after the Falklands conflict in 1982, our forces in the Falkland Islands set in hand an extensive programme of identifying, marking and, to the extent possible, clearing the minefields left behind by the Argentines. This programme was suspended in August 1983. Four engineers were seriously wounded in the course of these operations, although there were no civilian casualties. An explosive ordnance detachment remains based in the Falklands to advise the civilian population on the areas to avoid and to deal with any mines which become exposed.

Argentina has recently offered to pay for a third party to clear the minefields in the Falklands. The Falkland Islands Government have agreed that this proposal should be explored further, and we are following this up with Argentina. Before accepting the Argentine offer we would need to reach agreement on various practical issues. There would not be any involvement by Argentine workers in any operation on the Falkland Islands to clear the mines.

War Widows' Pensions

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the changes that he proposes in the eligibility for war widows' pensions whereby pension will be diminished or denied where the deceased has contributed to or caused his own death by tobacco or alcohol poisoning.

Mr. Hague: I have been asked to reply.

On 4 January 1994 we wrote to members of the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions with proposals to exclude from the scope of the War Pensions scheme any death or disablement due to the use or effects of tobacco or the consumption of alcohol. This exclusion would not apply where the individual was suffering from a mental disablement which was attributable to service, assessed at 80 per cent. or more, and caused him to smoke or drink or prevented him from giving up the habit.

We are now considering their responses and no decisions have been made.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 9 February 1994

NORTHERN IRELAND

Children (Northern Ireland) Order

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will defer the introduction of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order, pending the outcome of the review of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Ancram: No. The Government are not undertaking a review of the Children Act 1989 although its provisions are monitored and some changes have been made since its enactment.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Secretary of State in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and so far in 1993-94.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: There is no specific budget for my travel costs. The amounts spent on travel on Government business are:

	1992-93	*[1]1993-94*
Internal travel	£621,241	£430,540
External travel	£ 36,935	£ 17,300

[1] To 4 February.

Electricity

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which companies or organisations were invited to compete for the supply of electricity to Northern Ireland Electricity ultimately won by Scottish Power to supply it over the proposed interconnector; what was the procedure for this tender; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: I understand that NIE initially approached a number of generating companies including National Power plc, PowerGen plc, Electricité de France, Scottish Hydro Electric plc in addition to Scottish Power plc before entering into detailed negotiations with the latter.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library a copy of the Ove Arup report on the commercial assessment of the electricity interconnector with Scotland.

Mr. Tim Smith: No. This report, which contains information supplied in confidence by two privately owned companies, was commissioned by and is the property of the European Commission.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will request the Northern Ireland Electricity Regulator to take account of the results of a proper independent cost benefit analysis for the Province as a whole, prior to reaching a decision on the most economic source of electric power for Northern Ireland and making any future announcement.

Mr. Tim Smith: No. Under the terms of its licence Northern Ireland Electricity plc is required to purchase its power requirements as economically as possible and must satisfy the Director General of Electricity Supply that it has done so.

Electoral Register

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many citizens living overseas have applied to be registered to vote in elections in each parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Ancram: Records of the number of applications from British citizens overseas are not held. The numbers of overseas electors included on the electoral register for 1993-94, and the expected figures for 1994-95, are given in the table.

Constituency	*Overseas electors* *1993-94 register*	*1994-95 register (anticipated)*
Belfast East	10	9
Belfast North	8	5
Belfast South	9	4
Belfast West	1	—
East Antrim	3	3
East Londonderry	9	7
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	6	7
Foyle	2	1
Lagan Valley	3	2
Mid Ulster	6	5
Newry and Armagh	4	2
North Antrim	6	7
North Down	21	19
South Antrim	3	2
South Down	2	3
Strangford	10	9
Upper Bann	5	6
Total	108	91

Co-operatives

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to encourage the development of retail, wholesale and manufacturing co-operatives.

Mr. Tim Smith: LEDU, Northern Ireland's small business agency, plans to continue to encourage such activities through its community business programme which provides a package of grant aid as well as loan funding.

In addition, the Northern Ireland Co-operative Development Agency (NICDA), which is funded by Government, encourages the development of worker co-operatives, service co-operatives, community enterprises and employee share ownership plans, through a range of services.

Proxy Votes

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make the application form to vote by post or proxy due to disability or physical incapacity available in braille.

Mr. Ancram: There are no plans to do so.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's Office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Sir John Wheeler: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 1 February 1994 at column *633*.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Sir John Wheeler: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who are the members currently appointed to the Royal Mint advisory committee.

Mr. Nelson: The members of the Royal Mint advisory committee are as follows:

HRH The Duke of Edinburgh *(President)*
Roger de L. Holmes, Deputy Master of the Royal Mint *(Chairman)*
Marchioness of Anglesey
Professor E. Arthur Bell
Dominic Cadbury
Sir Hugh Casson
Dr. Christopher Challis
Vincent Duggleby
Sir John Hale
Michael Harvey
Professor Bryan Kneale
John Porteous
Dr. Conrad Swan

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by Her Majesty's Treasury on (i) internal and (ii) overseas travel by the Chancellor of the Exchequer since 27 May 1993.

Mr. Nelson: Expenditure and budgets for the Chancellor's United Kingdom and overseas travel since 27 May 1993 is as follows:

Item	*Budget (£)*	*Actual (£)*
Overseas travel	38,531	24,613
United Kingdom travel	1,087	556

Economic Convergence

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in table form those EC countries conforming to the economic convergence criteria of the treaty of Maastricht.

Mr. Nelson: The table shows the state of progress of EC member states with respect to the convergence criteria as set out in the Maastricht treaty. Definitions of the indicators of convergence have not yet been fully standardised and the figures are therefore only indicative at this stage.

Performance against Maastricht convergence criteria

	Latest inflation[1]	*Budget balance*[2]	*General government debt*[3]	*Long-term bond yield*[4]
Belgium	2·4	−7·4	139·1	6·6
Denmark	1·5	−4·4	80·2	6·2
France	2·1	−5·9	58·3	5·9
Germany[5]	3·4	−4·2	50·8	5·9
Greece	11·1	−15·4	111·3	n/a
Ireland	1·5	−3·0	93·7	6·4
Italy	4·0	−10·0	116·2	8·4
Luxembourg	3·6	−2·5	8·9	6·6
Netherlands	1·7	−4·0	83·4	5·8
Portugal	6·6	−8·9	65·8	9·1
Spain	4·9	−7·2	53·8	8·0
United Kingdom	1·9	−7·6	51·8	6·5

[1] Latest percentage change in consumer prices on year ago.
[2] Estimate of 1993 general government financial balance (as a percentage of GDP).
[3] Estimate of 1993 gross debt of general government (as a percentage of GDP).
[4] Yield on 10 year government securities on 7 February 1994.
[5] Inflation figures are for western Germany.
Source: OECD and European Commission.

The convergence criteria are:

a high degree of price stability, as measured by consumer price inflation over one year being within 1½ percentage points of, at most, the three lowest inflation countries;

no "excessive" budget deficit, as judged by ECOFIN. (A Commission report to ECOFIN might be triggered by a budget deficit above 3 per cent. of GDP or a ratio of public debt to GDP above 60 per cent. of GDP);

average long-term nominal interest rates over one year within two percentage points of rates in, at most, the three lowest inflation countries;

respecting the normal fluctuation margins in the ERM without severe tensions for at least the last two years. In particular, the member state shall not have devalued its currency's bilateral rate against any other member state's currency on its own initiative for the same period.

Currently Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain are members of the ERM. On 2 August 1993 the fluctuation margins of the ERM were temporarily widened to 15 per cent.

Economic Growth

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated per capita average rate of economic growth in each of the industrial countries in real terms *(a)* between 1964 and 1973, *(b)* between 1973 and 1979, *(c)* between 1979 and 1988 and *(d)* between 1988 and 1993.

Mr. Nelson: The relevant statistics are published in the OECD National Accounts Main Aggregates volume 1 and in the OECD Main Economic Indicators.

Incomes

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures for the current tax year, showing incomes net of income tax and national insurance contribution, plus child benefit for *(a)* single people earning £30,000 a year, *(b)* single-wage married couples earning £30,000 a year, *(c)* two-wage married couples each spouse earning £15,000, *(d)* single-wage couples plus two children aged four and 10 years and plus four children aged four, 10, 13 and 15 years, again with £30,000 per family per year and *(e)* two-income couples plus two children and plus four children, ages as above, each spouse with £15,000; if, in each case, he will equivalise the families' net incomes, using the equivalence ratios used by the Department of Social Security in their households below average incomes analysis, but taking single people as the reference point; and if he will recalculate both sets of figures assuming that married couple's allowance had been phased out.

Mr. Dorrell: Information is given in the table. The calculation of income tax liability assumes that no reliefs or allowances other than the personal and married couple's allowance are available. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay class 1 national insurance at the contracted-in rate. The equivalence scales used are before housing costs are deducted.

£ per year

	1993-94 tax regime		*Assuming no married couple's allowance*	
	Income net of tax and national insurance contributions, plus child benefit	*Equivalised net income*	*Income net of tax and national insurance contributions, plus child benefit*	*Equivalised net income*
(a) Single people earning £30,000	21,296	21,296	21,296	21,296
(b) Single wage married couples earning £30,000	21,984	13,405	21,296	12,985
(c) Two-wage married couples each spouse earning £15,000	22,610	13,787	22,180	13,524
(d) Single-wage couples plus two children aged 4 and 10 earning £30,000	22,925	9,924	22,237	9,626
Single-wage couples plus four children aged 4, 10, 13 and 15 earning £30,000	23,768	7,428	23,080	7,212
(e) Two income couples plus two children as above each spouse earning £15,000	23,551	10,195	23,121	10,009
Two-income couples plus four children as above each spouse earning £15,000	24,394	7,623	23,964	7,489

EC Funding

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the expected receipts from each of the European Community's funds to the United Kingdom in the current year.

Sir John Cope: Details of the United Kingdom's public sector receipts by Government Department and EC fund, for the current United Kingdom financial year, will be published in March in the Chancellor's 1994 departmental report. The forecast of United Kingdom public sector receipts by calendar year for 1994, that is the current EC Budget year, will be published in the spring in the White Paper, "Statement on the 1994 Community Budget".

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what value of receipts he expects from the European Community's structural fund for each of the fund's objectives in the calendar year 1994, divided into payments to *(a)* central Government, *(b)* local government, *(c)* other public sector bodies and *(d)* the private sector.

Mr. Portillo: The structural funds are implemented by multi-annual programmes and the Commission has announced the United Kingdom's allocations under objectives 1, 3, 4 and 5(b) for the years 1994-1999 and under objective 2 for the years 1994-1996. The breakdown of those allocations between years will be a matter for negotiation with the Commission on the community support framework which lay down how the funds will be used.

It is not possible to say how much any sector will receive in advance of applications, for support being received from the funds and decisions taken.

Trustee Investments Act Review

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements he is making to ensure that a wide range of charities, investment management companies and other interested parties are invited to make representations to the Treasury in connection with the current review of the Trustee Investments Act 1961; and if he will list the names of organisations which have been invited individually to submit views.

Mr. Nelson: A number of changes to the Trustee Investments Act 1961 are currently being drafted. These are largely technical in nature and are either necessary to comply with European obligations or result from amendments to other statutes. The Treasury has undertaken a limited consultation on these changes, seeking the views of other Departments (including the Charity Commission), the Law Society, the Unit Trust Association and a small number of law firms who have expressed a desire for technical changes.

The Government are also considering the case for wider reform. If it is decided that there are grounds for such reform, we will ensure that bodies of the type mentioned are fully consulted.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the effect on the tax relief on payments required by the Child Support Agency of the use of collection services.

Mr. Dorrell: Where tax relief is available for maintenance payments made under Child Support Agency assessments it is unaffected by the use of the agency's collection services.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken or intends to take to secure extension of the derogation permitting the continuation of VAT zero rating in the United Kingdom beyond 1996.

Sir John Cope: At ECOFIN on 24 June 1991, all member states agreed that, under transitional agreements to last until at least the end of 1996, member states which at 1 January 1991 applied zero rates of VAT to certain goods and services in accordance with the provisions of Community law then in force would have the option of retaining them.

The Sixth VAT Directive 77/388/EEC, as amended, provides that the transitional period will continue beyond the end of 1996 if there is not unanimous agreement of the definitive VAT system to operate from that date. The United Kingdom has made it clear that one of the conditions for such an agreement must be our right to continue with zero rates.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Nelson: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors will be taken into account in setting levels of vehicle excise duty; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: As with other taxes, the Chancellor takes account of a wide range of factors in setting the structures and rates of vehicle excise duty (VED). These include the need to raise revenue while minimising economic distortions; the impact of the tax on inflation; the transport costs of British industry and the competitive position of United Kingdom hauliers relative to their continental counterparts; and the costs of other forms of transport. In general the Chancellor will seek to ensure that, through a combination of VED and fuel duty, road users at least cover the economic costs they impose, though further work is required to estimate these costs accurately. When direct charges for motorway use are introduced the Government will take these into account in setting motoring taxes.

Policy in the past has been that road vehicles should, through VED and fuel duty, at least cover their annual "track costs".

However, the Government made clear in their Green Paper, "Paying for Better Motorways", that this measure has limitations as a basis for setting motoring taxes. For example, it takes account only of the cash costs of capital expenditure on road construction, and of current expenditure on road maintenance and makes no allowance for a return on capital. Publication of the annual Road Track Costs Bulletin will therefore be discontinued. The Government intend to produce better measures of the costs of road use including, where these can be valued, wider costs such as noise and other environmental costs.

Fraud

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many employees were judged to be guilty of fraud in his Department in each year since 1989; and how many were dismissed.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 1 February 1994]:* Except for minor cases (eg misuse of stationery, postal services and sick certificates), staff found guilty of fraud have been dismissed. The number each year since 1989 is:

	Guilty of fraud	*Dismissed*
1989-90	0	0
1990-91	1	0
1991-92	2	2
1992-93	9	4
[1]1993	2	

[1] To date.

The figures given exclude the Central Computer Telecommunications Agency and Chessington computer centre as these businesses were transferred to the Cabinet Office in 1992.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's policy for dealing with employees found guilty of fraud.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 1 February 1994]:* Where evidence appears sufficient to obtain a conviction, cases are considered for referral to the police for further

investigation and possible prosecution. All cases of fraud are also considered under the Treasury's disciplinary procedures.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Court Information

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report,* column *719,* what representations he has received about human rights in respect of the arrangement for passing information from the courts to central Government.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have received no such representations.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report,* column *719,* on matrimonial cases, when the decision to set up the arrangement in question was made; by whom that decision was taken; what representations he has received concerning the arrangement; who made the decision to discontinue it; what reasons led to its discontinuance; when that decision was taken; what its estimated cost was; and in how many cases and by how many courts the information was requested under the second heading by the Home Office supplied.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The arrangement came into effect on 1 November 1993, following discussions between junior officials in the civil business division of my Department and officials of the Home Office between July and October. I have received no representations other than those from the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). The matter became known to senior officials on 18 January 1994. Legal advice was sought which stated that the arrangement had no statutory authority. The decision to discontinue the arrangement was taken by the head of the civil business division on that day. Arrangements have been made to ensure that legal advice will be sought in all future cases of this type. The cost of each notification made under the arrangement is estimated at £1·16 for the inner London area and £1·06 for the remainder of the courts. I am informed by the Home Office that they received approximately 30 notifications between 1 November and 18 January, which have all been destroyed. It is not therefore possible to say how many separate courts provided information.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report,* column *719,* on matrimonial cases, how many arrangements currently exist or have existed within the last five years by which information from the courts is disseminated to *(a)* the Home Office or *(b)* other central Government Departments.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The following arrangements currently exist or have existed within the last five years by which information from the courts is or has been disseminated to central Government Departments:

To the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys:

Information about divorce decrees absolute (in accordance with the senior district judges' direction of 20 January 1992).

To the Child Support Agency

As required by the Child Support (Information, Evidence and Disclosure) Regulations 1992.

To the Inland Revenue:

Information about small maintenance orders in accordance with the requirements of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (this was discontinued on 6 April 1989).

To the Home Office (Immigration and Nationality Department):

Information about divorce cases where the parties were married in the United Kingdom and separated on the same day (this was discontinued on 18 January 1994).

In addition to this information, various pieces of statistical information which do not identify particular cases or parties are supplied by the courts for use, for example, in the Judicial Statistics.

Writs

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current charge for the issue of a writ; what it was 12 months ago; when it was last changed; what considerations underlay the scale of the change; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Under the Supreme Court Fees (Amendment) Order 1993 the writ fee was increased from £70 (set in 1990) to £100. In setting the level of these fees, the Department has sought to begin closing the gap between the present level of cost recovery and its target of full cost recovery from court users by 1996-97.

Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what discussions have taken place between the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Home Office concerning possible changes to the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill *[Lords].*

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and the Home Secretary regularly discuss matters which are of interest to both of their departments, including the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has in respect of the appointment of chief justices' clerks to magistrates courts committees.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government's intention is that every magistrates courts committee should appoint a legally qualified head of service and that the Lord Chancellor's approval should be required for each such appointment.

Such an appointment will provide clearer lines of accountability within the service, and also yield improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the service's management.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to empower the Lord Chancellor to enforce the amalgamation of magistrates courts committee areas.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill currently before Parliament proposes that the Lord Chancellor should have the power to initiate amalgamations between magistrates courts committee areas. An amalgamation order may only be made after consultation with the local magistrates, the magistrates courts committees concerned and all local authorities in the affected area.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to change the proposed requirement that the Lord Chancellor should approve the appointment of chairmen of magistrates courts committees.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As announced in this House on 2 February, the Lord Chancellor has listened to the criticism of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill voiced in the House of Lords on 18 January. He proposes to move an amendment when the Bill next comes before Parliament, the effect of which will be to remove the proposed requirement that the Lord Chancellor approve the appointment of magistrates courts committee chairmen.

Justices' Clerks

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans the Lord Chancellor has to require that all justices' clerks be put on fixed-term contracts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As announced in this House on 2 February, the Lord Chancellor has listened to the criticism of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill voiced in the second reading debate in the House of Lords on 18 January. He proposes to move an amendment when the Bill next comes before Parliament, the effect of which will be to remove the proposed power of the Lord Chancellor to require that any contract of service made between a magistrates court committee and a chief justices' clerk or justices' clerk must contain such provision as my be specified in the order.

Crown Courts (Racial Bias)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many complaints he has received in his last recorded year over alleged racial bias by *(a)* Crown court judges, *(b)* Crown court recorders and *(c)* Crown court magistrates.

Mr. John M. Taylor: According to the information which is readily available, during 1993 no complaints were received in which a specific allegation of racial bias by individual members of the judiciary or magistracy sitting in the Crown court formed the sole or substantive grounds of complaint (but two such complaints, one against two circuit judges and one against a recorder, initially received in 1992, were dealt with in 1993). This does not include any complaints received in 1993 about proceedings in the Crown court in which imputed or alleged racial prejudice by the courts may have been an element in, or seen as relating to, the grounds of complaint, but which cannot be separately identified or quantified.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

HOME DEPARTMENT

Hostels, West Midlands

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are expected to be made redundant in the event of the closure of hostels in the west midlands area; and what would be the financial costs.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff will be made redundant in the event of the closure of hostels in the west midlands area; and what would be the financial costs.

Mr. Maclean: It will be for the probation committee as employer to decide how to manage the consequences of closures in terms of staff redeployment or redundancy; we have not yet received full accounts of their conclusions.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the occupancy rate of hostels in the west midlands area for each of the last 10 quarters.

Mr. Maclean: Occupancy figures for the period April 1991 to March 1992 are not readily available on a quarterly basis. The occupancy figures for the most recently available six quarters and for December 1993 are as follows:

	Per cent.
April—June 1992	78
July—September 1992	74
October—December 1992	74
January—March 1993	79
April—June 1993	60
July—September 1993	71
December 1993	79

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department following the proposed closure of hostels in the west midlands area, what advice will be given to the magistrates courts regarding any future bail hostel remands.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice will be given to the magistrates courts regarding any future bail hostel remands following the closure of bail hostels in the west midlands.

Mr. Maclean: There are alternative hostel facilities in the west midlands and in neighbouring probation areas; and it will be for the probation service to bring them to the attention of the courts.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who will be consulted about the proposed closure of hostels in the west midlands area.

Mr. Maclean: The west midlands probation service was notified on 1 December of our closure proposals and given the opportunity to comment.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the average cost of a weekly place in hostels in the west midlands area, *(b)* the average length of stay and *(c)* the average cost of a prison remand place in the west midlands area.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the average cost of a

weekly place in hostels in the west midlands area, *(b)* the average length of stay and *(c)* what was the average cost of a prison remand place in the west midlands area.

Mr. Maclean: *(a)* The average weekly cost in 1993-94 is £243; *(b)* this information is not readily available in the form requested; *(c)* costs for remand prisoners are not kept separately. For 1992-93, the average weekly net operating cost per prisoner at Birmingham prison, the only prison in the west midlands, was £383. Remand prisoners represent just over 40 per cent. of these prisoners.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what capital expenditure was planned for hostels in the west midlands area prior to his Department's statement of 30 November.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any capital expenditure was planned for hostels in the west midlands area prior to the Home Office statement of 30 November.

Mr. Maclean: A number of proposals for capital expenditure on west midlands hostels had been received prior to the 30 November statement, but none had or have yet been approved.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many residents of hostels in the west midlands area were *(a)* aged under 17 years, *(b)* 17 to 21 years and *(c)* 21 years and over at the most recent available date.

Mr. Maclean: For the period January to December 1993, *(a)* none, *(b)* 368, *(c)* 713.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what capital and revenue expenditure will be available for hostel provision in the west midlands area for 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what capital and revenue expenditure will be available for hostel provision in the west midlands area for 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Maclean: Revenue grant for approved bail and probation/bail hostels in the west midlands for 1994-95 and 1995-96 will be approximately £1·5 million a year. The amount of capital grant available for hostels in this area will depend on the strength of bids submitted by the probation committee in comparison to those for hostels in other areas.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what he expects to be the annual saving as a result of the closure of hostels in the west midlands area.

Mr. Maclean: We expect the saving to be in the order of £0·2 million in 1994-95 and £0·4 million in 1995-96.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were *(a)* re-arrested and charged or *(b)* breached for failure to comply with requirements at hostels in the west midlands area for the latest period for which statistics are available.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were either re-arrested and charged or breached for failure to comply with requirements at hostels in the west midlands area for the latest period for which statistics are available.

Mr. Maclean: For the period January to December 1993, the information requested is as follows:

	Number
Re-offended	54
Absconded and breached	210
Breached for failure to comply with hostel rules	219

Bewsey Street Hostel, Cheshire

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any capital expenditure was planned for the Bewsey street hostel prior to his Department's statement of 30 November 1993.

Mr. Maclean: A proposal for capital expenditure on the Bewsey street hostel had been received prior to the 30 November statement, but it had not and has not since been approved.

Youth Custody

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each year since 1989 the total number of young people serving youth custody sentences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Bill Etherington, dated 9 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking if he will list for each year since 1989 the total number of young people serving youth custody sentences.

The information you have requested is given in the following table.

Average population[1] of sentenced young offenders in Prison Service establishments, England and Wales: 1989 to 1993

Year	*Average population*
1989	7,232
1990	6,264
1991	5,859
1992	5,469
1993	5,131

[1] Includes a small number held in police cells in some years.

Source: Table 1.5, Prison Statistics, England and Wales, 1991, (Cm 2157) and Home Office Statistical Bulletin 7/93, Table 1 for figures 1989-92.

Domestic Homicides

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many homicides involving *(a)* shotguns and *(b)* other firearms have taken place as a result of domestic incidents in each police force area in each of the last 10 years; and how many of the victims in each case were women.

Mr. Maclean: The following tables give the information.

Offences currently recorded as homicide (1) in which the relationship between the suspect and victim was domestic (2) and where a shot gun was used—England and Wales, 1983 to 1992

Police force area	1983		1984	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	1	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	2	2	—	1
Dorset	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	1	—	—
Essex	—	—	1	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	1	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	1
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	1	2	2
Kent	—	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	—	1
Leicestershire	—	1	1	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	1	—	—
Metropolitan Police District	2	1	—	1
Norfolk	—	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	1	—	—	1
Northumbria	1	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	1
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	—
Surrey	—	—	—	—
Sussex	1	—	—	—
Thames Valley	—	—	1	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—
West Mercia	1	1	—	2
West Midlands	—	2	—	1
West Yorkshire	—	—	1	2
Wiltshire	1	—	—	—
Dyfed-Powys	—	1	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—
North Wales	—	—	2	2
South Wales	—	—	—	—
England and Wales	10	11	9	15

Police force area	1985		1986	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	1
Bedfordshire	—	1	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	1
Cleveland	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	1	—
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	4	4
Dorset	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	1	—	—
Essex	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	1
Greater Manchester	1	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	2	—	—
Hertfordshire	1	—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	1
Lancashire	—	—	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—

Police force area	1985		1986	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Metropolitan Police District	—	1	—	—
Norfolk	2	2	—	1
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	—	1	—	—
North Yorkshire	1	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	1	1	—	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	1	—	1
Surrey	—	—	1	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—
Thames Valley	—	—	1	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—
West Mercia	—	—	—	1
West Midlands	—	—	2	1
West Yorkshire	—	—	1	1
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—
Dyfed-Powys	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—
North Wales	—	—	—	—
South Wales	—	—	—	—
England and Wales	6	10	10	13

Police force area	1987		1988	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	—	1	—	—
Derbyshire	—	1	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—	1
Dorset	—	—	—	1
Durham	—	1	—	—
Essex	—	1	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—
Hertfordshire		—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	—	—
Kent	1	1	1	—
Lancashire	—	—	1	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	1
Lincolnshire	—	1	—	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan Police District	1	1	—	1
Norfolk	—	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	1	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—
South Yorkshire	—	1	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	1
Surrey	—	—	—	1
Sussex	—	1	—	1
Thames Valley	—	—	—	—
Warwickshire	—	1	—	—
West Mercia	—	—	—	1
West Midlands	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—
Dyfed-Powys	—	—	—	—
Gwent	1	—	—	—
North Wales	1	—	—	1
South Wales	—	—	—	1
England and Wales	5	10	2	10

Police force area	1989		1990	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	1
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	1
Cleveland	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—	—
Dorset	—	1	—	1
Durham	—	—	—	1
Essex	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	2	—	—
Kent	1	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	1	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan Police District	—	—	2	—
Norfolk	—	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	1
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	1
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	1	1
Surrey	—	—	—	—
Sussex	—	1	—	—
Thames Valley	—	1	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—
West Mercia	—	1	1	—
West Midlands	1	1	1	1
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	1
Wiltshire	—	1	—	—
Dyfed-Powys	—	1	1	1
Gwent	—	—	—	1
North Wales	—	—	—	—
South Wales	—	—	—	—
England and Wales	2	9	6	11

Police force area	1991		1992	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	1	—	—
Cheshire	—	1	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	1	—
Cumbria	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	—	—
Essex	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	1	—	—
Hampshire	—	1	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—
Humberside	1	—	—	—
Kent	—	1	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan Police District	—	—	—	—

Police force area	1991		1992	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Norfolk	—	—	1	1
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	—	—	—	1
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	1
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	—
Surrey	—	—	—	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—
Thames Valley	1	—	—	1
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—
West Mercia	—	1	—	1
West Midlands	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	1	—	—
Dyfed-Powys	—	—	—	1
Gwent	—	2	—	—
North Wales	—	—	—	—
South Wales	—	—	—	—
England and Wales	2	9	2	6

Offences currently recorded as homicide[1] in which the relationship between the suspect and victim was domestic[2] and where a firearm was used—England and Wales, 1983 to 1992.

Police force area	1983		1984	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	—	1	—	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	—	—
Essex	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan Police District	—	—	3	—
Norfolk	—	—	—	1
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire			—	—
South Yorkshire	1	—	1	3
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	—
Surrey	—	—	—	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—
Thames Valley	—	—	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—
West Mercia	1	2	—	—
West Midlands	—	1	—	—
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	—	1
Dyfed-Powys	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—
North Wales	—	—	—	—
South Wales	—	—	—	—
England and Wales	2	4	4	5

Police force area	1985		1986	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	—	—
Essex	3	3	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan Police District	—	—	—	—
Norfolk	2	2	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	1	—	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	2
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	1	—	—	—
Surrey	—	—	—	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—
Thames Valley	—	—	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—
West Mercia	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—
Dyfed-Powys	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—
North Wales	—	—	—	—
South Wales	—	—	—	—
England and Wales	4	4	—	2

Police force area	1987		1988	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	—	1	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	—	—
Essex	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	—	1
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan Police District	1	2	—	1

Police force area	1987		1988	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Norfolk	—	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	—
Surrey	—	—	—	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—
Thames Valley	—	1	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—
West Mercia	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	—	1
Dyfed-Powys	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—
North Wales	—	—	—	1
South Wales	—	—	—	—
England and Wales	1	4	—	4

Police force area	1989		1990	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	—	—
Essex	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan Police District	1	—	1	—
Norfolk	—	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	—
Surrey	—	—	—	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—
Thames Valley	—	—	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—
West Mercia	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—
Dyfed-Powys	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—
North Wales	—	—	—	—
South Wales	—	—	—	—
England and Wales	1	—	1	—

Police force area	1991		1992	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Avon and Somerset	1	—	—	1
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	1	—	—
Cumbria	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	—	1
Essex	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	1	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	1	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—
London, City of	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	1	—
Metropolitan Police District	1	—	—	2
Norfolk	—	—	—	1
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	1	2	—	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	—
Surrey	—	—	—	—
Sussex	—	1	—	—
Thames Valley	—	—	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—
West Mercia	—	—	—	3
West Midlands	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—
Dyfed-Powys	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—
North Wales	—	—	—	—
South Wales	—	—	—	—
England and Wales	3	6	1	8

(1) Offences currently recorded as homicide as at 27 August 1993.
(2) 'Domestic' includes the following relationships of victim to suspect: son or daughter; parent; spouse; cohabitant or former spouse or cohabitant; other family; lover or former lover including spouse's lover or lover's spouse or other associate.
(3) Information for 1993 is not yet available.

Parole

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he has given to chief constables concerning approaches by the police to prisoners in respect of responsibility for crimes other than those for which they were convicted, in respect of resistance to parole.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Firearms

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many occasions a licensed firearms or shotgun holder has committed *(a)* homicide or *(b)* serious injury with a gun in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Maclean: No information is available centrally on whether a licensed firearm or shotgun holder has used his weapon to kill or injure.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Police Advisory Board.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The constitution of the board stipulates that the board shall consist of:

(a) the Secretary of State, who shall be the Chairman thereof, and such persons as he may from time to time direct to serve thereon;

(b) the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of Chief Police Officers of England and Wales, the Police Superintendents's Association of England and Wales, and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

It is for the authorities and bodies listed above to decide who should represent them on the board.

The membership of the board is currently as follows:

Secretary of State
Mr. Trefor Morris—Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary
Mr. I. Burns—Deputy Under Secretary, Home Office
Mr. C. Scoble—Assistant Under Secretary, Home Office
Mrs. P. G. W. Catto—Police Department, Home Office
Mr. I. Smith—Police Department, Home Office
Miss M. Barton—General Secretary ACPO
Mr. B. Skitt—ACPO (Chief Constable, Hertfordshire)
Mr. T. Speed—Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police
Mr. D. Clark—Superintendents' Association
Mr. V. Jones—Superintendents' Association
Mr. R. Coyles—Chairman, Police Federation
Mr. L. Williams—Secretary, Police Federation
Mr. J. Moseley—Police Federation
Mr. S. Cadmore—Police Federation
Mr. G. Hyde—Police Federation
Mr. D. Bellotti—Association of County Councils
Mr. J. Collins—Association of County Councils
Mr. R. G. Owen—Association of County Councils
Mr. S. Murphy—Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Mr. R. W. Gillies—Association of Metropolitan Authorities

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Police Discipline Appeals Tribunal.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Tribunals comprise three members selected from the following panels:

Chairmen
His Honour Christopher Beaumont MBE
Mr. T. G. Field-Fisher QC
Mr. G. Flather QC
Mr. M. Vere-Hodge QC
Mr. R. Grey QC
His Honour Robert Leech
Mr. D. C. Lovell-Pank QC
Mr. T. M. E. Nash
Sir Max Williams
Mr. J. G. Boal QC
Miss A. J. Rafferty QC
Mrs. L. Stern QC
Mr. V. B. A. Temple QC
Mr. H. A. D. De Silva

Second Members
Mr. R. F. Broome OBE QPM
Mr. J. Brownlow CBE QPM
Mr. G. Charlton CVO CBE QPM
Mr. S. W. Crump QPM
Mr. F. L. Jordan CBE OStJ QPM CBIM
Mr. C. Payne CBE QPM DL CBIM
Mr. A. O. Smith QPM OStJ
Mr. S. L. Whiteley CBE QPM

Mr. P. Wright CBE CBIM
Sir Stanley Bailey CBE QPM DL CBIM
Sir James Anderton CBE QPM DL
Mr. D. Hall CBE QPM
Sir Peter Imbert QPM
Sir John Woodcock CBE QPM CBIM

Third Members
Mr. P. Astles
Mr. T. Grinter
Mr. A C. Turner
Mr. P. A. Cripps BEM
Mr. J. D. Thompson
Miss V. G. Neild QPM Dip NEBSS
Mr. R. Ellis
Mr. B. T. Turrell
Miss M. Henderson
Mr. P. M. Heaton
Mr. C. McIlwrick MBE
Mr. A. Eastwood
Mr. E. Day
Mr. P. Wall

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Service Candidates.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current list of members is as follows:

Anthony Cripps, QC (Chairman)
Muir Hunter, QC (Vice Chairman)
Rt. Hon. The Lord Barnett
Baroness Birk
Baroness David
Rt. hon. the Earl Ferrers
Lord Kilmarnock
Baroness Macleod of Borve
Rt. hon. the Lord Renton
Rt. hon. the Baroness Seear
Baroness Sharples
Lord Wigoder, QC

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Alcohol Education and Research Council.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The current members of the Alcohol Education and Research Council are:

The rt. hon. Christopher Chataway (Chairman)
Dr. Ann Cartwright
Mr. Alan Croston
Mr. Anthony Fuller
Dr. Ellish Gilvarry
Professor Ray Hodgson
Mr. Tim Hulbert
Mr. Ian MacKenzie
Professor Phyllida Parsloe
Dr. Diana Patterson
Dr. Jeremy Queenborough
Dr. Bruce Ritson
Mr. Arnold Tasker
Ms Gill Williams

Anthony Robert Madden

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will place a copy of the report into the death of Anthony Robert Madden in Armley prison on 26 June 1993 in the Library;

(2) if he will provide family access to the medical records regarding the late Anthony Robert Madden.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Pearson to Mr. Bob Cryer, dated 9 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions about Anthony Robert Madden, who killed himself in Leeds prison on 26 June 1993.

As in all cases of death in Prison Service custody, an investigationi was carried out into the very sad death of Mr. Madden. A report was submitted by the Governor of Leeds prison to Prison Service Headquarters. It is not, however, our practice to publish reports of internal investigations, the disclosure of which might undermine their effectiveness.

A full and open inquest into Mr. Madden's death was conducted by the West Yorkshire Coroner on 29 and 30 November 1993. After hearing all the relevant evidence relating to Mr. Madden's death, the jury recorded the verdict that he killed himself. Transcripts of Coroner's notes of evidence are not routinely made, but can be requested from the office of the Coroner concerned on payment of a fee.

If you or Mr. Madden's family have any specific questions about the death of their son which they feel were not answered at the inquest, please let me know.

Under the Access to Health Records Act 1990 Mr. Madden's next of kin are entitled to request the disclosure of a copy of his prison medical record. If they would like to make such a request to me in writing, I will arrange for a copy of the record to be sent to them.

Deportees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects his Department's investigation of the complaints alleging excessive force by Airline Securities Consultants Ltd. against two deportees to report; and whether there is any independent element to those investigations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I expect these investigations to be completed shortly. Complaints against members of the Immigration Service or private security firms engaged in detaining or escorting immigration detainees are investigated by a senior officer of at least inspector level who has no involvement in the matter under complaint. An independent complaints audit committee has recently been established with a remit to satisfy itself as to the effectiveness of the procesures for investigating complaints, to draw to the attention of management any weakness and to make an annual report to the Home Secretary.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police forces provided in-flight escorts for deportees in 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The answer is as follows:

Cambridgeshire
Devon and Cornwall
Durham
Greater Manchester
Leicestershire
Metropolitan Police
Norfolk
Nottingham
West Mercia
Royal Ulster Constabulary
South Wales.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Howard: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Police Resources

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the criteria used for the allocation of resources for police authorities by urban and rural classification.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary wrote to chief officers of police on 5 November 1991 with details of the criteria used for allocating additions to force establishments. A copy of his letter is in the Library.

South Wales Police Authority

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the next expenditure of the South Wales Police Authority for *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1992-93.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is in the following table:

South Wales constabulary

	1989-90 £ million[1]	*1990-91 £ million*	*1992-93 £ million*
Total expenditure[2]	97·275	108·599	132·913
Expenditure net of 51 per cent. Home Office police grant	47·665	53·214	65·127

[1] Comparisons with future years affected by changes in the funding of capital projects from 1990-91.
[2] Includes capital expenditure and loan charges.

Forensic Science Service

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the result of his review of the Home Office forensic science service.

Mr. Howard: I announced the review of the Forensic Science Service, an executive agency of the Home Office, on 19 May 1993. This review is now complete. The Government have decided that the service should remain as an executive agency for the present and move to trading fund status when appropriate. This will allow the agency to continue to build on the progress it has made so far.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malaysia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there was any further correspondence reiterating promises of civil aid between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Malaysia following the letter dated 28 June 1988 from the then Secretary of State for Defence to the Malaysian Finance Minister.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* Yes. We have kept in close touch with the Malaysian Government about the provision of development aid.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

The Attorney-General: It is not possible to provide a definite and exhaustive list of questions which I might exceptionally decline to answer on grounds other than cost. Each question will continue to be answered on its merits, but examples which would fall into this category would be questions about:

(i) The propriety of decisions given in individual cases by courts of law, administrative tribunals and similar bodies;
(ii) Details of investigations by or on behalf of the Departments for which I am responsible in connection with prosecutions or civil actions and confidential information relating to such proceedings or possible proceedings; and
(iii) Legal advice given to or by the Law Officers.

EDUCATION

Universities (Staff and Students)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* undergraduates, *(b)* postgraduates, *(c)* teaching staff and *(d)* professors there are at each university in the United Kingdom; and what are the salary scales at each institution for (i) professors, (ii) readers, (iii) senior lecturers and (iv) lecturers.

Mr. Boswell: Information on the number of students and staff at former UFC funded United Kingdom universities is published by the Universities' Statistical Record in "University Statistics: Volume 1 Students and Staff". Student data for the universities formerly funded by PCFC are contained in "Statistics of Education, Further Education, Higher Education in polytechnics and colleges 1991-92" published by DFE. Staff information is published in "The Academic Staff of Polytechnics and Colleges: 1991". Copies of these publications are in the House Library. The nationally agreed pay scale bands for academic and research staff in the former UFC and PCFC sectors are as follows:

Former UFC Universities: Pay bands as at 1 April 1993

	£
Lecturers A	12,828-18,855
Lecturers B	19,642-25,107
Senior Lecturers	26,359-32,202
Professors	Minimum 30,398
Research Grade 1B	12,828-15,186
Research Grade 1A	12,828-20,442
Research Grade II	18,855-25,107
Research Grade III	23,782-32,202

All Former PCFC Funded HE Institutions: Pay band as at 1 September 1993

	£
Lecturer	11,067-20,745
Senior Lecturer	19,362-25,584
Principal Lecturer	24,198-30,426
Researcher A	8,988-12,444
Researcher B	13,140-20,052
Head of Department	Minimum 26,304

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Boswell: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much the carpets incorporating the initials NCC in the National Curriculum Council's York office cost to purchase; when they were purchased; and what has happened to them.

Mr. Robin Squire: The carpet was purchased in 1990, when the National Curriculum Council was fitting out its offices in York. No information on the cost of the carpet is held centrally, and the cost is not separately identifiable from the published accounts of the NCC. The council was dissolved on 1 January 1994 and its former York office (with the carpet still in place) has been transferred to the Secretary of State. It will become the headquarters of the new Funding Agency for Schools from April this year.

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

The Prime Minister: The general practice of this and previous Administrations is described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

TRANSPORT

Road Lighting

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent on lighting trunk roads and motorways in each of the last five years; and how much it is budgeted to spend in the current financial year and 1995.

Mr. Key: The table shows the amount spent on lighting in 1992-93, in 1993-94 to date, and the budget for 1994-95. Figures for earlier years are unavailable.

	£ million
1992-93 (actual)	23·911
1993-94 (to date)	28·793
1994-95 (budget)	27·248

Cycle Lanes

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of a mile of cycle lane on the average road if it is constructed on the current road surface and does not involve extending the road.

Mr. Key: The estimated cost of providing signing and white-lining for a mile of cycle lane on the current road surface is approximately £3,000. In addition there are costs which will be site-specific, for example for provisions at junctions and traffic management during installation, but these items cannot be estimated.

Mandatory cycle lanes can only be marked on the carriageway when the remaining width is sufficiently wide for existing traffic flows and when waiting and loading can be effectively restricted.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which new policy commitments and initiatives in the field of transport, announced in "Sustainable Development: The U.K. Strategy", have not already appeared in previous Government documents and ministerial speeches.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside on 8 February, *Official Report*, column *149*.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what EC funds are available to ensure additional environmental protection on the route of the channel tunnel rail link; when he applied for them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I am not aware of any EC funds specifically for this purpose, but the channel tunnel rail link is already in receipt of funds from the EC's transport infrastructure programme, and my Department is in discussion with European Commission officials about further support.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's Office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 2 February at col. *758*.

Rail Travel

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what comparative date he has on the cost per kilometre of rail travel to passengers in each European Community country; and if he will provide separate figures for the cost per kilometre to passengers on inter-city rail routes.

Mr. Freeman: Comparative data of the kind requested is not available to the Department.

Road Safety

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) which local authorities no longer employ road safety officers;

(2) what is his estimate of the overall number of road safety officers employed in 1993-94 *(a)* in total and *(b)* for each local authority.

Mr. Key: No central record is kept of the numbers of road safety officers either in total or in any one authority. It is for individual local authorities to assess their own requirements for road safety officers, having regard to the needs of the local community.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which local authorities have submitted road safety plans accompanying the transport supplementary grant plans under the national road safety plan; and if he will make a statement as to the use made of these plans.

Mr. Key: All local traffic authorities have submitted road safety plans. These are used to provide advice on the allocation of funds for local safety schemes. More importantly, they are used by the authorities themselves to focus and monitor road safety activity within the authority.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who is currently responsible for the co-ordination and monitoring of road safety policy.

Mr. Key: Mr. right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is responsible for the Government's road safety policy.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account is taken of road accidents in the determination of road safety policy.

Mr. Key: The reduction of road accidents is the fundamental objective of road safety policy, and the yardstick by which its success is measured.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the requirements within the Road Traffic Acts relating to road safety; and what enforcement measures in each case are required of the police.

Mr. Key: The main provisions of road traffic law relating to road safety are set out on pages 67 to 72 of the Highway Code. The police have a duty to enforce all laws and it is for each chief constable to decide how best to fulfil that responsibility.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what responsibility he expects the Highways Agency to have for road safety.

Mr. Key: The Highways Agency will be required to support the Department's road safety policy and to contribute to the Secretary of State's target of reducing road casulaties by one third by the year 2000 compared with the annual average from 1981 to 1985.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the overall budget spent on road safety by local authorities.

Mr. Key: The local roads settlement for 1994-95 includes provision of £50 million for expenditure on local safety schemes, maintaining the level of provision for the current year. In addition, local authorities spend money on education, training, publicity, street lighting, road maintenance, gritting and snow clearing, crossing patrol officers and many other safety related activities. No central record is kept of total expenditure.

Departmental Headquarters

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce details of his Department's new headquarters accommodation.

Mr. MacGregor: On 12 November 1992 at columns *963-64* I announced that the Department of Transport would remain in Marsham street for around three years, with suitable accommodation being sought for the longer term.

I am now able to announce my Department's new headquarters will be Great Minster, Horseferry road. After the building is fitted out staff will relocate there from 2 Marsham street, probably in autumn 1995. The Department will retain some space in Romney house nearby to provide overspill accommodation when required.

Driver Safety Consultation Paper

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what responses he has received to the new driver safety consultation paper; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Some 5,200 copies of the consultation document were distributed and about 400 responses were received from organisations and individuals. There was very widespread support for the four main proposals in the document and many interesting and helpful comments were made on points of detail. In the light of these responses, the Government propose to proceed as follows.

A1. Retesting for new drivers convicted of offences: The document proposed that a driver convicted of certain offences within a specified period of passing the driving test would be debarred from holding a full licence, reverting to "learner" status, until passing a further test. There was very strong support for this measure. A number of different views were expressed on the detailed questions asked in the consultation document, and a further exercise is being set in hand to consider how such a scheme could work in practice. Any such scheme will require the approval of Parliament either in the form of a statutory instrument requiring affirmative resolution or (for some variants) primary legislation.

A2. Separate theory testing: Consultees were asked whether a separate theory test should be introduced to fulfil the requirement of the Second EC Driving Licence Directive (91/439/EEC). Almost all consultees were in favour of a separate mandatory theory test. I am setting in hand detailed developmental work to ensure that such a test, and the organisation to operate it, is fully in place by 1 July 1996, the date on which the directive comes into effect.

This will be the most important change in the car driving test since its introduction in 1935, and we shall be aiming to devise a form of test that makes a significant contribution to reducing the accident rate among newly qualified drivers, in particular by improving hazard perception. We shall be carefully monitoring the effect of

the separate theory test during the first five years of its operation and it will be rigorously evaluated to ensure that it is achieving the desired effect of reducing accidents. I shall make appropriate adjustments if it fails to do so. We are also anxious to obtain the fullest advantage from technological improvements that are likely to occur in this period.

A3. Post-test driver training: The document proposed the development of voluntary schemes in which insurers would offer financial incentives to newly qualified drivers to take further training. A number of insurers and driving schools have expressed strong interest in this proposal, and my officials are working towards the setting up of a voluntary scheme.

A4. Road safety education: The document proposed the development of educational programmes of the 16-plus age group targeted at potential drivers and new drivers. Again there was strong support and we shall be working with the private and voluntary sectors to prepare suitable material for use in schools and colleges. We are already targeting this age group with the current "Drive" TV series, produced in conjunction with the BBC.

We also consulted on two other measures on which we were doubtful but prepared to keep an open mind:

B1. Probationary plates: We received a mixed response on this issue. Members of the public who commented were almost all in favour of the introduction of probationary ("P") plates for newly qualified drivers, but the main representative organisations were more guarded. In the Government's view, the case for introducing "P" plates is still not proven, though we are prepared to consider it further when the full results are available of a study into "Restricted" plates in Northern Ireland.

B2. Increasing age for full licence to 18: Only a minority of consultees supported this, and a number of disadvantages were highlighted. We shall not take this proposal further.

The consultation document also described 10 further possible measures which the Government had considered but were not minded to pursue. While some of these attracted a fair measure of support, particularly from individuals who responded, the majority of consultees accepted our reasons for rejecting them.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. MacGregor: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what authority and under what regulation his Department advised the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust that the conditions laid down in enclosure statutes were only of permissive character; and if he will make it his policy that his Department will not disregard such statutory requirements.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 1 February 1994]:* Because of the legal complexities involved in this issue, I will write to the hon. Member with an answer to his question as soon as possible. I will arrange for a copy of that reply to be placed in the Library.

Projects and Contracts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list all contracts awarded by his Department to *(a)* financial, *(b)* political and *(c)* other consultants without competitive bidding (i) for each of the past five years and (ii) as a total the number, and the cost over the same period;

(2) if he will publish a list of all contracts or projects which are planned to be the subject of competitive bids by *(a)* financial, *(b)* political or *(c)* other consultants, the nature of each contract or project and the date envisaged by his Department for inviting bids; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 19 January 1994]:* I am placing the information in the Library.

Competitive bids are normally sought in awarding consultant commissions. The main reasons for awards without competitive bidding are; specialist nature of work; need for continuity by extending an existing contract, urgency, and the small-scale nature of some projects. Fee bidding was introduced as normal policy for road schemes consultancies in 1991.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the consumer panel.

Mr. Soames: Currently the members are:

Mr. Phillip Bell
Mrs. Judy Brander
Mrs. Dorothy Craig
Mrs. Hariet Kimbell
Ms Suzi Leather
Mrs. Jean McVitty
Mr. Gareth Morgan
Mrs. Karen Powell
Mrs. Maeve Robinson
Mrs. Noel Whamond

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Consumers Committee for England and Wales under the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958.

Mr. Soames: The members of the committee are:

Mrs. Janet Lawrence *(chairman)*
Miss Beata Brookes
Mrs. Marjorie Grimes
Mrs. Barbara Hawkins
Mr. John Murphy
Mrs. Evelyn Rose
Mr. John Tracy

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis.

Mr. Soames: The members currently appointed to the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis are:

Mr. M. T. Thomasin-Foster *(chairman)*
Mr. R. Baker

Lady Bolitho
Mr. C. P. Booty
Mr. H. V. Thompson
Dr. A. J. Mitchell-Jones
Professor H. E. M. Kay
Dr. D. W. Macdonald
Dr. W. Cresswell
Dr. Hans Kruuk
Mr. P. J. de Vries
Dr. J. L. Stanford
Mr. J. Sterry
Mr. E. R. Thomas
Professor S. Harris
Dr. M. J. M. Rowland

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Farm Animal Welfare Council.

Mr. Soames: The current membership of the Farm Animal Welfare Council is as follows.

Professor Sir Colin R. W. Spedding CBE—*chairman*
Mr. C. B. Atkinson
Mr. R. H. Baker
Dr. M. Baxter
Mr. G. Berry
Rev. A. L. Birbeck MBE
Dr. W. J. M. Black JP
Professor D. M. Broom
Mr. H. A. R. Dewhirst
Mr. T. Harris
Mrs. F. F. Hodgson
Mr. C. Hollands
Mrs. J. A. MacArthur Clark
Mr. R. Macpherson
Miss C. A. Milburn
Dr. M. Pattison
Mr. F. E. Sheidls MBE
Mr. P. F. Staines
Mr. J. G. Thomas
Mrs. J. Turnbull JP
Mr. A. Watkins
Mrs. T. Wickham
Dr. A. C. Winter

Tobacco

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the United Kingdom contribution to common agricultural policy expenditure on tobacco subsidies in the last three years.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom contributes to the EC budget as a whole, not to particular parts of it such as CAP expenditure on tobacco. We do not produce or store tobacco and therefore have no receipts. Our contributions would benefit in full from the abatement agreed at Fontainebleau and in effect, our net contribution to the tobacco regime could be estimated to be at around six per cent. of EC expenditure. Community expenditure on tobacco amounted to 1,330 mecu (£931 million) in 1991, 1,223 mecu (£873 million) in 1992 and 1,165 mecu (£917 million) in 1993. Budgetary ecu rates: 1991 £1=1·4291 ecu; 1992 £1=1·4131 ecu; 1993 £1=1·2700 ecu.

The effect on expenditure on tobacco resulting from the reform of the regime agreed in 1992 will not begin to show in expenditure figures until at least 1994 and the regime is to be reviewed again in 1996. Nevertheless, tobacco is still the most heavily subsidised CAP crop per hectare and we will continue to press for greater reforms.

Quarantine

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she considers animal quarantine regulations a suitable subject for subsidiarity.

Mr. Soames: The principles of subsidiarity apply to this area, as in all Community activity. Moreover, the Government do not consider that animal health measures fall within the Community's exclusive competence. We accept, however, that the harmonisation of animal health controls on the movement of animals between member states, which are designed to further the single market, is appropriate.

I am satisfied that the current harmonised EC animal health trade rules provide adequate safeguards against the introduction of disease and that post-import quarantine of farm livestock imported from other member states is not necessary.

Scrapie

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the number of cases of scrapie in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: Scrapie was made a notifiable disease on 1 January 1993 to meet the requirements of EC directive 91/68 on animal health conditions governing intra-community trade in sheep and goats.

The following cases of scrapie in Great Britain have been confirmed by laboratory analysis in the period requested (to 31 January 1994):

	Sheep	*Goats*
1985	143	N/R
1986	153	N/R
1987	176	N/R
1988	211	N/R
1989	246	6
1990	334	15
[1]1991	896	12
[1]1992	589	6
[2]1993	282	3
[2]1994	22	0

N/R = not recorded.
[1] In 1991 and 1992 voluntary reporting of cases of scrapie in sheep was encouraged to obtain material for spongiform encephalopathy research.
[2] Further laboratory analysis of suspect cases of scrapie is not usually carried out for two years after the disease has been confirmed in a flock. These figures therefore indicate the number of flocks confirmed to be infected, but give no indication of the number of cases of scrapie in those flocks.

Pig Producers

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations she has made to the French Government and the European Commission on the subject of financial assistance given to Danish, Belgian and German pig farmers;

(2) what action she is taking to determine the legality of French Government aid to their pig producers;

(3) what consideration has been given by her Ministry to the introduction of a scheme to compensate British pig producers who are disadvantaged by unfair competition from European Union pig producers;

(4) what measures she is considering introducing to improve the economic prospects for British pig producers;

(5) if she will summarise the evidence she has prepared for the European Commission on state aids given to pig producers in other EU states.

Mr. Jack: The support measures available to pig producers under the CAP are very limited and pigmeat producers are dependent on the market for their returns.

Aid programmes paid for by national governments are only permitted with the approval of the European Commission. Rumours of aids to pig producers in other member states are widespread, but we have firm evidence only in respect of a scheme in France. My right hon. Friend has already pressed the Commission to determine the legal status of the aids in accordance with article 93 of the treaty and to take whatever action is necessary. She has also raised the matter on numerous occasions in the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

The Government legitimately help the pig industry through the funding of research and development. Spending by the Agriculture Departments on the pig sector in the current year amounts to £14 million. A further sum is spent by the Agriculture and Food Development Council on animal science, some of which is of direct benefit to the pig industry.

Organophosphorous Sheep Dips

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she expects to be able to announce the names and past relevant experience of all the members of the panel to evaluate research into reports of long-term effects arising from exposure to organophosphorous sheep dips; and whether they have past or present declarable interests in the manufacture of such sheep dips.

Mr. Soames: I announced the appointment of Dr. D. N. Bateman, medical director of the Northern region drug and therapeutic centre, as chairman of the Veterinary Products Committee's medical panel, in my reply to the hon. Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) on 3 February at column *817-18*. Prospective members of the panel are currently being approached with a view to establishing their willingness to serve. A further announcement about the membership of the panel, and any declarable interests which members may have, will be made as soon as possible.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the extent to which the Government are fulfilling their obligations under EU legislation with respect to the safe disposal of organophosphate sheep dips.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government's obligations with respect to the disposal of sheep dip under EU legislation are implemented through the Water Resources Act 1991 in England and Wales and the Control of Pollution Act 1974, as amended by schedule 23 of the Water Act 1989, in Scotland. These controls are further supplemented by detailed guidance in the Codes of Good Agricultural Practice published by the Ministry and the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

The Government are also undertaking a review to assess whether any further measures might be necessary to ensure the safe disposal of sheep dips.

Goosanders

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether English Nature has given its approval for the issuing of licences to kill goosanders on the river Wharfe on the Bolton Abbey estate, north Yorkshire; how many goosanders have been approved to be shot; what evidence has been submitted to her Department in support of this application; and if she will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Soames: As a licensing authority under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Ministry is responsible for the issue of these licences and they must not be unreasonably withheld.

On receipt of the applications from the Bolton Abbey estate, ADAS, the Ministry's wildlife advisers followed their usual practice and notified English Nature of the applications and invited them to comment. The views of English Nature were made known in its press release of 14 January 1994, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Those views were given full weight in making the licensing decision.

The applicant must provide sufficient evidence of serious damage being caused to the fishery and show that other methods of non-lethal scaring are ineffective or impractical and not just difficult to implement. The Ministry cannot disclose to third parties information provided in support of a licence application which is commercial in nature, such as the extent of any financial loss being suffered by the fishery.

Two licences have been issued for the Bolton Abbey estate to shoot goosanders as an aid to scaring; one licence, covering a 7.5 mile stretch of the River Wharfe, is to shoot up to 10 birds between 1 October 1993 and 28 February 1994; the other is to shoot up to four birds on the Bolton Abbey trout hatchery between 1 January to 28 February 1994.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research work has been carried out on the river Wharfe to examine the impact on fish stocks of breeding goosanders.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry has not conducted any formal research studies on the river Wharfe. However, on receipt of the applications from the Bolton Abbey estate, an officer of ADAS, the Ministry's wildlife advisers, visited the applicants to assess their case. English Nature was advised of the applications and were invited to comment. The Ministry's own fisheries experts at Lowestoft were also asked for their comments. ADAS then provided a report on the visit with recommendations to the Ministry.

Once the licences were issued, ADAS began making monitoring visits and have been providing reports to the Ministry. They will continue to do this during the period of validity of the licence. The licensees are also required to provide a report to the Ministry of the action taken under their licence and, where possible, to retain the carcases of birds shot. These will be collected by ADAS and sent to our fisheries laboratory at Lowestoft where the contents of the gut will be examined. All of this information collected as part of the licensing arrangements will enable the Ministry to keep under review its policy on the issue of such licences.

Milk Marketing Scheme

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the last date for the ending of the milk marketing scheme.

Mrs. Shephard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have made an order under section 1(3) of the Agriculture Act 1993. The order extends the deadline for the revocation of the England and Wales milk marketing scheme from 1 October 1994 to 1 January 1995. This will enable the Milk Marketing Board to proceed with its intention to propose a new vesting date of 1 November 1994.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list those topics on which it is not her practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if she will list any recent changes in the practice of her Department.

Mr. Jack: This Department's practice is as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Less-favoured Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answers of 17 December, *Official Report*, column *1068* and 11 January, *Official Report*, column *63*, what is the average number of *(a)* hill cows and *(b)* hill sheep eligible for hill livestock compensatory allowances she considers necessary for a less-favoured area farm to be considered a full-time commercial business for the purposes of the farm business survey; and what hectarage and acreage she considers to be a very small farm.

Mrs. Shephard *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* To be classified as a full-time commercial farm in the less-favoured areas of England, a farm must have at least a minimum level of agricultural activity. On the assumption that, apart from grass, there are no other crops or livestock on the farm, this minimum is currently equivalent to either 30 hill cows, or between 200 and 250 hill ewes.

In practice, almost all farms have other crops or livestock so that many with fewer than 30 hill cows or fewer than 200 to 250 hill ewes will exceed the minimum and will therefore be classified as full time.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Car Parking (Orange Badge Holders)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what action he plans to take to ensure that car parking spaces associated with the House of Commons and parliamentary buildings which are reserved for orange badge holders are not misused by other drivers.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Although there are no places specifically set aside for orange badge scheme holders, there are 12 parking spaces in Star Chamber Court and three in the Norman Shaw car park reserved for vehicles driven or used by photo-identity pass holders who have disabilities and have registered with the Serjeant at Arms.

Those who use the other parking spaces in Star Chamber Court have recently been reminded not to use the spaces reserved for disabled people. The area is checked on a random basis and the Serjeant at Arms has been requested to draw any case of continuing misuse to the attention of the Administration Committee.

Data and Video Network

Mr. Waller: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the parliamentary data and video network to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 14 March to Friday 18 March.

Child Care

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he will name the consultants engaged to carry out the survey into child care needs in the House; and what has been the total cost incurred to date.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The survey of potential demand for child care services for the House was conducted by Research Services Ltd. The fee paid is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee when he expects to announce the results of the questionnaire on child care facilities sent out last year; what was the total number of hon. Members, Members' staff and staff of the House who were sent a questionnaire, listed by *(a)* females and *(b)* males; how they were selected; and what proportion of those sent a questionnaire returned it.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Administration Committee expects to receive the consultants' report on the survey of potential demand for child care facilities in the very near future. It intends to examine the results and will then consider what recommendations to make in respect of future policy.

The questionnaire was sent to 4,105 Members, Members' staff, staff of the House and other support staff who work for both Houses. It is not possible to determine how many of that number were male or female.

Results of the survey itself will be made known once they have been considered by the Committee and the Commission.

Plain English Campaign

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Plain English Campaign to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 21 March to Friday 25 March.

Souvenir Kiosk

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee what was the turnover of the kiosk run by the Refreshment Department for the most recent financial year; and what was the turnover for the months of November and December in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993.

Mr. Colin Shepherd *[holding answer 31 January 1994]:* The turnover from all sources for souvenirs in financial year 1992-93 was £652,087 excluding VAT. On the same basis the other information requested is as follows:

	1992 £	*1993* £
November	95,642	80,445
December	175,735	212,260
Total	271,377	292,705

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will publish for each service that has been market tested in his Department in 1993 *(a)* the cost of the testing process, including consultancy costs, *(b)* the result of the test, *(c)* the name of the successful contractor, *(d)* the value and duration of the contract, *(e)* the number of staff involved, *(f)* estimated annual cost reductions and *(g)* whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were deemed to apply.

Mr. Newton: No service in the Privy Council Office has been market tested.

WALES

Public Appointments

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many names there are on the register of appointees to non-departmental public bodies in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: An updated list of appointments at 1 December is available in the Library of the House. There are 784 appointments and 14 vacancies.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many names there were on the list of potential appointees to non-departmental public bodies in Wales in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The departmental register of candidates for appointment is a running list to which names are frequently added. Information is not available on a calendar year basis. Currently there are 4,421 names on the register.

Hunting Hounds

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to raise with the Masters of Foxhounds Association the practice of feeding of uncooked meat and offal from fallen and casualty stock to hunt hounds.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans to discuss this matter with the Masters of Foxhounds Association.

Executive Appeals

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the subjects on which his Department formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Redwood: Next steps agency chief executives are usually asked to reply to parliamentary questions about the day-to-day operational matters of their agency and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in their agency's framework document.

Temporary Employment

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were in temporary employment at the latest available date; and what is the proportion of those in temporary employment as a percentage of the total number registered for employment for each employment travel-to-work area and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Redwood: According to latest estimates from the summer 1993 Labour Force Survey there were 84,000 employees in temporary employment in Wales. This represents 8.5 per cent. of all employees in employment. Comprehensive data are not available on numbers registered for employment. Estimates are not available for travel-to-work areas.

Council Rents

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the proposed notional rent for 1994-95 for each district council in Wales, together with the average for Wales; and what is the percentage difference for each council and for Wales, between these notional rents and the corresponding actual rents in 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is set out in the following table:

Local authority	*Actual rent 1993-94*[1] £ p	*Estimated average weekly notional local authority rent in 1994-95*[2] £ p	*Percentage difference: notional rent, 1994-95 on actual rent, 1993-94*
Aberconwy	28·93	29·07	0·5
Alyn and Deeside	26·06	29·46	13·0
Arfon	29·80	30·65	2·8
Blaenau Gwent	32·81	31·13	−5·1
Brecknock	28·34	31·22	10·2
Cardiff	34·63	36·13	4·3

Local authority	Actual rent 1993-94[1] £ p	Estimated average weekly notional local authority rent in 1994-95[2] £ p	Percentage difference: notional rent, 1994-95 on actual rent, 1993-94
Carmarthen	31·06	32·03	3·1
Ceredigion	32·30	31·70	−1·9
Colwyn	28·24	28·57	1·2
Cynon Valley	29·48	29·67	0·7
Delyn	29·05	30·27	4·2
Dinefwr	23·78	28·33	19·1
Dwyfor	27·35	28·24	3·3
Glyndwr	25·40	29·67	16·8
Islwyn	33·18	30·84	−7·0
Llanelli	34·65	27·37	−21·0
Lliw Valley	28·50	29·67	4·1
Meirionnydd	30·07	27·63	−8·1
Merthyr Tydfil	30·85	27·40	−11·2
Monmouth	35·72	37·82	5·9
Montgomeryshire	30·69	33·75	10·0
Neath	30·95	28·01	−9·5
Newport	35·06	36·31	3·6
Ogwr	32·12	31·80	−1·0
Port Talbot	32·36	29·43	−9·1
Preseli Pembrokeshire	28·69	30·17	5·2
Radnorshire	33·48	32·75	−2·2
Rhondda	32·38	32·56	0·5
Rhuddlan	26·55	29·48	11·0
Rhymney Valley	34·75	31·44	−9·5
South Pembrokeshire	31·00	34·06	9·9
Swansea	31·10	28·75	−7·6
Taff Ely	33·19	28·67	−13·6
Torfaen	39·25	35·03	−10·7
Vale of Glamorgan	35·73	34·86	−2·4
Wrexham Maelor	26·09	27·86	6·8
Ynys Mon	29·44	28·81	−2·1
Wales	31·84	31·30	−1·7

Source: [1] Local authority subsidy claims.
[2] Welsh Office estimates.

Science and Engineering Graduates

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the number of graduates with professional science and engineering qualifications employed in industry in Wales at the latest available date.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Reliable estimates are not available.

Housing

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many houses for renting *(a)* Tai Cymru and *(b)* other housing associations in Wales have developed on mainly private estates in each year since 1991-92;

(2) what are the figures for underspending by housing associations in Wales for each year since 1991-92;

(3) how many houses from the private sector have been bought by housing associations in Wales for renting in each year since 1991-92 and 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is primarily a matter for Housing for Wales. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member and I shall place a copy of his reply in the Library of the House.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the guidelines to housing associations on buying houses from the private sector; what assessment he has made as to whether they are sufficiently flexible to ensure that there is a balance of rented accommodation and privately owned houses provided in communities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Purchases from the private sector need the approval of Housing for Wales. In determining a particular application Housing for Wales will take into account both the economic and the social implications.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the housing allocation policies of Welsh local housing authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have received 31 responses to the Department's consultation exercise on allocation of council housing, policies and procedure. I have asked the housing management advisory panel for Wales to prepare a good practice guide for local authorities taking account of those responses. Responses to the Department's consultation paper, "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies", have been invited by 18 March.

Police Reforms

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how the Government will determine the share which the new police authorities proposed for Wales in the White Paper on police reforms—Cm 2281—will have of non-domestic rate revenues.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am still considering the arrangements for distributing non-domestic rate resources

to the new police authorities. I will discuss my proposals with the Home Secretary and the Welsh local authority associations through the forum of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. Currently non-domestic rates are distributed amongst local authorities on the basis of resident population.

Hospital Staff (Redundancies)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of redundancies among national health service hospital staff *(a)* by grade and *(b)* by reason for each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Sheltered Accommodation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many units of sheltered accommodation have been provided by *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* housing associations and *(c)* health trusts for people with mental and physical disabilities in Wales; and if he will give these statistics for each local authority for each year since 1991-92.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on newly built sheltered accommodation is not held centrally.

Wind Power

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what circulars or other guidance have been published by his Department to assist local planning authorities when considering applications for wind power installations.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Guidance is contained in the annex to Planning Policy Guidance Note 22, "Renewable Energy", which was published jointly by the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment in February 1993.

Welsh Language

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much additional finance has been provided to teach Welsh as a second language to students of constituent colleges of the university of Wales for each year since 1988.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales has made £314,500 available to colleges of the University of Wales in 1993-94 for the provision of Welsh courses for adults. Information for earlier years, when the University of Wales was funded by the Universities Funding Council, is not held centrally.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he is making within the Welsh Office to submit a Welsh language scheme as required by the Welsh Language Act 1993; on what date he will submit the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is too early to indicate on what date a scheme might be submitted to the Welsh Language Board. The Department's scheme will need to take into account the statutory guidelines which the board will be preparing. A comprehensive internal review of the Department's policy and practice regarding the use of Welsh is currently being conducted. This will be of considerable benefit in formulating our language scheme.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Redwood: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

National Health Service

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria are used for allocating NHS resources to areas of high deprivation in Wales; and what resources are available to those areas which meet the criteria.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The current formula for assessing the distribution of revenue resources to health authorities in Wales was introduced in 1991. This takes into account the higher levels of sickness that are associated with socially deprived areas by the morbidity weighting within the formula.

Quangos (Membership)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has concerning the number of active Conservative party members currently sitting as members of quangos in Wales.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* I do not know how many people currently holding public appointments to non-departmental public bodies in Wales are active Conservative party members.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Indonesian military personnel and Indonesian state employees working on defence-related matters received support through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the past 10 years to study in Britain; and through which programmes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Indonesian military personnel have over the years attended a range of developmental and technical training courses in the United Kingdom. Details of the training, including numbers involved, are regarded as confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Indonesia.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Indonesian military personnel have been funded to study in Britain since 1975; through which Government Departments they have been funded; and what subjects they have been studying.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Indonesian military personnel have, over the years, attended a range of developmental and technical training courses in the United Kingdom. Details of the training, including numbers involved, are regarded as confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Indonesia.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring he is undertaking as to the use to which Hawk aircraft supplied by the United Kingdom to Indonesia are being or have been put; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: It would be impracticable on a regular basis to monitor, after transfer, equipment which we have licensed for export. We are, however, ready where necessary to ask recipient countries, on a confidential basis, about the location and use of defence equipment we have supplied. We have no evidence that Hawk aircraft are being or have been used for repressive purposes against the civil population in Indonesia and East Timor. Nor do we believe that Hawk, or any other items of British equipment, have been or are likely to be used against the civilian population in Indonesia and East Timor. The Indonesian Government have given us assurances that Hawk aircraft will not be used for internal security purposes.

Military Personnel (Scholarships)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many military personnel have been funded to study under Foreign and Commonwealth Office scholarships from *(a)* Indonesia, *(b)* Jordan, *(c)* Ecuador, *(d)* Malaysia, *(e)* Nigeria, *(f)* Oman and *(g)* India in the past 10 years; and what subjects they have been studying.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Military personnel are attending a range of developmental and technical training courses in the United Kingdom. Details of the training, including numbers involved, are regarded as confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Governments concerned.

Appointments

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria were used in the appointments of *(a)* Pauline Neville-Jones to the post of political director of the Foreign Office and *(b)* Paul Lever as chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee.

Mr. Goodlad: The selection board's criteria were the same as those used in any other apointments for officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—namely, their skills, experience and qualities as measured against the requirements of the job in question and the field of available candidates.

Statements (Translation)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide an English translation when he deposits in the Library statements made by other states speaking on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in other languages.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is not our usual policy to deposit statements in the Library that are not in English. When documents in other languages are deposited they are used to provide a translation and such translations are deposited as soon as they are available.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the agenda of the 1994 session of the conference on disarmament in Geneva; and how the quantity of work to be done in the conference on disarmament in 1994 has changed from that of previous years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The agenda of the conference on disarmament remains the same as in 1993, and the following ad hoc committees have again been established: nuclear test ban; effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; transparency in armaments; and prevention of an arms race in outer space. The overall quantity of work has not changed.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ensure that all statements made by representatives of Her Majesty's Government at the conference on disarmament are placed in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The working documents of the conference on disarmament contain verbatim texts of the statements of the delegates of all governments represented at the Conference, including those of Her Majesty's Government. Copies of these documents are normally placed in the Library.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration Her Majesty's Government are giving to offering an additional voluntary financial contribution to the costs of the 1995 non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference and the preparatory arrangements thereof.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Arrangements as to how costs for administration relating to the non-proliferation treaty extension and review conference are to be shared by states party to the treaty are currently being considered. However, as a co-depositary of the treaty, and in accordance with past practice, we have made clear our willingness to contribute significantly more to conference costs than would be the case under the regular United Nations budget scale.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's annual contribution to the costs of the conference on disarmament; and what consideration Her Majesty's Government are giving to offering an additional voluntary financial contribution towards these costs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom contributes to the costs of the conference on disarmament through its contribution to the United Nations regular budget from which the conference is fully funded. No voluntary contributions are made to the conference on disarmament.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the position of Her Majesty's Government on the appointment of Miguel Marin Bosch of Mexico to be chair of the ad hoc committee on a nuclear test ban at the conference on disarmament.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We shall work constructively in the committee, under Señor Marin Bosch's chairmanship, for an effective comprehensive test ban treaty.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given to the use of tactical air support for the opening of the humanitarian aid route between Split and Sarajevo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An aid route linking Split and Sarajevo via Gornji Vakuf is in regular use. Air support to open the route is thus not required.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to withdrawal of British forces from Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British forces will continue through the winter to support the UN in carrying out its humanitarian mandate. No decisions have yet been taken about the deployment of British forces thereafter.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what opportunities have arisen during recent NATO meetings to discuss the possible use of air strikes against Bosnian Croat forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The NATO summit on 10-11 January reaffirmed the readiness of the alliance to provide close air support for UNPROFOR throughout Bosnia.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis the decision was taken not to use air support for the protection of the United Nations safe haven at Mostar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: NATO has undertaken to make air power available to the UN Secretary General should he require it in support of the UNPROFOR mandate. The UN has not so far requested the use of this facility.

India (Human Rights)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received over human rights offences and disappearances in India; and what representations he has made to the Indian High Commissioner.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received various representations of human rights in India from a number of sources. We regularly raise our concerns with the Indian Government, including with the Indian high commissioner.

Canada (Environmental Protest)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Governments of Canada and British Columbia over the arrest of Cornelia Durrant, a British national, last November in connection with protests at Clayoquot Sound.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff in his Department are covered by statutory sick pay.

Mr. Goodlad: All staff in the Department are covered by statutory sick pay. FCO staff number 6,220 and ODA staff number 1,128: a total of 7,348.

Dual-use Machine Tools

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to raise at the next Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union the role of the Dresdner Bank in financing the export of dual-use machine tools from the European Communities to various countries in the middle east in breach of EC agreements on export control restrictions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. Bilateral channels exist to take up such matters as appropriate.

Colombia

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received over human rights offences and disappearances in Colombia; and what representations he has made to the Colombian ambassador.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We receive frequent representations. During my recent visit there I made clear to President Gaviria and his Government the concern felt in this country about human rights. We support the Colombian Government's efforts to tackle human rights abuses.

India

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will press the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva to express its concern at the human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir and to send a fact-finding mission to investigate and report on the situation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are concerned by the human rights situation in Kashmir, and shall continue to express our views clearly to the Indian Government. Our approach to Kashmir at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva will be closely co-ordinated with our European partners.

Land Mines (Export)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his EC counterparts to prevent the export of land mines.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There have been no discussions.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Government Communications Headquarters

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to involve the private sector in the work of GCHQ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: For many years GCHQ has used private sector contractors to provide various support services. There are no plans to change this practice.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards establishing a new scheme for St. Helenians to enable them to come to the United Kingdom for training and work experience.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

In order to mitigate the effects on the economy of St. Helena of the ending of the dependent territories quota scheme and in recognition of its unique position in being the only dependent territory in receipt of budgetary aid, the Government have decided to introduce a special arrangement, on a pilot basis, which will enable St. Helenians to come to this country to undertake training or work experience at a lower level than is normally permitted. The new arrangement will allow citizens of St. Helena to spend up to four years training towards vocational qualifications or up to two years gaining valuable work experience, while working with British businesses or other organisations. The Government hope that the new arrangement, which has been welcomed by the St. Helena Government, will benefit individuals and contribute to the economy of the island.

EMPLOYMENT

Fraud

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many civilians were found guilty of fraud in his Department in each year since 1989; and how many were dismissed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: One employee was convicted of fraud in 1990. The person concerned was dismissed.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his Department's policy for dealing with employees found guilty of fraud.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 1 February 1994]:* Employees convicted of fraud would be subject to internal disciplinary proceedings. Each case would be treated on its merits, but in serious cases the normal penalty would be dismissal.

Unemployed Benefit

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of Employment Service claimants were paid the correct sum within three working days of signing on in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 9 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the proportion of Employment Service claimants who were paid correctly and within three working days of signing in the last year for which figures are available.

The Employment Service (ES) monitors both the accuracy of awards of benefit and the promptness of all payments made. However, our definition and measurement of promptness of payment is "the despatch of a payment on the day entitlement is established". We do not, I am afraid, collect information about payments in the terms requested by your question.

In 1992-93 we paid 96·7 per cent. of our clients accurately, and 97·5 per cent. of our clients promptly.

This exceeded both our Annual Performance Agreement and internal management targets.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of clients of the Employment Service are offered the option of having money sent direct to a bank or building society account rather than receiving a girocheque.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 9 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the proportion of clients offered the option of being paid directly into a bank or building society account.

It may be helpful if I explain that automated credit transfer facilities for the payment of benefits is a feature of a new computer system (NUBS2). The system is being installed into our offices on a rolling programme, due to be completed in September 1994.

Currently about 70 per cent. of clients are served by the new system, all of whom can chose to have their money paid direct into a bank or building society account. At the moment approximately 42,000 clients receive their payment in this way.

I hope this is helpful.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when his Department published national citizens charter targets.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have not published any national citizens charter targets for the Department as a whole. However, individual services across the Employment Department group which deal directly with the public have set and published their standards and targets in charters or charter statements of service standards. They include:

Employment Service's job seeker's charter—published December 1991 and currently being revised.

Redundancy payments service charter—second edition published January 1993.

Advisory, Conciliatory and Arbitration Service commitment—published May 1992.

The Health and Safety Executive's booklets "HSE and You" and "HSE—Working for Employers"—published January 1994.

Customer Survey

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when his Department last carried out its most recent annual national customer survey; and how many local customer surveys were carried out in 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have not carried out a national customer satisfaction survey for the Department as a whole.

However, individual services within the Department carry out annual surveys to get their customers' views about the services they provide. They include the following:

Employment Service
Redundancy payments service
Health and Safety Executive
Skills and enterprise network
Statistical services division

In addition, the Employment Service will be carrying out local customer surveys in all ES jobcentres in the spring.

Jobcentres

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what proportion of jobcentres displayed local targets as at July 1993 on *(a)* waiting times, *(b)* telephone answering, *(c)* promptness and accuracy in benefit payments and *(d)* information on local labour markets; and in how many cases these targets were being met;

(2) what proportion of jobcentres displayed at July 1993 *(a)* the name of the local manager and *(b)* the name of the area manager.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Hugh Bayley dated 9 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about how many Employment Service local offices displayed standards and targets, how many local offices met the standards, and how many local offices displayed the name and address of the local manager and area manager in July 1993.

The Jobseeker's Charter sets out our aim for our local offices (1,300 July 1993) to display standards of service. Between July and September 1993, 92 per cent. of local offices displayed standards and targets.

The information you have asked for is as follows:

WAITING TIME:

Clients waiting no longer than the 10 minutes standard: 1,170 offices; 90 per cent.

TELEPHONE ANSWERING TIME:

Calls answered within the 30 seconds standard: 1,170 offices; 90 per cent.

PROMPTNESS OF PAYMENTS:

98 per cent. of payments were made on time; on accuracy of payments of benefit you will wish to know that in the quarter July to September 1993 96·9 per cent. of payments were accurate. This is against a national target of 96·5 per cent.

LOCAL LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION:

Each local office has a target for the number of vacancies and number of placings they must achieve. We do not collect information about how many offices reach their target, but nationally, in the first six months of the operating year 1993-94, we placed over 859,000 people. This is 10 per cent. above our profiled target for this period.

Turning to your second question, this information is not available centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However, I can assure you that all our local offices have been instructed to display the name and address of the local area managers.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of people attending jobcentres for advisory interviews in July 1993 saw the same person as they saw on their previous visit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 9 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about what proportion of people attending advisory interviews in July 1993 were seen by the same person as they saw on their previous visit.

Unfortunately this information is not available in the form you request it. My local offices now deliver advisory interviews through teams of five or six people who focus their activities on particular sections of the unemployed register. This allows more continuity of contact to make sure the service we offer our clients is structured and co-ordinated.

When they attend for an interview, clients are seen by someone from the same team and, wherever possible, by the same person.

We do not collect statistics about what proportion are seen by the same person. However, I can assure you that we do believe that the arrangements we have in place represent the best available levels of service and that we are continually looking for further improvements.

I hope this is helpful.

Earnings

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers have earnings *(a)* above the national insurance contributions maximum payments ceiling and *(b)* below the lower earnings limit; and how many of these are women.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that in April 1993 there were 2·9 million employees earning above the national insurance upper earnings limit and 3·2 million employees earning below the national insurance lower earnings limit. The corresponding numbers for women were 400,000 and 2·3 million respectively.

Sources: New earnings survey 1993—Employment Department.

Survey of personal income—Inland Revenue.

Disabled People

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disabled people are in employment classified by standard industrial category.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The labour force survey asks people of working age if they currently have any health problem or disability which limits the kind of paid work they can do. Estimates based on answers to this question will include people with short-term health problems and disabilities as well as those registered as disabled.

The latest labour force survey estimates of the number of such people in employment by industry are given in the table:

People with health problems or disabilities in employment
Great Britain

	Thousands
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	37
Energy and water supply	15
Manufacturing	296
Construction	94
Distribution, hotels and repairs	288
Transport and communication	97
Banking, financial and business services	131
Other services	428
TOTAL all industry sectors[1]	1,406

[1] Total includes people with work place outside Great Britain and those who did not state industry.
Source: Labour force survey, summer 1993—not seasonally adjusted.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disabled people are employed in *(a)* companies with between 20 and 99 employees, *(b)* companies with between 100 and 999 employees and *(c)* companies with over 1,000 employees.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available.

Brixham Jobcentre

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are employed by his Department in the Fish Quay office at Brixham, providing administrative support for the jobcentre; and what assessment he has made of the cost to public funds of relocating them together with another jobcentre into a single location.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 9 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of staff employed in the Brixham Jobcentre and the assessment of the cost of relocating them together with another Jobcentre to a single location.

Within the Fish Quay office, eight staff are providing administration support to the Jobcentre. The decision to rehouse them into a single site has been taken in principle only. Until all suitable options have been explored the costings cannot be determined.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration was given to the future relocation of the Brixham jobcentre in Fore street before public funds were used on refurbishing it; and how much was spent on the refurbishment in the last two years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 9 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the consideration given to the future relocation of Brixham Jobcentre prior to the public funds being spent on refurbishment, and how much was spent on refurbishment in the last two years.

The refurbishment of the Brixham Jobcentre was completed in October 1991, as part of the National Employment Service Integration Programme. Subsequently, an increase in the number of people using the office has prevented a full service from being offered. It has been decided, in principle, to rehouse the Jobcentre in order to offer a better service to people, locally. No funds have been spent on refurbishment in the last two years.

I hope this is helpful.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's Office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *725*.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive has three members:

Director General:
J. D. Rimington CB

Appointed by the Health and Safety Commission with the approval of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Deputy Director Generals:
Miss J. H. Bacon and Mr. D. C. T. Eves

Appointed by the Health and Safety Commission with the approval of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and after consultation with the director general.

Docks and Ports (Deaths)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaths have occurred in docks or ports in each year from 1989; and what was the name of the deceased and the date and place of death in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Fatal injuries occurring within the docks and harbours industry (a) Reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR), 1988-89—1992-93[1]

Year	*Number of deaths*
1988-89	10
1989-90	11
1990-91	2
1991-92	7
[1]1992-93	8

(a) As defined by (i) standard industrial classification 1968 minimum list headings 705 and 706 for the year 1988-89, (ii) standard industrial classification 1980 class 74 and activity heading 7630 for subsequent years.
[1] provisional.

It is not the policy of the Health and Safety Executive to disclose other information concerning fatalities without the knowledge and consent of the families concerned.

Community Action Scheme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the distribution of expenditure and places under the community action scheme in each standard region; and what are each region's figures as a percentage of the total.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 9 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about Community Action.

It may help if I explain that in the current financial year, £31·5 million has been made available to the Employment Services in order to set up and run Community Action. Of this £8·5 million has been allocated for programme expenditure, i.e., the money paid to providers contracted to deliver the programme. The attached table shows the regional breakdown of resource and allocation of places. This has been allocated to the nine Employment Service regions in direct proportion to the percentage of 12 months plus long-term unemployed people within each region.

A further £19 million of the budget allocation is used to cover the allowance payments to participants. Each participant on Community Action receives an allowance equivalent to their benefit entitlement plus £10 each week. This budget is held centrally. The remaining £4 million has been set aside to cover the costs of the Employment Service of setting up and running Community Action, the majority of this budget has been allocated to Employment Service regions on the same basis as the programmes money. A small proportion has, though, been retained centrally to cover Head Office running costs and the costs of producing forms and national publicity materials.

I hope this is helpful.

Table showing 1993-94 programme budget allocation and places for community action by employment service region

Region	*Programme allocation £*	*Number of places*	*Per cent. of total*
Northern	473,000	1,120	5·58
Yorkshire and Humberside	767,000	1,810	9·05
East Midlands and Eastern	761,000	1,800	8·98
London and South East	2,672,000	6,310	31·55
South West	613,000	1,450	7·24
Wales	400,000	940	4·72
West Midlands	929,000	2,190	10·97
North West	1,114,000	2,630	13·15
Scotland	742,000	1,750	8·76
Great Britain Total	8,470,000	20,000	100

Notes:

1. The average length of stay on community action is four months, therefore, 20,000 programme places would provide a total of 60,000 opportunities in a full year.
2. Additional amounts of £19 million to cover allowance payments to participants, and £4 million to cover ES running costs, are held centrally

Correspondence

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East will receive a reply to the letter he wrote on the Employment Service and enterprise councils on 28 July 1993, which was followed up by a reminder on 1 November 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Regrettably, no trace can be found of the hon. Member's letter of 28 July, nor his reminder of 1 November. I have written to the hon. Member offering a meeting at his earliest convenience.

Working Conditions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all proposed EC/EU measures of the past 10 years regarding working conditions which Her Majesty's Government *(a)* opposed and *(b)* supported.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* Since 1983, the Council of Ministers, including the UK, has agreed to over 50 measures relating to working conditions—covering measures in the field of employment law, social security arrangements and health and safety at work. The UK plays a full and constructive part in all negotiations on social affairs matters, adopting an approach on particular proposals or on individual parts of them, based on the Government's view of their merits, the need to achieve a sensible balance between social protection, competitiveness and employment growth, and the question of whether action is best taken by the Community or by member states. The UK has not voted against a single legislative proposal in the current EC social action programme and has one of the best implementation records of any member state. Details of measures adopted by the Council are contained in the "Directory of Community Legislation in Force", published by the, *Official Journal* of the European Communities, the 22nd edition of which is available in the Library.

Health and Safety

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all current effective legislation affecting health and safety matters.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* I have arranged for a list to be placed in the Library and will send a personal copy to the hon. Member.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* There is one shredding machine in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's office. Information is not held centrally for the numbers in the Department as a whole.

ENVIRONMENT

Empty Housing

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the proportion of residential housing stock owned by *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* housing associations, *(c)* private owners and *(d)* Government Departments, which were empty in each year from 1979.

Sir George Young: The numbers of their own dwellings reported by local authorities and housing associations in England as vacant on 1 April in each year from 1979 to 1993 were as follows:

Local authorities[1] at 1 April

	Management vacants (000s)[2]	*Other vacants (000s)*	*Total vacants (000s)*	*Total as a percentage of all LA dwellings*
1979	n/a	n/a	100	2·2
1980	n/a	n/a	100	2·1
1981	n/a	n/a	97	2·0
1982	n/a	n/a	100	2·1
1983	n/a	n/a	114	2·4
1984	n/a	n/a	113	2·5
1985	n/a	n/a	117	2·6
1986	n/a	n/a	113	2·6
1987	54	59	112	2·5
1988	51	52	103	2·4
1989	51	50	101	2·4
1990	51	48	99	2·5
1991	43	40	83	2·1
1992	40	34	74	1·9
1993	40	31	71	1·9

[1] The figures for the years up to 1986 exclude vacant dwellings owned by authorities situated outside their own area.
[2] Available for letting immediately or after minor repairs.
Source: Annual HIP1 returns.

Housing associations[1] at 31 March:

	Management vacants (000s)[2]	*Other vacants (000s)*	*Total vacants (000s)*	*Total as a percentage of all HA dwellings*
1979	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981	n/a	n/a	28	6·9
1982	n/a	n/a	32	7·7
1983	n/a	n/a	31	7·1
1984	n/a	n/a	27	5·5
1985	n/a	n/a	26	5·5
1986	n/a	n/a	26	5·2
1987	n/a	n/a	24	4·8
1988	n/a	n/a	24	4·7
1989	8	14	22	4·2
1990	7	13	20	3·5
1991	7	9	16	2·7
1992	7	9	16	2·5
1993[3]	7	10	17	2·4

[1] The figures for 1981 to 1988 are for England and Wales.
[2] Available for letting immediately or after minor repairs.
[3] Excludes some 10,500 dwellings that were purchased under the November 1992 Housing Market Package and were management vacants on 31st March 1993
Source: Annual HAR10/1 returns.
n/a = not available.

In addition to providing information on those of their own dwellings that are vacant, local authorities in England are also asked to provide estimates of the numbers of private sector and other public sector vacant dwellings in their area on their annual housing investment programme returns. Estimates of the proportions of private sector dwellings that are vacant, based on these data and including estimates for those authorities which did not provide the information, are set out in the table. These proportions should be treated with care as there are doubts about the quality of some of the estimates provided by authorities.

Data on vacant Government Department-owned dwellings have been collected from Departments in recent years and the proportions reported as vacant are set out in the table. Corresponding figures for earlier years are not available. Most of the Government Departments' voids are Ministry of Defence properties. External consultants advised MOD that in order to meet the demand for married accommodation from entitled service personnel an overall 9 per cent. management margin of vacant properties, excluding those held vacant for major works or deployment, should be maintained. The task force on Government Departments' empty houses was set up to help bring this property back into use, and it is expected to present its final report to Ministers shortly.

	Private sector (other than housing associations) percentage	*Government Departments percentage*
1979	4·0	n/a
1980	4·1	n/a
1981	4·1	n/a
1982	4·3	n/a
1983	4·2	n/a
1984	4·2	n/a
1985	4·1	n/a
1986	4·1	n/a
1987	4·1	n/a
1988	4·1	n/a
1989	4·1	18
1990	4·0	15
1991	4·2	13
1992	4·6	12
1993	5·0	15

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of organisations representing housing co-operatives to discuss funding and strategy; what is his policy regarding the development of housing co-operatives; what criteria he applies when determining financial assistance to housing co-operatives; what plans he has to encourage the development of housing co-operatives; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Arrangements for the development and funding of housing association co-operatives in England are the responsibility of the Housing Corporation and are set out in the corporation's housing co-operative strategy, which was published in March 1993. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House. In the field of local authority housing, my Department is currently providing grant support for the development of 85 tenant management organisations including co-operatives. Details of the criteria for grants to such organisations will be made available in the near future, in the context of the new right-to-manage legislation.

Housing

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to repeal any part of subsection (i) of section 2 of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to paragraph 12.1 of the consultation paper "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies", which states that we have no plans to alter the categories of priority need.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the consultees to whom the consultation paper on access to local authority and housing association tenancies has been sent.

Sir George Young: Approximately 4,000 copies of the consultation paper have been sent out. Recipients include all English local housing authorities, the local authority associations, each hon. Member of this House with an English constituency, the Housing Corporation, the 200 largest housing associations operating in England, and a wide range of organisations with an interest in housing in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of *(a)* owner-occupiers, *(b)* council tenants, *(c)* housing association tenants and *(d)* private sector tenants, including (i) protected tenancies and (ii) other tenancies; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The most recent information on the main tenure breakdown is from the 1992 Labour Force Survey. It shows that in England in 1992 there were an estimated:

13,200,000 owner occupiers
3,800,000 council tenants
600,000 housing association tenants
1,800,000 private sector tenants

My reply to my hon. Friend on 18 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *578*, gave a provisional estimate from the first half year of data collection from the new survey of English housing of about 350,000 protected tenancies in England in 1993. This remains the current estimate. An equivalent figure for 1992 is not available.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for 1978-79 and each subsequent year for which data are available, the total number of dwellings let to new tenants by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations, and of these, in each case, the number let to (i) homeless applicants and (ii) applicants from the waiting list, and the number which were first lettings of (iii) newly built and (iv) newly modernised buildings.

Sir George Young: The numbers of local authority lets to new tenants in England and the numbers of these lets which were to *(a)* households accepted under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 or the Housing Act 1985 and *(b)* applicants from the waiting list are given in the table. No information is collected centrally on lettings of newly built or newly modernised local authority dwellings.

Thousands

		Local authority lettings	
	New lettings	*Of which to homeless households*	*Of which to waiting list applicants*
1978-79	289	38	185
1979-80	275	41	171
1980-81	275	44	174
1981-82	251	45	167
1982-83	256	49	173
1983-84	246	49	161
1984-85	240	54	156
1985-86	247	63	153
1986-87	244	67	149
1987-88	242	74	142
1988-89	236	73	139
1989-90	229	80	125
1990-91	240	97	126
1991-92	239	109	112
1992-93	230	104	111

Source: HIP1 returns.

The available information on housing associations lettings to new tenants in England is set out in the table. The figures for new lettings in the years before 1989-90 are estimates.

Housing association lettings

(000s)

	New lettings[1]	*Of which to households accepted as homeless by local authorities*	*First lettings to new tenants newly built*	*newly rehabilitated*
1978-79	34	n/a	n/a	n/a
1979-80	37	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980-81	42	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981-82	43	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982-83	45	n/a	n/a	n/a
1983-84	47	n/a	n/a	n/a
1984-85	49	n/a	n/a	n/a
1985-86	51	n/a	n/a	n/a
1986-87	52	n/a	n/a	n/a
1987-88	54	n/a	n/a	n/a
1988-89	57	n/a	n/a	n/a
1989-90	60	n/a	n/a	n/a
1990-91	63	9	14	3
1991-92	71	15	20	3
[2]1992-93	91	23	29	3

[1]Figures for the number of housing association new lets in years before 1989-90 are estimates based on the data for England and Wales available for these years.

[2]Information on the number of first lettings of newly built and newly rehabilitated properties in 1992-93 that were to new tenants is provisional.

Sources: New lettings and new lettings to homeless applicants—Housing Corporation HAR10/1.
First lettings of newly built/rehabilitated dwellings—National Federation of Housing Associations CORE database.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the actual numbers of dwellings which were *(a)* privately-owned, *(b)* rented from local authorities, *(c)* rented from housing associations and *(d)* rented from the private sector for 1970, 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: Estimates of the stock of dwellings in England by type of tenure appear in "Housing and Construction Statistics, Great Britain". Figures for December 1970 appear in the 1970-1980 annual edition, table 107, those for 1979 are in the 1979-1989 edition, in table 9.3 and those for 1992, with provisional June 1993 figures, are in part 2 of the June 1993 quarterly edition, table 2.23.

Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Water Quality

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has reached agreement with the European Commission on changes to the requirements imposed on the United Kingdom by European Community laws on water quality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The European Council in December asked the Commission to bring forward as soon as possible four framework directives to replace parts of existing Community laws on water quality. We welcome this decision to make water legislation consistent with subsidiarity and up-to-date science. The Commission and the Council must now ensure that the new and revised directives meet these criteria and are confined to essential quality and health parameters. Existing directives will remain in place until the Commission has brought forward its proposals and substitute directives have been agreed by the Council after consultation with the European Parliament.

Landfill Sites

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated reduction in waste sent to landfill sites in 1992-93 and 1993-94 because of the changes made by the packaging industry *(a)* throughout England and *(b)* in west Yorkshire.

Mr. Atkins: This information is not available. However, the producer responsibility group, in its report "Real Value, from Packaging Waste", presented to Ministers on 7 February, indicated that it would monitor this in future. A copy of the report is in the Library.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated saving of waste to landfill sites because of recycling of waste materials and incineration by west Yorkshire for the period 1 April 1992 to 1 April 1993 to 1 April 1994.

Mr. Atkins: This information is not currently available. However, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy produces an annual report on waste disposal statistics for local authorities and data for 1992-93 are due to be published by the end of this financial year. I have asked the institute to notify the hon. Member when the report is published. Provided the appropriate authorities reply to the institute's request for information, the information sought by the hon. Member should be provided by the report.

"London: Making the Best Better"

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses his Department received to the consultation paper "London: Making the Best Better".

Sir George Young: Responses are still coming in, but a total of 10,000 completed questionnaires had been received by the end of January 1994.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to *(a)* analyse and *(b)* publish the results of the consultation on his Department's publication "London: Making the Best Better".

Sir George Young: Analysis of the responses to "London: Making the Best Better" is in progress and we aim to publish a digest of the results in March.

Benzene

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department has made of which are the main sources of exposure to benzene vapour in the environment; and if he will quantify the contribution made by each of those sources.

Mr. Atkins: The main sources of exposure to benzene vapour in the environment arise from the benzene content of ambient air and, in smokers, from cigarette smoke. Of the former, the greater proportion arises from the use, production and distribution of petrol. The recent report of the expert panel on air quality standards estimated that 78 per cent. of benzene emissions in the United Kingdom in 1991 arose from petrol engine exhausts. Cigarette smoke contains benzene and this may be the main source of exposure for a heavy smoker.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has given to the letter from the president of the Nuclear Control Institute in regard to the economic viability of reprocessing at THORP; and when he received the letter.

Mr. Atkins: The President of the Nuclear Control Institute's letter was received on 2 February. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be replying shortly.

North Yorkshire County Council

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff were employed by the education department of North Yorkshire county council in the year before the implementation of the local management of schools; and what is the current level of employment in the department.

Mr. Baldry: North Yorkshire county council education department employed 7,763 full-time and 9,617 part-time staff in June 1989 and 6,521 full-time and 8,685 part-time staff in June 1993. The figures for June 1993 exclude staff in institutions which transferred to the Further Education Funding Council in April 1993.

Local management of schools was introduced in April 1990. Staff in locally managed schools remain employees of the local authority.

New Towns

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the contributions made by the Commission for New Towns to each former new town local authority for promotional activities each year since 1988.

Mr. Baldry: There have been no contributions by the commission to local authorities for promotional activities since 1988 although various promotion agencies, which include local authority representation, have received such contributions.

Inner City Areas

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been made to institutions of the European Communities regarding the application of community funds to the social and infrastructural re-invigoration of inner-city areas.

Mr. Baldry: The Government promoted a powerful case for increased assistance from the structural funds for inner city areas. As a result, Merseyside has gained objective 1 status from January 1994. Other inner city areas, including for the first time parts of London, have gained objective 2 status. We were disappointed that some urban areas proposed by the Government were omitted from the list of eligible areas agreed by the Commission. However, at 76 per cent. of our original bid for objective 2 funding, the United Kingdom has done better than almost every other member state.

Sponsor Ministers

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who is the sponsor Minister for *(a)* Birmingham Sandwell and Walsall, *(b)* Wolverhampton, *(c)* Nottingham, Rugby and Leicester, *(d)* Sheffield and Hull, *(e)* Newcastle, Tyne and Weir, *(f)* Leeds, Bradford and Kirklees, *(g)* Bristol, *(h)* Plymouth and *(i)* Stoke on Trent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The list of sponsor Ministers was placed in the Library of the House on 4 November 1993, and a copy of the list has been sent to the hon. Member. There has been one change to the list since 4 November; following the move of Lady Denton to the Northern Ireland Office, her responsibilities as sponsor Minister for Leeds, Bradford and Batley have been taken over by the hon. Member for Skipton (Mr. Curry).

Public Bodies

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the number of appointments he makes to those non-departmental agencies he has responsibility for and their budgets.

Mr. Baldry: This information is published annually in *"Public Bodies"*, the latest edition of which was issued in December and is available in the Library.

Homelessness, Dewsbury

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are homeless in the parliamentary constituency of Dewsbury.

Sir George Young: The available data relate to local authority areas. The reported number of households accepted as homeless by Kirklees metropolitan council are given in the supplementary table to the quarterly Information Bulletin "Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England"; copies of both are in the Library. The latest statistics are for the third quarter of 1993.

Environmental Trusts

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider providing core funding for existing environmental trusts providing the same services as groundwork trusts.

Mr. Atkins: Existing environmental voluntary organisations can apply for core funding under the Department's environmental action fund.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to encourage the efficient use of energy.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of the Environment's Energy Efficiency Office budget has been increased to more than £100 million for 1994-95, over 17 times the level of expenditure in 1979-80. It runs a comprehensive range of programmes and initiatives to encourage the efficient use of energy. In addition, the Department is taking a variety of initiatives with regard to publicly owned housing and, as set out in the answer given on 19 January to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) by my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) *Official Report*, columns *671-72*, is considering proposals to strengthen the energy efficiency requirements of the Building Regulations. The Department's programmes, and their contribution to reducing carbon dioxide emissions and protecting the environment generally, are set out in the United Kingdom's report under the framework covention on climate change and in the United Kingdom's strategy for sustainable development, both of which were launched by the Prime Minister on 25 January 1994.

Coastal Marine Environment

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to improve the quality of the coastal marine environment.

Mr. Atkins: The Government's policies for protecting and enhancing the marine environment were summarised within "This Common Inheritance" in 1990 and reported upon in the 1991 and 1992 reports (Cm. 1655 and Cm. 2068 respectively). A further report is to be published shortly.

Halons

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the Government propose to phase out the use of halons more rapidly than required by the Montreal protocol following the decision to establish a halon recycling scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It is not Government policy to phase out the use of halons. Our policy, in line with that of the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, and subsequent EC regulations, is to control the production and supply of halons, not their use. Production of halon was phased out by 1 January 1994.

The halon bank has been set up to enable recycled halons to be made available to service those halon users with a continuing need. The establishment of the bank is in accordance with decision IV/26 of the parties to the protocol agreed in November 1992 to encourage recovery, reclamation and recycling of halons. The UK halon bank was the first in the world and has helped to ensure that production of halon will not be necessary during 1994.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Baldry: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Small Cetaceans

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to publicise the United Kingdom's activities implementing the agreement on the conservation of small cetaceans of the Baltic and North seas.

Mr. Atkins: The summary of action taken by the United Kingdom to implement the agreement has been published today. A copy has been placed in the House Library.

Recent activities have built on our already extensive range of laws intended to protect dolphins and other marine and land-based animals, and their habitats.

A co-ordinating committee has been established to ensure the objectives of the agreement were understood and acted upon by Government agencies. This has resulted in extensive co-operation between Government Departments, agencies, universities and voluntary bodies to identify priorities for action, set up a secretariat to run the agreement and begin vital research work.

Action taken by the Government to support the agreement includes financial contributions for a number of research projects: a two-year international survey of populations and distributions of porpoises and dolphins in the North sea and English channel, research into ways of deterring cetaceans from swimming into fishing nets, recording of beached animals and analysis of cause of death, and investigation of the problems presented by acoustic disturbance.

Taken together, these projects will provide a sound basis for future policies and programmes for effective and appropriate protection of these species on an international scale.

Canadian Rain Forest

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made, in accordance with the objective of global conservation set out in the United Kingdom action plan for biodiversity, to the Governments of Canada and British Columbia over the logging of substantial areas of Canada's temperate rainforest.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

None. The Canadian Government and British Columbia authorities are well aware of public concern in the United Kingdom about logging.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office

15. **Ms Estelle Morris:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are his policies for increasing the competitiveness of the Post Office.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is for the Post Office Board to ensure the competitiveness of the Post Office and for the Government to set the framework within which it does so. That framework is under consideration within the Post Office review, which is still continuing.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of post offices as at July 1993 displayed posters giving information on service targets and performance against them.

Mr. McLoughlin: As at July 1993 information about service targets and performance displayed on posters in post offices was as follows:

Royal Mail
All Crown, franchise and modified sub post offices displayed posters giving 1st class letter targets and performance on a quarterly basis for their local postcode area.

Post Office Counters Ltd.
All Crown offices displayed posters giving annual national targets for customer queuing times and performance of the individual office on a quarterly basis. In 1993-94 a rolling programme to introduce posters displaying queuing time targets is being implemented in the largest 5,000 agency offices.

Parcelforce
All Crown, franchise and modified sub post offices displayed posters, for a period of one month after the Post Office annual report and accounts for 1992-93 were published, giving national delivery targets and performance for inland services for that year.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the service targets set by the Post Office as at July 1993; and what was the performance against them.

Mr. McLoughlin: As at July 1993 the service targets set by the Post Office businesses were as follows:

Royal Mail
The 1993-94 annual targets for 1st class letter delivery—nationally and for each postcode area—are set out in detail in the Post Office's 1992-93 annual report and accounts. For 1993-94 the overall national target is to deliver 92 per cent. of 1st-class letters on the next working day after posting. For the April-June 1993 quarter in the York postcode area the overall performance for 1st class letter delivery by the next working day was 91 per cent. against a local annual target of 92 per cent.

Post Office Counters Ltd.
For all Crown and franchise offices an annual target of 96 per cent. of all customers to be served within 5 minutes was set for 1993-94. For the quarter 22 April-14 July 1993 performance against this target was 97·8 per cent. In addition, this target is being extended during 1993-94 under a rolling programme to 5,000 of the largest sub post offices.

Parcelforce
National annual delivery targets for 1993-94 and performance for the quarter April-June 1993 are as follows:

	Target *Per cent.*	*Performance April-June '93* *Per cent.*
Parcelforce Datapost 10	99·0	96·9
Parcelforce Datapost 12	99·0	97·5
Parcelforce 24	99·0	95·7
Parcelforce 48	98·0	93·9
Parcelforce Standard	94·0	95·0

Electricity

16. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to refer PowerGen and National Power to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

33. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to refer PowerGen and National Power to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

34. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to refer PowerGen and National Power to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Heseltine: The Director General of Electricity Supply has said that he will decide shortly whether to make a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Space Launch Agreement

17. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the agreement between the EC and the Russian Federation on space launch services.

Mr. McLoughlin: A draft agreement has been negotiated by the European Commission and the Russian Space Agency governing Russian access to the international market for space launch services between 1995 and 2000. Conclusion of the agreement is still being considered both by the member states of the European Union and by the Russian Government.

Aerospace Industry

18. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent discussions he has held with members of the aerospace industry about the prospects for the industry.

19. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met representatives of the British aerospace companies to discuss future prospects for the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department maintains a close and continuing dialogue with aerospace industry on a wide range of issues.

Chinaware

20. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department is giving to promote British chinaware in United Kingdom embassies and high commissions overseas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The full range of overseas trade services are avilable to the British chinaware industry for their export campaigns. In addition, I hope shortly to be able to announce formally the establishment of a DTI tabletop advisory group. This will include manufacturers of china, glass, cutlery and table linen. The group will work with the DTI, manufacturers and retailers to promote the sectors' competitiveness and sales both at home and overseas.

Gas

21. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade by how much the price of gas to the domestic consumer has fallen since privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Domestic gas prices for all consumers have fallen by 22 per cent. in real terms since privatisation.

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many domestic gas consumers use (i) 100 therms, (ii) 200 therms, (iii) 300 therms, (iv) 500 therms, (v) 1,000 therms and (vi) 2,000 therms a year; and what is the forecast percentage change in cost of those levels of consumption as a result of the abolition of the monopoly control over the domestic gas tariff.

Mr. Eggar: British Gas estimates of the number of domestic gas consumers in different ranges of consumption are as follows:

Analysis of British Gas domestic tariff sales (September 1992 estimate)

Range therms per year	*Number of customers*
0-100	1,325,311
101-200	964,173
201-300	1,392,542
301-500	3,871,768
501-1,000	8,121,502
1,001-2,000	1,965,922
over 2,000	152,482
	17,793,700

Source: Monopolies and Mergers Commission, Gas and British Gas plc, Volume 2, Appendix 4.1, Table 2.

Abolition of the monopoly will expose British Gas to competition which should lead to reduced prices to domestic consumers. A joint DTI/OFGAS public consultation document, to be published soon, will discuss the operation of the competitive market and the arrangements for regulating the transition to full competition.

Recycling

22. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to encourage industry to increase the use of recycled materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have been encouraged by the recycling rates achieved in recent years. Around 30 per cent. of container glass, for example, was recycled in 1993, compared with only 20 per cent. in 1990.

The producer responsibility initiative that we launched in July 1993 is aimed at encouraging commerce and industry to increase recycling rates further.

West Midlands (Regeneration)

23. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what practical steps he is taking to encourage commercial regeneration in the west midlands.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government are committed to regeneration throughout the United Kingdom. In the west midlands there is a wide range of Government-funded support services available.

Insolvency

24. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many investigations are currently being carried out by the Insolvency Service; and how many were carried out during *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1985.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Under the Insolvency Act 1986 the Official Receiver has a duty to investigate the affairs of each company wound up by the courts and the conduct and affairs of every bankrupt except where an order for summary administration has been made.

There were 6,910 winding-up and receiving orders made in 1980 and 12,477 made in 1985. In 1993 there were 8,361 winding-up orders and 31,025 bankruptcy orders including 5,357 summary cases.

28. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on Government policy towards insolvency.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Government believe that it is important to have a civilised, orderly and equitable method for dealing with financial failure of individuals and businesses and for tackling fraud and malpractice where they occur. The insolvency legislation seeks to achieve this end. It is kept under continual review.

Defence Technology Transfer

25. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to assist with technology transfer from defence based industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: A number of my Department's schemes assist technology transfer, including transfer from defence-based industries.

Electrical Equipment

26. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further representations he has received from business or consumer organisations about banning the sale of electrical equipment without pre-fitted plugs.

Mr. McLoughlin: Representations from business and consumer organisations were received during the formal consultation on the proposed regulations last year. Also, a number of meetings were subsequently held with officials. There was general support for the proposed regulations.

However, the European Commission is still seeking clarification on a number of points which is delaying the progress of the proposed regulations. I am hopeful that these matters will be resolved shortly.

Nuclear Review

27. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the terms of reference of the nuclear review.

Mr. Eggar: The Government will announce the terms of reference for the review and how it will be conducted as soon as possible.

South East (Growth)

29. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what initiatives his Department has taken in the past 12 months to stimulate growth and job creation within the South East.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government are committed to stimulating growth and job creation throughout the United Kingdom. Assisted area status and objective 2 status have been granted to parts of the South East in the past 12 months.

International Competitiveness

30. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further assessment he has made of Britain's international competitiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government have announced that they will publish a White Paper on competitiveness later this year.

31. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many directors have been disqualified during the years *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1991.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The number of directors disqualified in 1980 was 62; in 1985 it was 120; and in the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 was 420 and 460 respectively.

32. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost of fixtures and fittings in his Department's new offices.

Mr. Eggar: In the last and current financial years my Department has not moved into any new offices in central London.

35. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has had any recent discussions with representatives of the motor industry concerning future exports.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has not discussed this subject with industry representatives recently, but my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade met representatives from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders on 1 February to discuss, among other matters, issues relating to the export of automotive products.

36. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next plans to visit Ilford to discuss the economic situation.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has no current plans to do so.

Arms Trade

37. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the value of *(a)* British and *(b)* Japanese arms exports in the most recent years for which comparable figures are available; and what proportion this represents of total exports from those countries.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom defence exports can be found in table 1.11 of UK Defence

Statistics 1993 edition, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. For 1992, United Kingdom exports of identified defence equipment amounted to £1,506 million, representing 1·4 per cent. of total visible exports. Comparable figures for Japan are not available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Telecommunications for Disabled and Elderly People Committee

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Disabled and Elderly People.

Mr. McLoughlin: Appointments to the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Disabled and Elderly People are the responsibility of the Director General of Telecommunications. However, I understand that the current members are:

Chairman
Mrs. Jean Gaffin
Members
Mrs. Sheila Barrows, MBE
Mr. David Dunsmuir
Mr. Michael Godfrey
Mr. Wally Herbert, OBE
Mr. David Hyslop
Mr. Colin Low
Mr. Michael Martin, OBE
Dr. Eric Midwinter, OBE
Mrs. Sheila Porter
Mrs. Nancy Robertson
Dr. Eleanor Steiner

Area Transport Users Committees

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the area transport users consultative committees.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are eight area transport users' consultative committees. The committees and their members at 21 January 1994 are as follows:

The transport users' consultative committee for southern England:
Miss Angela M. Hooper, CBE (Chairman)
Mr. John A. Bigny
Mr. Chris John Campbell
Mr. Peter Catchpole
Miss Suzanne Davis
Mr. John G. Doctor
Mr. John V. Foster
Mrs. Jennifer Hinton
Mr. Peter J. Lee
Mrs. Elizabeth Macdonald-Brown
Miss Alison M. R. Penn
Mrs. Fiona M. G. Ross
Mr. Alan E. J. Shotter

The transport users' consultative committee for eastern England:
Mr. David Bertram (Chairman)
Mr. Dennis A. Adams
Mrs. Jill Allen-King, MBE
Mr. Robert E. Bone
Councillor Peter R. Chappell
Mrs. Charlotte E. M. Clark
Mr. Brian M. Cooke
Mr. Bryan M. W. Frost
Mrs. Elizabeth B. Gard
Mrs. Jennifer M. Honisett
Mr. Rodney Hughes
Mr. John R. Legg
Sir Graham A. M. Macmillan
Mr. Peter R. Pennington
Mrs. Elizabeth Purdy
Mr. Richard Ramage
Mr. Derek J. Stevens
Mr. Richard E. West

The transport users' consultative committee for north western England:
Mr. Frank F. Dolphin (Chairman)
Mr. Mark Andrew
Mrs. Jennifer S. Borer
Mr. Harold Combs
Mr. Morris Dickie
Mrs. Geraldine P. Evans
Mr. Paul Fawcett
Mr. Robert Gale
Mrs. Nora Gleave
Mrs. Valerie Godfrey, JP
Mrs. Phyllis M. Hardman
Ms Christine S. Jackson
Mr. Robin Morris
Mr. Walter H. Neve
Mr. John M. Richardson
Mr. Donald R. Wignall, BA, MSC

The transport users' consultative committee for north eastern England are:
Mr. Alan Paul, MBE (Acting Chairman)[1]
Mrs. S. J. Adams
Mrs. Christine J. H. Clubley
Mr. Garnet G. Dore
Mr. Geoffrey Egglestone
Mrs. Sylvia D. Greenwood
Mrs. Gloria V. E. Havenhand
Mr. David Heseldin
Mrs. Joan Johnson, OBE
Mr. Geoffrey E. Meikle
Mr. John T. Middleton, OBE
Major David M. Naylor, CB, MBE
Mr. Eric Davis Pepper
Mrs. Shirley Shaw
Sir Reginald Sheffield
Dr Robin W. J. Sisson
Mrs. Ruth S. Studholme
Mr. Dennis M. Walsh

[1] Mr. Paul is Acting Chairman in the absence of Professor Paul Fairest, the permanent chairman, who has temporarily stood down to undertake research.

Professor Fairest will resume duties as chairman on 1 April 1994.

The transport users' consultative committee for western England:
Sir Robert W. Wall, OBE (Chairman)
Mr. Peter C. Blackburn
Councillor Geoffrey J. P. Browne
Councillor G. L. J. (Toby) Bruce-Morgan
Councillor John M. Chapman
Mr. William H. Davey
Councillor Rosaleen A. Day
Mr. Paul A. Eward
Dame Margaret J. Fry
Lady Elizabeth P. A. Gass
Dr. K. Melissa Hardie
Mr. Chris C. Irwin
Mrs Abigail A. Kirby-Harris, JP
Dr. Robin L. D. Rees
Mr. Peter W. Simmonds
Mrs. Elizabeth A. Smith
Councillor Betty J. Topham

The transport users' consultative committee for the Midlands area:—
Dr. P. Pritchard Jones (Chairman)
Mrs. Sarah A. Bennett
Mr. D. G. Bullock
Mrs. H. Byford, OBE
Mr. Stuart I. Edwards
Mr. John M. Everitt
Dr. John P. Fletcher
Mr. Gyde Horrocks
Mr. Robert M. S. Lincoln

Mr. Arthur E. R. Manners
Mrs. Sandra M. Meredith-Vulja
Mr. Robert Miller
Mr. D. J. Pett, MA
Mr. Barry Picken, JP
Mr. J. O. Pugh
Mr. Mark A. Sullivan
Mrs. Jean H. Thornton
Mr. Percy J. Tinson

The transport users' consultative committee for Scotland are:—
Mr. John A. Corrie (Chairman)
Mrs. Eleanor Brownlee
Miss Pamela Clough
Ms Deirdre Forsyth
Mr. Stephen C. Gibbs
Miss Cecily E. Giles, CBE
Mr. Lawrence Kemp
Captain Roderick Mackinnon, JP
Mrs. Jeanette M. Mason
Mr. Alan T. Rees
Dr. Douglas G. Williamson
Mr. John Wilson, JP
The transport users' consultative committee for Wales:
Mr. Charles A. Hogg, JP (Chairman)
Mrs. Margaret A. Brown
Mr. Ashley M. D. Clay
Mr. H. Mansel Davey, JP
Mr. Martin R. Davies
Mr. David B. T. Deere
Mr. Phillip C. Evans
Mr. Robert L. Griffin
Mrs. Gillian M. G. Jones
Dr. William P. Race
Miss Kathleen J. Smith
Mr. Robin C. Smith
Councillor John D. A. Thompson
Councillor William J. Williams
Mr. Owen P. Williams

Malaysia (Exports)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *612*, if he will list exports to Malaysia under standard international trade classifications *(a)* 792, *(b)* 793 and *(c)* 981.29 for 1982 to 1993.

Mr. Needham: The information is given in the table.

Value of exports to Malaysia

(£000's)

Year	*SITC 792*	*SITC 793*	*SITC 981.29*
1982	6,976	338	NA
1983	8,054	2,318	NA
1984	8,712	192	NA
1985	CC	CC	NA
1986	3,785	228	NA
1987	2,461	2,077	NA
1988	CC	CC	CC
1989	CC	CC	CC
1990	CC	CC	0
1991	6,174	789	0
1992	CC	CC	0
1993	CC	CC	CC

Notes:
SITC—Standard International Trade Classification.
792—Aircraft and associated equipment; spacecraft (including satellites) and spacecraft launch vehicles; and parts thereof.
793—Ships, boats (including hovercraft) and floating structures.
981.29—Munitions of war and parts thereof, not elsewhere specified.
CC—Figures not available due to commercial confidentiality.
NA—The SITC was revised in 1988. As a result, exports prior to 1988 corresponding to the current heading 981.29 cannot be separately identified.
Source: HM Customs and Excise.

Disqualification Unit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the full complement of staff in his Department's disqualification unit; and how many are currently in post.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The complement of permanent staff of the disqualification unit is currently 50·5. There are 47·5 staff in post, in addition to which there is a total of 11 staff seconded from the private sector, on loan from other Government Departments or employed on a casual basis.

Mr. Roger Levitt

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will review the bankruptcy laws in the light of Roger Levitt's discharge from bankruptcy.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to do so.

Competitiveness Unit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list each subdivision of his competitiveness unit; together with an outline of their work programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the Minis 93 returns, and the DTI functional directory, both of which are in the Library of the House. A new branch is being established to spread best purchasing practice in both the public and private sectors. The Minis 94 returns will set out its work programme.

Coal

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he takes to ensure that coal imported to the United Kingdom from Colombia is mined under conditions which do not breach international standards on the use of child labour; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have received assurances from the Colombian authorities that none of the United Kingdom's coal imports from Colombia are produced by child labour, and that their Government are attempting to eliminate the practice where it does occur in illegal family-run mines. Most of the coal produced in Colombia for the United Kingdom comes from the El Cerrejon mine which is run by Exxon to high standards. Representatives of the United Kingdom's two major coal importers have been to that mine to inspect conditions and are satisfied that no children are employed there.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to safeguard the environment in areas likely to be affected by the granting of compulsory rights orders by the local authority after privatisation of the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: The Government have announced a review of the regime for compulsory access to land for minerals extraction contained in the Mines (Working Facilities and Support) Act 1966, which applies to all minerals including coal. The intention of this review is to produce an integrated regime for access to minerals that will be appropriate for the next century. As a transitional measure during the review, the Government intend to retain the compulsory rights order (CRO) provisions of the Opencast Coal Act 1958, but only until the end of 1999.

It is the Government's intention that CROs should be available to opencast operations as a matter of last resort only. The Coal Industry Bill would transfer to the Coal Authority the power to make CROs, but it is intended that the authority should not exercise this power unless it is satisfied that the applicant has made all reasonable efforts to secure the rights by agreement, but this has not been possible because: the owners of the land are too numerous, or cannot be identified; or the owner(s) do not have power to grant the rights sought; or the owner(s) have unreasonably refused to negotiate, or sought unreasonable terms. To come into force, a CRO must be confirmed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, or for Scotland or Wales as appropriate. My right hon. Friends will confirm a CRO only if they are satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so.

As now, CROs will only be used in exceptional circumstances. There is no reason at this stage to think that the use of CROs will more or less likely in any area of Britain's coalfields.

All new opencast development proposals will of course require planning permission and will continue to be scrutinised by planning authorities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has recently issued draft revised guidelines, which set demanding environmental tests for the industry.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what safeguards and compensatory arrangements he plans after privatisation of the coal industry to protect local communities and individuals from pollution of rivers and streams by old coal workings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Government will ensure that all British Coal's current responsibilities will continue to be discharged following privatisation. The Coal Authority will be responsible for water pollution from abandoned mines, except to the extent that any part of the responsibility may be passed to the private sector through leases.

All discharges into controlled waters, including any from abandoned mines, will continue to be subject to the pollution control regime of the Water Resources Act 1991. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is currently reviewing the legal framework governing discharges from abandoned mines in general.

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to offer to the private sector further pits closed by British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: The Government are committed to ensuring that any closing pits are made available to the private sector.

To date, 28 pits have been made available by British Coal for lease/licence. Decisions on lease/licence are a matter for British Coal.

British Coal has indicated that the corporation is unlikely to offer any further closing pits for lease/licence. It is the Government's intention, therefore, to offer such pits in parallel to the privatisation regional packages. Such pits would meanwhile be kept on care and maintenance basis. Detailed arrangements will be announced within the next few weeks when expressions of interest are invited from potential bidders.

The chairman of British Coal has assured me that no equipment will be removed from the pits proposed for closure at general review meetings last week unless it is essential for safety reasons or the reserves of any of the pits are reallocated to adjacent mines.

Clothing and Textiles

Ms Quin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the latest progress on the final discussions on the clothing and textile section of the GATT round.

Mr. Needham: The final GATT Uruguay round textiles and clothing agreement sets out the methodology for the phase-out of the multi-fibre arrangement (MFA) over a 10-year period which will commence once the detail of the complete GATT package has been agreed.

The MFA phase-out will be in four stages, each consisting of the liberalisation of some quotas and an increase in the level of those quotas not eliminated. Detailed work on the content of each stage of the phase-out phase-is not yet completed although it has been agreed that smaller supplying countries will benefit sooner than the larger suppliers.

The phase-out of the MFA will be balanced by improved GATT rules to deal with unfair trading practices, better intellectual property rights and lower tariffs in many export markets. We have pressed the European Commission to seek improvements in the tariff reductions offered by some countries and it is currently continuing negotiations with India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Hong Kong with a view to achieving greater concessions than those offered at present. Negotiations will if necessary continue until Ministers sign the final GATT act in April.

Land Mines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many export licences have been granted in the last 10 years for self-neutralising or self-destructing anti-personnel land mines.

Mr. Needham: It has been the policy of successive administrations not to disclose details about export licences that have been issued. In this case, in addition, the information requested could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Scotch Whisky (Chile)

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if Her Majesty's Government intends to request the European Commission to initiate GATT proceedings against the Chilean Government on account of their failure to respond to Her Majesty's Government's representations about their discriminatory taxation treatment of Scotch whisky.

Mr. Needham: My Department is in close touch with the Scotch Whisky Association about discriminatory taxation in Chile. Once it is clear what effect the outcome of the Uruguay round has had on this problem, all the options for future action including action by the European Commission in the GATT, will be considered.

Alcohol (Taxation)

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations have been made to the Japanese Government about the need for the outstanding liquor tax discrimination within the spirits sector to be eliminated this year.

Mr. Needham: The Government have made a number of high level representations to the Japanese Government in recent months regarding the continuing tax discrimination against foreign liquors in that country. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised the issue with the Japanese Prime Minister both in person during his visit to Tokyo in September 1993 and subsequently by letter. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade raised the issue with Japanese Ministers during his visit to Tokyo in January. I have also lobbied the Japanese Government, and the European Commission is actively pursuing the matter. This is an issue which concerns us greatly and one on which we are regularly in touch with the Scotch whisky industry.

Power Transmission Lines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will meet the chairman of the National Grid Corporation to discuss the allegations of ill health caused by electro-magnetic radiation fields given off from overhead transmission cables and electricity sub-stations.

Mr. Eggar: I meet the Chairman of National Grid Corporation from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has given to the letter from the President of the Nuclear Control Institute in Washington DC in regard to the economic viability of reprocessing at THORP; and when he received the letter.

Mr. Eggar: The letter arrived on 2 February 1994. I shall be replying in due course.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received the annual report and accounts for British Nuclear Fuels for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement on the delay in completing these accounts.

Mr. Eggar: The annual report and accounts for British Nuclear Fuels plc for 1992-93 were published on 2 February 1994 and, in accordance with section 14 of the Atomic Energy Authority Act 1971, laid before both Houses of Parliament. On the question of timing, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column 756.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the basis of his decision of 27 January not to refer the joint venture proposal involving British Nuclear Fuels plc, Ultra-Centrifuge Nederland NV, Uranit GMBH and Urenco Ltd. to the Monopolies Commission under the Fair Trading Act 1973.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In accordance with advice from the Director General of Fair Trading, I decided not to refer the proposed joint venture between British Nuclear Fuels plc, Ultra-Centrifuge Nederland NV, Uranit GMBH and Urenco Ltd. to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) because it did not in my view raise competition or other relevant concerns warranting scrutiny by the MMC.

Oil Sales

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the monthly sale of oil in *(a)* monetary value and *(b)* tonnage from the United Kingdom to Greece in each month since 1984.

Mr. Eggar: Data on monthly exports of oil by the United Kingdom to Greece since 1984 are available from the monthly Central Statistical Office publication "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom". From July 1992 the exports are as follows:

United Kingdom oil[1] exports to Greece

	£ million	Tonnes[2]
1992		
July	0·3	388
August	0·2	348
September	0·8	3,310
October	0·4	662
November	0·4	479
December	12·5	129,039
1993		
January	0·2	—
February	3·7	—
March	0·8	—
April	0·4	—
May	3·5	—
June	0·5	—
July	0·2	—
August	0·7	—
September	0·3	—

[1] Petroleum, petroleum products, and related materials, i.e. Division 33 of the Standard International Trade Classification

[2] Monthly details of tonnage for Intra-EC trade under the Division 33 heading from January 1993 onwards are not yet available.

Source: HM Customs and Excise

UN—Iran Joint Commission

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade pursuant to the answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *644*, if he will list the *(a)* United Kingdom and *(b)* Iraqi participants at the UN-Iraq Joint Commission of 27 to 30 November 1989.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

(a)

The right hon. Lord Trefgarne, Minister for Trade

Mr. M. Petter, Head of Middle East Branch Department of Trade and Industry

Mr. J. Gallaher, Middle East Branch, Department of Trade and Industry

Mr. R. Higgins, Middle East Branch, Department of Trade and Industry

Dr. J. Warren, Head of Overseas Technical Information Unit, Department of Trade and Industry

Mr. S. Lawrence, Overseas Technical Information Unit, Department of Trade and Industry

Mr. R. Wild, Director Project of Group, Export Credit Guarantee Department

Mr. D. Coombe, Head of Project Division, Export Credit Guarantee Department

Mr. I. Foster

Project Division, Export Credit Guarantee Department

Mr. A. Brown
First Secretary Commercial, British Embassy, Baghdad
Mr. P. Sullivan
Head of Industrial Training, British Council
Mr. M. Edwards
Ministry of Agriculture
Mr. T. Crawley
Department of Health
Mr. R. Mackintosh
National Health Service, Overseas Enterprises

(b)
Dr. Mohammed Mehdi Saleh
Minister for Trade
Mr. Abdul Sahib Sattar Aziz
Protocol Division, Ministry of Trade (PS to Minister)
Mr. Farouk Al-Obaidi
Director General Foreign Economic Relations, Ministry of Trade
Mr. Bourhan Abdullah Ramadhan
Foreign Economic Relations Department, Ministry of Trade
Mr. Hashim Ali Obeid
Under-Secretary, Ministry of Finance
Dr. Azmi Al-Salihi
Iraqi Ambassador to United Kingdom
Mr. Sadaam Z. Hasan
Commercial Attache, Iraqi Embassy London
Mr. Rajaa Hssan Ali
Director General, Economic and Administrative Department, Ministry of Industry and Military Manufacturing
Mr. Yahya Abdul Amir Al Dojaili
Director General, Ministry of Industry and Military Manufacturing
Mr. Khalid Hussain Ahmed
Head of Economic Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning
Mr. Saleeh Jalal
Central Bank of Iraq
Mr. George Z. George
Rafidain Bank
Mr. Haitham A. Khalil
Research Department, General Federation of Iraqi Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Motor Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect of the takeover of Rover by BMW on the share of the United Kingdom car market taken by imports.

Mr. Sainsbury: We would expect the acquisition of Rover by BMW to strengthen Rover's competitiveness still further, thus increasing the ability of United Kingdom-based manufacturers to increase their share of the United Kingdom market.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made as to the effect on United Kingdom car manufacturers of being taken over by foreign companies.

Mr. Sainsbury: The effect on car manufacturers being taken over by foreign-owned companies will vary from case to case.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made as to the effect of United Kingdom membership of the EC on United Kingdom car plants being owned by foreign companies.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Manufacturing Assets (Foreign Companies)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the proportion of the value of manufacturing assets owned by foreign companies in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* France and *(d)* Italy.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information is not available in the form requested.

Indonesia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total Export Credits Guarantee Department exposure outstanding in Indonesia.

Mr. Needham: At 31 March 1993 the total Export Credits Guarantee Department exposure outstanding on Indonesia was £1,177·2 million.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what levels of export credit guarantees have been provided to Indonesia in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The Export Credits Guarantee Department's annual report details the value of guarantees issued for capital goods and projects each year for the main markets. The value of such guarantees for Indonesia in each of the last five years is as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	67·0
1989-90	52·3
1990-91	149·6
1991-92	126·8
1992-93	448·8

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of Export Credits Guarantee Department credit for Indonesia has been allocated to defence contracts in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: Of the guarantees issued by the Export Credits Guarantee Department in support of capital goods and project exports to Indonesia, the following proportion has related to exports of defence equipment in each of the last five years:

	Per cent.
1988-89	4·2
1989-90	0·0
1990-91	1·7
1991-92	1·7
1992-93	97·3

Company Voluntary Arrangements

Mr. Dykes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on progress being made in the consultations with outside interested parties on the company voluntary arrangements document issued by the Insolvency Service in October 1993.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The deadline for responses to the document has been extended to 31 March 1994. More than 40 have been received so far and many more are expected. The views expressed will be carefully considered.

Management Bids

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the management bids under each of the Minis rounds by each agency chief executive and departmental head together with the current staff-in-post numbers.

Mr. Eggar: The process of resource allocation within the Department is an internal matter for the Department. The final allocation to each management unit is published annually in Minis.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many tenders were received for the contract for the review of the Insolvency Service which was awarded to Stoy Hayward.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Three tenders were received and all three parties were interviewed before the contract was awarded.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much the Stoy Hayward report cost.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: This information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library the minutes of the Department's resources management group held on 13 July 1993 relating to the staffing needs of the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No, the discussions of the Department's Resource Management Group are an internal matter for the Department.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints have been received under the Insolvency Service published standards by *(a)* the inspector general and chief executive, *(b)* official receivers and *(c)* the President of the Board of Trade for each of the last two years.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Insolvency Service Standard, published in March 1993, has been in place for less than a year. In that time no letters have been received under it by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. The Inspector General and Agency Chief Executive has received letters relating to 23 cases under its terms. Complaints made to official receivers which are satisfactorily dealt with at that level are not recorded centrally.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place the Stoy Hayward report into the Insolvency Service in the Library.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: As announced on 7 February, a summary of the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many tenders were received for the second stage review of the privatisation of the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A letter of invitation to bid for the second phase of the review was issued on 4 February 1994.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the projected budgets and staffing levels for the Insolvency Service for the next three years.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The allocation of budgets and manpower to the Insolvency Service for 1994-95 has yet to be made. Budgets and staffing levels for future years will depend on the outcome of future Public Expenditure Surveys.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will detail moneys paid into the Insolvency Service account in respect of interest on the money received by liquidators and invested for each of the past five years, together with details of the amounts paid to the commissioners of the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The details are as follows:

Year ended 31 March	*Interest paid (net of tax)* £'000	*Amounts paid to Inland Revenue* £'000
1989	1,887	662
1990	2,030	677
1991	1,700	499
1992	1,949	562
1993	1,946	804

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many temporary staff were employed by the Insolvency Service in January 1993, April 1993 and January 1994; and how many he estimates will be in post in April.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The number of casual staff employed by the Insolvency Service in January 1993, April 1993 and January 1994 was as follows:

	Number
1 January 1993	164·5
1 April 1993	190·5
1 January 1994	241

The level of resource for the Insolvency Service for 1994-95 has not yet been decided upon.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how he defines the term, mechanical processing work, used in his announcement of the review into the future of the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The term is used loosely to describe those activities routinely involved in case administration as opposed to investigation.

Market Testing

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will highlight the areas market tested in the Department, the cost of each market test; and how many tests were awarded in-house.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has completed market tests in the following areas; office and financial management service, internal consultancy, and oil and gas support

programmes. Within these area, in 11 individual tests service delivery was retained in house. Market test costs are being finalised for publication in the "Citizen's Charter Second Report".

Overseas Project Board

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how the members of the Overseas Project Board are chosen; and what criteria are used for their selection;

(2) who are the present members of the Overseas Projects Board; when they were appointed; what are their occupations; which firms employ them; what were the reasons for their selection; and what is their term of office;

(3) what is the role of the Overseas Projects Board; and when it was established.

Mr. Needham *[holding answers 8 February 1994]:* The Overseas Projects Board (OPB) provides expert advice to DTI Ministers and their officials on issues affecting UK industry's ability to complete effectively for major projects overseas and servces as a focal point for industry to communicate its views to Government. Appointments are made by the Minister for Trade usually for three years. The aim is to have on the OPB senior businessmen and others who have experience of major projects overseas. The names of the current members, their occupations, employers, and the dates of their appointments are as follows:

Overseas Project Board
Members

Sir Alan Cockshaw
Chairman
AMEC plc
(Appointed 1 September 1991)

Mr. C. H. Brown
Chief Executive, British Gas plc
(Appointed 31 March 1993)

Mr. B. P. Dewe Mathews
Director J. Henry Schroder Wagg and Co. Limited
(Appointed 30 June 1989)

Professor G. Fleming BSc PhD
Professor of Civil Engineering
Department of Civil Engineering
University of Strathclyde
(Appointed 30 June 1991)

Mr. R. T. Fox CBE
Vice Chairman, Kleinwort Benson Group Plc
(Appointed 30 June 1987)

Mr. S. Gillibrand CBE
Vice Chairman, British Aerospace plc
(Appointed 30 June 1989)

Mr. D. O. Lloyd
Director, Sir William Halcrow and Partners Ltd
(Appointed 31 August 1990)

Mr. I. W. Reeves
Chairman, High Point plc
(Appointed 31 July 1992)

Mr. A. White CBE
Chairman, Biwater Ltd
(Appointed 31 July 1992)

Mr. P. Hills
Executive Director
Samuel Montagu
(Appointed 4 November 1993)

Mr. F. Kennedy
Executive Board Director
George Wimpey plc
(Appointed 4 November 1993)

Sir Wilfrid Newton
Chairman
London Regional Transport
(Appointed 4 November 1993)

Mr. D. Jefferies
Chairman, National Grid Company
(Appointed 4 November 1993)

Sir Desmond Pitcher
Chairman
North West Water Group
(Appointed 26 November 1993)

Mr. P. L. Lockton CBE
Managing Director
Rolls Royce India Ltd.
(Appointed 26 October 1987)

Mr. K. A. Bray
Managing Director
GEC Asthom
(Appointed 12 January 1994)

Mr. R. Beresford
Managing Director
Mott McDonald
(Appointed 12 January 1994)

Mr. I. Robinson
Chairman and Managing Director
John Brown plc
(Appointed 28 January 1994)

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff in his Department are covered by statutory sick pay.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* Approximately 12,700 staff in the Department are eligible to receive statutory sick pay. This total includes Departmental staff on loan or secondment out of the Department.

HEALTH

Hormone Replacement Therapy

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the total expenditure on *(a)* hormone replacement therapy and *(b)* etidronate prescribed by general practitioners in each family health services authority area and NHS region for each of the last two complete years; and if she will also express this as an expenditure figure per head of the total population in each area, and also as an expenditure figure per head for women aged 45 years and over.

Dr. Mawhinney: The net ingredient cost for products used for hormone replacement therapy in each family health services authority area and national health service region for 1991 and 1992 will be placed in the Library. Information for the drug disodium etidronate cannot be supplied as it is commercially confidential.

Opticians

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last discussed form AG3 with opticians; what assessment she has made of form AG3 with respect to the optical section in particular; whether people likely to need this form are likely to be able readily to understand it, and what assessment she has made of whether opticians find the form to be simple and straightforward.

Dr. Mawhinney: Planned changes to form AG3 are discussed periodically with the optical profession, most recently as part of a wider review of national health service forms and leaflets. In addition, family health services authorities provide comprehensive guidance to opticians about the national health service low-income scheme and form AG3 in order that they may give effective advice to patients. There are no grounds for believing that the form is other than simple and straightforward to use.

Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the advisers to her Department for each of the professions allied to medicine, stating in each case whether they are full-time appointments, for what duration the appointments have been made and the method by which the appointees were selected; and if she will outline her policy on the future of such appointments.

Mr. Sackville: The Department obtains advice in relation to the professions allied to medicine from professional staff employed within the Department and from a variety of outside expert sources, depending on the nature of the advice required. It is not our practice to publish details of individual appointments.

Electric Power Lines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been *(a)* sponsored or *(b)* undertaken within her Department on the potential risks of overhead power cables and electricity transmission stations; and in what form these have been published.

Mr. Sackville: The Department funds the National Radiological Protection Board which undertakes a programme of research into the effects on health of electromagnetic radiation. This includes sources of EM radiation such as power lines and electrical equipment. The board publishes its work in various documents, reports and other scientific forms.

Patients' Views

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the companies commissioned by her Department to carry out polling and market research about patients' views in the year to 1 April 1993; and if she will list the areas of research, the questionnaires to be used and the groups to be questioned.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Health commissioned four market research projects about patients' views in the year to April 1993. These were:

Subject	*Questionnaires*	*Groups*
Pregnancy Booklet	Omnibus Survey	Pregnant Mothers
Oral Syringe	Group discussions/ interviews	Parents of children having treatment/ had treatment
NHS Waiting Lists	Group discussions/ interviews	Sample of general public
Health Information Service	Group discussions/ interviews	Sample of general public

The companies commissioned to carry out these projects were Research Surveys of Great Britain, the Qualitative Consultancy, Counterpoint Research and Craig Ross Davidson.

Since 1990 the Department has contributed towards the cost of the British social attitudes survey carried out by social and community planning research, which monitors trends in social attitudes towards a range of issues including health and health services.

The Department has also had questions included in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys general household survey on general practitioner attendances, hospital in-patient stays, out-patient visits and day cases.

Care Plans

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of national health service patients had written community care plans at the time of their discharge from hospital in 1992-93.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Mentally Ill People

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the changes in the number of places in staffed residential care homes catering primarily for people who are mentally ill or have learning disabilities *(a)* in the South Birmingham health authority area, *(b)* in the West Midlands health authority area and *(c)* in England in each of the last five years divided into publicly owned, privately owned and voluntary sector owned.

Mr. Bowis: The information requested is shown in the table.

Number of places in staffed residential care homes catering primarily for people who are mentally ill or have learning disabilities by sector, at 31 March 1988 to 31 March 1992

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
South Birmingham district health authority[1]					
Local authority	168	164	190	150	206
Voluntary	109	124	113	135	152
Private	57	66	74	72	104
West Midlands regional health authority					
Local authority	2,265	2,275	2,222	2,173	2,184
Voluntary	971	1,015	1,107	1,276	1,466
Private	1,500	1,470	1,674	1,796	1,825
England					
Local authority	19,650	20,130	19,770	19,500	18,960
Voluntary	8,150	9,490	10,970	13,010	15,500
Private	13,090	15,270	17,450	19,110	20,420

[1] On 1 April 1991 South Birmingham merged with Central Birmingham to produce the single district health authority, South Birmingham. To reflect this, the combined figures have been given for each year prior to the merger.

Waiting Times

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each health authority in England as at July 1993, whether it had published a guaranteed maximum waiting time for patients seeking *(a)* hip and knee replacements and *(b)* cataract removals; and what waiting times were guaranteed by each authority that had done so.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under the patients charter, local health authorities are expected to make available detailed information on health services, including quality standards and maximum waiting times. Local standards are not

monitored separately, but as a minimum all must meet the national guarantee that all patients waiting for a hip or knee replacement or a cataract operation are treated within 18 months.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the subjects on which her Department or its predecessors formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by her to an executive agency.

Mr. Sackville: Next steps agency chief executives are usually asked to reply to parliamentary questions about day-to-day operational matters of their agency and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in their agency's framework document.

Whooping Cough

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has about any recent change in the incidence of whooping cough; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Although the current winter is one in the epidemic cycle when increases would have been expected in whooping cough notifications, they have remained at exceptionally low levels.

Provisional notifications in 1993 were 4,030 against 11,663 in 1989, the comparable year in the epidemic cycle. These very low notifications reflect the very high immunisation coverage of 93 per cent. at November 1993.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she has taken to ensure that all those children who were not vaccinated for whooping cough but who, following the change in medical advice, might be considered suitable for vaccination, have been contacted and given the opportunity to receive the vaccination.

Mr. Sackville: It is for individual general practitioners to identify children who in the past did not complete their whooping cough immunisation.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what directions she has issued, following the change in medical advice given three years ago on the use of the whooping cough vaccination for children with a family history of fits.

Mr. Sackville: Advice on whooping cough immunisation was issued to all doctors in the United Kingdom in July 1992 in the memorandum "Immunisation against Infectious Disease", copies of which are available in the Library. This provides guidance for doctors, practice nurses and health visitors on the use of the vaccine in children with a variety of family or personal histories.

Orthodontic Treatment

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many practising orthodontists work in the NHS in each health authority area in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: Any dentist who has the necessary facilities, experience or expertise may provide orthodontic treatment.

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the average waiting time for orthodontic treatment for each health authority area in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: A full comparison of average in-patient and day case waiting times for the orthodontic specialty is not possible because health authorities may record orthodontic treatment under different categories, for example, out-patient activity or general surgery.

Benzene

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her Department's assessment of the health hazard posed by benzene vapour releases from petrol.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Ms Jackson) on 26 January at columns *297-98*.

Leeds Healthcare

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to ensure that the circumstances identified in the health service commissioner's report on Leeds healthcare failure to provide long-term health care to a patient seriously incapacitated after a stroke are not repeated elsewhere; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: As part of the new community care arrangements we have required health and local authorities to agree their respective responsibilities for long-term care. This should be done in the light of their assessment of the best way to provide a comprehensive service to meet the needs of their local populations. We have also required them to agree co-ordinated hospital discharge arrangements. In addition, the chief executive of the National Health Service Management Executive wrote to all health authority managers, trust chief executives and unit general managers on 20 January 1994, EL(94)8, to remind them of the importance of having in place explicit and comprehensive discharge procedures which should be reviewed regularly. Copies of the letter are available in the Library.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many live births there were in 1993.

Mr. Sackville: A provisional estimate of the number of live births occurring in England and Wales in 1993 is 674,000.

West Midlands Patient Transport Service

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the West Midlands health authority received a request for arbitration concerning the patient transport service; and from whom.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for West Midlands Health. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Bryan Baker, chairman of that authority, for details.

Pharmaceutical Industry

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the prospects of the pharmaceutical industry.

Dr. Mawhinney: The pharmaceutical industry has a long record of success in the United Kingdom. The industry employs about 80,000 people in the United Kingdom and has a positive balance of trade—estimated at about £1·5 billion for 1993, the second largest contribution to the United Kingdom balance of trade. We expect the industry to continue to be successful in the years to come.

James Paget Hospital, Gorleston

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the guarantees she has given on the presumption that following the dismantling of the Great Yarmouth and Waveney district health authority on 1 April, the James Paget hospital, Gorleston, shall be deemed the local hospital for the people of north Suffolk; and what qualifications to these guarantees she now expects to make.

Mr. Sackville: The East Anglian regional health authority has given a comprehensive package of guarantees to the people of Great Yarmouth and Waveney. Ministers would expect the guarantees to be honoured or to have explained, in clear terms, why that was not possible. Copies of the guarantees will be placed in the Library.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those topics on which it is not her practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if she will list any recent changes in the practice of her Department.

Mr. Sackville: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

SCOTLAND

Mr. Douglas Mason

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what way Mr. Douglas Mason has been commissioned, employed or retained by his Department, or any agency, organisation, company or body appointed or funded by his Department, at any time during the last three years; what were his functions, responsibilities and duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Douglas Mason has been a member of Glenrothes development corporation board since 1 January 1985, when he was appointed as a local authority member; he was last reappointed on 1 January 1992 and his current period of office is expected to run until 31 December 1995 when the corporation is due to be wound up. The duties involved are attendance at the corporation's meetings, which are normally held once a month, and any such tasks as may from time to time be allotted to individual members. The responsibilities of the development corporation are laid out in section 3 of the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968 and the constitution and proceedings of development corporations covered by schedule 2 of the Act. Appointees to a development corporation also receive a copy of the code of conduct for board members. I have arranged for a copy of that code of conduct to be placed in the Library of the House. Mr. Mason has not been commissioned, employed or retained otherwise by my Department or any of its agencies. I am not aware if he has been so engaged by any other body funded by my Department.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Secretary of State in 1990-91 after 28 November 1990, 1991-92, 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Lang: My ministerial colleagues and I have a single travel budget so I am unable to provide a budgetary figure. Details of actual expenditure from the use of public transport for the period 28 November 1990 until 31 January 1994 are as follows:

	Internal (£)	*Overseas* (£)
28 November 1990 to 31 March 1991	3,180	375
1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992	8,066	5,636
1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993	6,495	5,045
1 April 1993 to 31 January 1994	5,144	11,406

Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the terms of reference of the public inquiry on the electricity interconnector with England.

Mr. Stewart: The application by ScottishPower to upgrade the existing 275 KV transmission line between Strathaven and Harker to 400 KV was referred to a public inquiry in 1991. This was conducted by a reporter from the Scottish Office inquiry reporters unit. His minute of appointment required him to report to my right hon. Friend on the placing above ground of transmission lines in certain defined areas for the reason that the proprietors had refused to give consent to the placing thereover of the said lines and to consider the objections to the erection of the said lines.

Children in Hospital

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the number of children at present inappropriately placed in long-stay hospitals.

Mr. Stewart: Excluding those on respite care, there are currently 21 children aged 15 or under who are long-term residents in NHS facilities, of which only five are located in a hospital. It is for individual health boards, as purchasers of health care, together with the other care agencies to assess whether continuing in-patient care is appropriate to an individual child's needs.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what target date he has set for the discharge of those children with disabilities who are being inappropriately cared for, at present, in long-stay hospitals; and what progress has been made since the publication of the White Paper, "Scotland's Children", on finding appropriate accommodation and support for such children.

Mr. Stewart: We have established that there is only a small number of children under 16 who are long stay

residents in national health service facilities. Many have complex needs and we will be discussing with health boards and social work departments the best form of facilities for them.

Renfrew Health Care Trust

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the responsibilities of the Renfrew Health Care Trust; if he will list the members of the trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Renfrewshire Healthcare was established as an NHS trust on 6 December 1993 and as a "shadow" trust has the limited functions of entering into NHS contracts and other contracts including contracts of employment, acquiring or disposing of land and other property, and doing such other things as are necessary to prepare the Trust for full operation from 1 April 1994. From that date the Trust's functions will be to own and manage Dykebar, Hawkhead, Bridge of Weir, Merchiston, Johnstone and Ravenscraig hospitals and any establishments, facilities and support services associated with those hospitals. In so doing the Trust will be responsible for achieving such financial objectives as are set for it by the Secretary of State.

The members of the Trust are:

Chairman
Dr. John Moffat
Non-executive Directors
Mr. Basil Baird
Mrs. Margaret Foggie
Mrs. Jean Goldie
Mr. John Hornibrook
Mr. David McNiven
Chief Executive
Mr. Ken Brewer
Medical Director
Dr. John McCurley
Director of Finance
Mrs. Lyn Hollis
Director of Personnel
Mr. Malcolm Dickinson
Director of Nursing
Still to be appointed.

Exports

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the value of exports which derive from each local authority district in Scotland, expressed both in cash terms and as a percentage of the total; if he will also show the estimated per capita value of these exports for each district; and if he will make a statement on the variations between districts.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not available. However, the Scottish Council Development and Industry, which produces the Annual Survey of Scottish Manufactured Exports, also compiles reports commissioned by a number of local enterprise companies. These reports are published and are available from SCDI.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the executive agencies which are responsible to his Department.

Mr. Lang: I am responsible for five executive agencies in the Scottish Office. These are:

Scottish Prison Service
Scottish Office Pensions Agency
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency
Historic Scotland
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency

In addition, I am responsible for two independent departments which are also executive agencies. These are the Registers of Scotland and the Scottish Record Office.

I have announced that the student awards branch of the Scottish Office will become an executive agency from 5 April 1994. The fisheries research service and roads directorate of the Scottish Office and the Scottish Court Service, part of the Scottish Courts Administration, are currently under consideration for executive agency status.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of Alzheimer's disease have been identified within Scotland; how many of those affected are *(a)* hospitalised, *(b)* in residential care and *(c)* being cared for in the community; and what further assistance he proposes to provide to carers.

Mr. Stewart: The figures requested are not available. However, there were 4,666 patients with dementia in mental illness hospitals and psychiatric units at the end of 1992. There were 4,145 people in residential homes for the elderly reported by the homes as being mentally confused at 31 March 1992. Estimates suggest that there are up to about 90,000 people suffering from some form of dementia. An estimated 60 per cent. of these suffer from Alzheimer's disease.

Local authorities have lead responsibility for assisting carers. It is for authorities to decide the particular services which they provide, drawing on the substantial resources provided for the implementation of community care.

Stoddard's Carpet Factory

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last visited Stoddard's carpet factory in Elderslie; what plans he has to make a ministerial visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend visited Stoddard's factory in 1987 as the Scottish Office Minister with responsibility for industry and home affairs. He has no plans to re-visit the factory. There have been more recent visits to the factory by our officials.

Fox Hunting

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ban fox hunting on all land over which he has jurisdiction.

Sir Hector Monro: No.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department now recognises the classification of myalgic encephalomyelitis as a disease by the World Health Organisation; what plans he has to give health boards guidance on the treatment of this disease; what funds he will make available for research into its prevention and cure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The version of the international classification of diseases currently in operation in Scotland

is the ninth revision, ICD9, which does not have a specific code for myalgic encephalomyelitis, ME, although it can be recorded under "unspecified encephalopathy". The next revision, ICD10, which has a code for "Benign Myalgic Encephalomyelitis", is expected to come into operation in Scotland in spring 1996.

As a matter of principle, the Government do not issue clinical guidance, since that is the responsibility of the medical profession.

The chief scientist office of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department is always prepared to give consideration to applications for scientifically bases research projects related to ME.

CPC (United Kingdom) Ltd.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of CPC (United Kingdom) Ltd., to discuss the continuance and development of their food manufacturing operation in Paisley; when he next plans to meet them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has had no meeting with representatives of CPC (United Kingdom) Ltd. to discuss the future of the company's operation in Paisley, and he has no plans for such a meeting. Our officials in Locate in Scotland, however, have met representatives of the company and are maintaining contact.

Co-operative Movement

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans Her Majesty's Government have to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the co-operative movement by the Rochdale pioneers.

Mr. Stewart: The Government have no such plans.

Scottish Grand Committee

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the places which are being considered as future venues for meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Grand Committee is a Committee of the House of Commons and accordingly responsibility for arranging meeting venues lies with the authorities of the House.

OPEN Project, Paisley

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide funding which will allow the one person employment network project in Paisley, operated by ENABLE from urban aid funding services, to extend its catchment area beyond areas of priority treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The area covered by the OPEN project was defined in the application for urban programme support submitted by Strathclyde regional council in November 1991. Extending the project's boundaries would be a matter for the regional council. Urban programme support is available only in those areas designated as eligible for such funding.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the shortfall of provision of sheltered housing to meet known needs in Renfrew district; how long it will take at current expenditure levels to match provision to need; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A comparison between the actual number of sheltered housing units in Renfrew district notified by the district council and the guideline figure of need estimated in accordance with the Scottish Office Environment Department circular 8/91 "Housing and Community Care" suggests that there may be a shortfall of 466 units in the district. It is, however, for the local authority to make its own estimate of the level of need and set targets for meeting that need based on its knowledge of local circumstances and other competing priorities for investment.

Local Housing authorities are not expected to provide all sheltered housing in their district, but to work with other housing agencies, including Scottish Homes, to meet local needs. Renfrew District Council should take into account the contribution of Scottish Homes and other housing providers when setting targets for meeting their estimated need for sheltered housing.

Ambulance Service

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number and grades of the operational staff employed by the Scottish ambulance service in each area or division in each year since 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is shown in the following table. The whole-time equivalent number of operational staff has risen from 1,720 in 1984 to 2,195 in 1994—an increase of nearly 28 per cent.

Scottish Ambulance Service
Operational Staff Establishment 1984-1994—Whole Time Equivalents

Area	*1984-85*			
	Leading ambulance person	*Qualified ambulance technician*	*Basic grade*	*Total*
Argyll and Clyde	n/a	n/a	n/a	168
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	n/a	n/a	n/a	219
Fife, Lothian and Borders	n/a	n/a	n/a	418
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	n/a	n/a	n/a	268
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	n/a	n/a	n/a	125
Greater Glasgow	n/a	n/a	n/a	303
Highland and Western Isles	n/a	n/a	n/a	95
Tayside	n/a	n/a	n/a	124
TOTAL	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,720

1985-86

Area	Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Argyll and Clyde	n/a	n/a	n/a	167
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	n/a	n/a	n/a	225
Fife, Lothian and Borders	n/a	n/a	n/a	433
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	n/a	n/a	n/a	267
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	n/a	n/a	n/a	130
Greater Glasgow	n/a	n/a	n/a	302
Highland and Western Isles	n/a	n/a	n/a	97
Tayside	n/a	n/a	n/a	130
TOTAL	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,751

1986-87

Area	Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Argyll and Clyde	13	147	10	170
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	13	201	10	224
Fife, Lothian and Borders	16	331	91	438
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	8	252	14	274
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	14	107	10	131
Greater Glasgow	18	201	91	310
Highland and Western Isles	15	82	—	97
Tayside	8	103	20	126
TOTAL	105	1,424	246	1,775

1987-88

Area	Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Argyll and Clyde	12	121	42	175
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	11	173	49	233
Fife, Lothian and Borders	12	301	129	442
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	8	189	76	273
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	15	104	22	141
Greater Glasgow	11	159	122	292
Highland and Western Isles	16	85	1	102
Tayside	8	101	21	130
TOTAL	93	1,233	462	1,788

1988-89

Area	Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Argyll and Clyde	10	96	64	170
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	13	142	88	243
Fife, Lothian and Borders	19	243	191	453
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	8	151	111	270
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	14	82	46	142
Greater Glasgow	11	96	176	283
Highland and Western Isles	15	70	21	106
Tayside	8	78	55	141
TOTAL	98	958	752	1,808

1989-90

Area	Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Argyll and Clyde	6	135	36·6	177·6
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	8	190	39·1	237·1
Fife, Lothian and Borders	16	321	99·4	436·4

1989-90

Area	Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	7	196	43·2	246·2
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	4	117	24·6	145·6
Greater Glasgow	14	151	117·9	282·9
Highland and Western Isles	8	95	10·0	113·0
Tayside	9	93	44·0	141·0
TOTAL	72	1,298	414·8	1,784·8

1990-91

Area	Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Argyll and Clyde	6	134	38·8	178·8
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	9	187	50·1	246·1
Fife, Lothian and Borders	17	327	109·6	453·6
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	9	196	71·5	276·5
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	4	128	32·4	164·4
Greater Glasgow	15	153	107·6	275·6
Highland and Western Isles	7	98	14·7	119·7
Tayside	9	94	40·8	143·8
TOTAL	76	1,317	465·5	1,858·5

1991-92

Area	Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Argyll and Clyde	6	140	56·9	202·9
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	8	197	79·5	284·5
Fife, Lothian and Borders	15	380	131·1	526·1
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	7	195	74·6	276·6
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	3	137	48·7	188·7
Greater Glasgow	14	160	91·4	265·4
Highland and Western Isles	7	126	20·5	265·5
Tayside	7	101	43·7	151·7
TOTAL	67	1,436	546·4	2,049·4

1992-93

Area	Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Argyll and Clyde	28	125	56·6	209·6
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	48	171	69·5	288·5
Fife, Lothian and Borders	70	319	142·3	531·5
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	43	157	81·4	281·4
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	25	125	46·7	196·7
Greater Glasgow	25	135	122·7	282·7
Highland and Western Isles	27	110	19·0	156·0
Tayside	22	88	45·2	155·2
TOTAL	288	1,230	583·4	2,101·4

1993-94

Area	Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Argyll and Clyde	27	127	57·4	211·4
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	49	171	76·5	296·5
Fife, Lothian and Borders	70	325	159·8	554·8
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	43	162	82·4	287·4
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	25	131	45·9	201·9

Area	1993-94 Leading ambulance person	Qualified ambulance technician	Basic grade	Total
Greater Glasgow	32	159	125·8	316·8
Highland and Western Isles	27	122	18·8	167·8
Tayside	22	88	48·6	158·6
TOTAL	295	1,285	615·2	2,195·2

n/a denotes not available.
The figures relate to vehicle crews.

Carpet Manufacturing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the state of the carpet manufacturing industry in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The latest full year figures show that the output of the Scottish carpet industry increased by almost 6·5 per cent. between 1991 and 1992. However this was against the background of a downward trend in output since 1989. Employment in the industry has been broadly stable since 1991 at around 1,500 employees.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to promote on the international market carpets designed and manufactured in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish carpet industry can benefit from a wide range of advice and assistance available from Scottish trade international, including the Government's overseas trade services. These include support for participation in industry specific overseas trade fairs. The Scottish Enterprise-funded Scottish textile design development scheme places design graduates with Scottish textile companies to assist in improving their design awareness and capabilities. The Scottish carpet industry has benefited from this scheme.

Ministerial Responsibilities

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the precise duties and responsibilities of each Minister in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The information requested by the hon. Member is included in the Cabinet Office publication "List of Ministerial Responsibilities". Copies are distributed to hon. Members by the Vote Office.

Councillors (Expenses)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to increase the *(a)* special responsibility payments, *(b)* allowances, *(c)* subsistence allowances and *(d)* travelling expense rates of elected members of Scottish local authorities in the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. Stewart: The system of councillors' allowances and the travel and subsistence allowances scheme are currently under review.

Coylton-Ballantrae Power Line

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the organisations which have submitted objections to the proposal by Scottish Power to construct a power line from Coylton to Ballantrae, and the total number of members of the public and hon. Members of both Houses of Parliament who have submitted objections by the final date designated for the submission by such non-statutory bodies and individuals.

Mr. Stewart: The 17 organisations listed below have submitted objections to the proposals.

Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
Ayrshire Tourist Board
Barr Community Council
Barhill Community Council
Burns Country Tourist Association
Coylton Branch SNP
Coylton Community Council
Crosshill, Straiton and Kirkmichael Community Council
The Grey Man Hillwalking Club
Leitrum Stop the Pylons Movement (Republic of Ireland)
National Farmers Union—Ayr Area
Pinwherry Community Association
Pinwherry Community Council
Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd.
Scottish Landowners Federation
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Stonehouse Heritage Group

In addition, approximately 5,500 representations have been received from members of the public and hon. Members of both Houses of Parliament.

Scottish Co-operative Development Company

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the role of the Scottish Co-operative Development Company in economic development; what support is offered by his Department and by Scottish Enterprise; what guidelines he has issued to local enterprise companies on their relationships with the Scottish Co-operative Development Company; and if he will allocate additional funding to the Scottish Co-operative Development Company for the development of a phoenix unit.

Mr. Stewart: The Government acknowledge that the Scottish Co-operative Development Company has performed a valuable role in helping to establish business co-operatives. One of the company's main sources of income is the urban programme, which is funded by the Scottish Office. The company currently receives no funding from Scottish Enterprise. It is open to local enterprise companies to contract with the Scottish Co-operative Development Company as they see fit; my right hon. Friend has issued no guidelines on this matter.

The question of funding for a phoenix unit will be considered when the company submits its proposals to the Scottish Office.

Co-operatives

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to encourage the development of retail, wholesale and manufacturing co-operatives.

Mr. Stewart: Co-operatives have benefited and will continue to benefit from the range of Government policies designed to encourage the development of small and medium-sized businesses. Scottish Office funding for a number of co-operative projects has been made available through the urban programme, and applications for funding for other such projects can still be made.

Patients

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many patients have been treated in national health service hospitals' private facilities in each year since 1987-88;

(2) how much income has been generated by private patient facilities in national health service hospitals in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Stewart: The number of private patients and the income generated are as follows:

Financial year	*Number*	*Income* £
1987-88	1,300	1,060,660
1988-89	1,139	1,078,452
1989-90	1,301	1,224,720
1990-91	1,430	1,354,542
1991-92	1,567	1,935,616
1992-93	[1]1,209	1,357,570

[1] Provisional figure.

Dementia

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many beds are provided for people with dementia by each health board in Scotland and expressed as a percentage of the elderly population.

Mr. Stewart: The number of patients in psychogeriatric beds in hospital with a diagnosis of dementia as at 31 March 1993, the latest date for which complete information is available is shown in the following table.

As at 31 March 1993

	Patients in hospital with a diagnosis of dementia	*Percentage of population 65+*
SCOTLAND	5,364	0·7
Argyll and Clyde	393	0·6
Ayrshire and Arran	298	0·5
Borders	157	0·8
Dumfries and Galloway	188	0·7
Fife	430	0·8
Forth Valley	223	0·6
Grampian	658	0·9
Greater Glasgow	1,003	0·7
Highland	217	0·7
Lanarkshire	417	0·6
Lothian	716	0·6
Orkney	—	—
Shetland	—	—
Tayside	599	0·9
Western Isles	65	1·2

These figures exclude those in geriatric units with diagnosis of dementia for whom separate information is not centrally held.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish targets for the reduction of NHS continuing care provision for elderly people and people with dementia for each health board by *(a)* 1996 and *(b)* 2001; and if he will explain the criteria on which these targets are based.

Mr. Stewart: There are no set targets for the reduction of NHS continuing care provision. It is for individual health boards to determine future in-patient bed numbers, based on assessment of patients who are likely to require continuing specialist medical and nursing supervision.

The scale and pace of any patient transfer programme is subject to local negotiation and agreement between the health and local authorities and founded on the basis of individual patient assessment.

Hospital Staff Redundancies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of redundancies among national health service hospital staff *(a)* by grade and *(b)* by reason for each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Stewart: Statistics on the redundancies in the NHS in Scotland are not collected centrally other than in respect of staff who are both over 50 years of age and have at least five years' reckonable service for superannuation purposes where a benefit is immediately payable under the National Health Service (Compensation for Premature Retirement) (Scotland) Regulations 1981. The total number of such premature retirement awards for the years since 1988-89 is as follows:

Year	*Number of cases*
1988-89	354
1989-90	1,040
1990-91	480
1991-92	625
1992-93	759

A breakdown by hospital staff only and by grade and by reason of redundancy is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Homicides (Firearms)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many homicides involving *(a)* shotguns and *(b)* other firearms have taken place as a result of domestic incidents in each police force area in each of the last 10 years; and how many of the victims in each case were women.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information held on homicides gives details of the relationship between the victim and the accused but does not separately identify incidents involving shotguns from those involving other firearms.

The available information is given in the table:

Total victims of homicide where the method of killing was shooting and the victim was a sibling, parent, spouse, whether separated or otherwise, cohabitee, lover or boyfriend etc., 1983-92[1]

Police force area	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Northern	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Grampian	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Tayside	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	—	1	—
Fife	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Lothians and Borders	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
Central	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	2	1	1	1	2	—	5	—	2	2

[1] Information as at 4 February 1994. The number of incidents identified as homicides may change as a result of subsequent court proceedings.

Female victims of homicide where the method of killing was shooting and the victim was a sibling, parent, spouse, whether separated or otherwise, cohabitee, lover or boyfriend etc., 1983-92[1]

Police force area	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Northern	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grampian	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	1	—
Fife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lothians and Borders	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Central	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	2	1	1	1	—	—	3	—	2	—

[1] Information as at 4 February 1994. The number of incidents identified as homicides may change as a result of subsequent court proceedings.

Local Government Pensions

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has to give to local authorities on enhancing the pensions of senior local government officers who choose to retire early; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The arrangements under which local authorities can make compensation payments to enhance the pensions of staff who retire prematurely on redundancy or in the interests of the efficiency of the service are set out in the Local Government (Compensation for Premature Retirement) (Scotland) Regulations 1979, as amended.

These arrangements are currently being reviewed, in consultation with the local authorities.

Cumbernauld Airport

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the sum realised from the sale of Cumbernauld airport.

Mr. Stewart: The airport was advertised for sale by Cumbernauld development corporation in 1993. Two formal offers were received and the development corporation sold the airport at a price of £71,000 to the existing operator and sitting tenant. The new owner is legally bound for the next 10 years to repay to the corporation any financial gains achieved from a change in use of the airport or 50 per cent. of any financial gains if the new owner extends at his cost the runway within five years from the date of sale. These conditions are intended to ensure that the new owner continues to operate and develop the airport for the benefit of the Cumbernauld area.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost of constructing Cumbernauld airport.

Mr. Stewart: A grass-surfaced airstrip was constructed by Cumbernauld development corporation in the 1950s. Information about the costs of construction and minor improvements in the period to 1986 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. In 1987 the corporation constructed an asphalt runway, apron and taxi-ways, hangarage and terminal buildings at a cost of £2·27 million, £0·97 million of which was provided by the European regional development fund.

Council House Sales

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total income received by each district council from the sales of council houses in each of the past five years; what percentage of these have been reclaimed by his Department, and what is the projected figure, from each council, for the building of new council housing in the next financial year.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The following table gives details of district council receipts from the sale of council houses for the years 1988-89 to 1992-93. The Department does not reclaim any such receipts.

Information on the numbers of new council houses which district councils plan to build in the next financial year is not held centrally.

£ million

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Berwickshire	1·264	0·860	0·705	0·824	0·988
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1·686	1·631	1·020	0·936	1·018
Roxburgh	2·225	1·626	1·184	1·401	1·260

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Tweeddale	0·532	0·581	0·346	0·315	0·527
Clackmannan	3·668	3·889	2·762	2·461	3·273
Falkirk	11·963	10·241	8·301	8·302	10·604
Stirling	4·716	5·714	4·748	4·691	5·678
Annandale and Eskdale	1·891	2·418	1·796	1·762	2·193
Nithsdale	3·824	2·876	1·953	1·890	2·288
Stewartry	0·861	0·950	0·675	0·931	0·988
Wigtown	1·249	1·003	1·054	1·233	2·367
Dunfermline	8·187	7·993	6·186	5·517	5·261
Kirkcaldy	6·752	7·515	6·982	7·247	6·991
North East Fife	2·901	3·958	2·224	2·778	2·529
Aberdeen	8·328	7·964	9·596	10·047	18·989
Banff and Buchan	3·465	3·275	2·729	4·007	4·919
Gordon	1·073	1·709	1·897	2·683	2·984
Kincardine and Deeside	0·860	0·718	0·853	1·442	2·048
Moray	4·238	4·693	3·196	3·933	3·813
Badenoch and Strathspey	0·612	0·807	0·390	0·516	0·471
Caithness	0·819	0·452	0·505	0·487	0·812
Inverness	1·985	3·111	2·705	2·446	3·839
Lochaber	1·389	1·858	1·700	1·266	1·348
Nairn	0·245	0·277	0·367	0·453	0·470
Ross and Cromarty	1·353	1·346	1·633	2·469	3·135
Skye and Lochalsh	0·346	0·199	0·400	0·334	0·398
Sutherland	0·420	0·362	0·327	0·706	0·730
East Lothian	10·633	8·239	5·545	6·849	6·271
Edinburgh	21·016	27·512	23·952	18·923	13·956
Midlothian	7·123	6·585	5·854	3·951	3·855
West Lothian	5·904	9·709	6·293	5·608	7·471
Argyll and Bute	1·635	2·369	2·898	3·818	3·226
Bearsden and Milngavie	0·605	0·943	1·319	1·057	0·820
Clydebank	4·355	4·689	5·964	4·539	4·855
Clydesdale	3·742	4·415	2·191	2·180	2·287
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1·787	1·744	1·130	1·348	1·439
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2·624	2·043	1·589	1·945	2·243
Cunninghame	7·714	9·658	6·458	5·724	4·917
Dumbarton	4·775	6·915	4·758	2·802	4·319
East Kilbride	1·028	0·881	0·645	0·625	0·774
Eastwood	0·895	0·787	0·731	0·334	0·720
Glasgow	29·199	45·912	46·957	41·513	39·163
Hamilton	7·870	10·427	9·317	6·473	10·166
Inverclyde	2·510	3·138	2·922	3·498	5·000
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	6·184	7·317	3·850	4·059	4·037
Kyle and Carrick	8·015	8·195	5·983	5·395	6·921
Monklands	6·452	10·853	8·306	6·256	9·661
Motherwell	9·531	11·530	12·600	9·383	10·415
Renfrew	13·306	15·964	11·584	10·432	11·984
Strathkelvin	5·513	4·474	3·358	3·808	4·228
Angus	4·096	3·837	2·999	3·809	3·306
Dundee	8·120	14·661	18·405	11·007	9·392
Perth and Kinross	4·999	6·147	5·369	5·537	5·835

Torness (Spent Fuel)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 17 December, *Official Report*, column *1025*, when he expects to make an announcement on the public inquiry into the spent fuel store at Torness.

Mr. Stewart: I have nothing to add to my earlier answer.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the present members of the Boundary Commission for Scotland; and for what terms they have been appointed.

Mr. Lang: The members of the Boundary Commission for Scotland are:

Madam Speaker, ex-officio, Chairman.

The Hon. Lord Davidson—appointed as deputy chairman by the Lord President of the Court of Session on 25 September 1985 and subsequently re-appointed.

Professor Urlan A. Wannop—appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland on 6 June 1983 and subsequently re-appointed.

Mr. Adam R. Napier—appointed by the Secretary of State on 2 May 1985 and subsequently re-appointed.

The appointed member's terms of office expire on 31 December 1996.

Community Action Volunteers Scheme

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if child care provision or payments for the cost of child care or care of infirm relatives will be made available for participants on the community action volunteers scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mrs. Maria Fyfe, dated 9 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Employment has asked met to reply to your question to the Secretary of State for Scotland about Community Action as this programme is being delivered by the Employment Service.

In line with other Employment Service programmes, there are no specific arrangements to provide child care or expenses to cover the cost of child care or care of infirm relatives for Community Action participants.

Community Action is, though, a part-time programme consisting of a minimum of 18 hours work experience and three hours jobsearch activity each week. This allows some flexibility in participation and programme providers are encouraged to exercise this flexibility in order to allow people with caring responsibilities to attend. At their discretion, providers are able to make child care facilities available to participants. A part of the payment made to providers can be used as a contribution for this purpose.

Participation in the programme is, though, in all cases, voluntary.

I hope this is helpful.

Business Bureaucracy

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives his Department have undertaken to reduce bureaucracy for businesses in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The Scottish Office, in common with all Government Departments, actively pursues the objectives of the deregulation initiative. These include the removal or streamlining of regulations which add to business costs and threaten competitiveness. It is intended that the regulatory burden on business be as light as possible without reducing important standards of protection for individuals, business or the environment. The current main elements of the deregulation initiative include the publication of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. Details of other measures are contained in a variety of booklets published by, and available from, the Department of Trade and Industry deregulation unit. Copies have also been placed in the Library.

Arable Area Payments

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many landowners in Scotland are receiving annual payments under the arable area payments scheme in the latest financial year of *(a)* up to £100,000, *(b)* between £100,000 and £500,000, *(c)* between £500,000 and £1,000,000 and *(d)* over £1,000,000; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* Under the arable area payments scheme in the current financial year, 9,401 payments of up to £100,000 were made to Scottish producers and a further seven payments of between £100,000 and £500,000. There have been no payments in excess of £500,000.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many cases payments to farmers and landowners under the arable area payments scheme have been withheld or recovered in Scotland; what is the amount of money withheld or recovered in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* Every case in which payments have to be withheld or recovered, for whatever reason, is examined very carefully and applicants have an opportunity to comment before a final decision is taken. This means that it is only possible to provide very provisional figures at this stage. Over 20 cases have so far been reduced or withheld entirely but there are further cases still under consideration. These figures exclude penalties for late applications and adjustments made following corrections notified by the applicant under the special arrangements which applied in 1993 for dealing with genuine errors in the completion of the IACS forms. The total amounts withheld in individual cases vary considerably.

Abortion

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish figures for the number of terminations of pregnancies occurring in Scotland in 1992 *(a)* by age, *(b)* by district health authority and *(c)* by gestation and the numbers being carried out within and outside the national health service.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* The information requested is published in "Scottish Health Statistics 1993", which is available in the Library of the House.

Roman Catholic Schools

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Archbishop of Glasgow, in respect of a meeting to discuss the implications for Roman Catholic schools of local government reorganisation; and what response he has made.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend and I have corresponded on a number of occasions with the Roman Catholic Church authorities, including the Archbishop of Glasgow, about representations which the Church has made about local government re-organisation and we have indicated our willingness to meet to discuss matters further.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Security Commission.

Mr. Waldegrave: The members of the Security Commission are:

The right hon. the Lord Lloyd of Berwick (Chairman)
The right hon. Lord Justice Butler-Sloss (Alternative Chairman)
Sir John Blelloch, KCB
Lieutenant General Sir Derek Boorman, KCB
Sir Christopher Curwen, KCMG
Lord Tombs of Brailes
Sir Patrick Wright, GCMG

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Advertising.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current membership of the Advisory Committee on Advertising is:

Mr. Brian Nicholson (Chairman)
Mr. Charles Auld
Mrs. Anne Ferguson

Mr. Howard Mann
Mr. John Mellon
Mr. Eric Nicoli
Mr. Nick Phillips
Mr. Richard Spelman

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the subjects on which the Office of Public Service and Science or its predecessors answered parliamentary questions but which are not referred by him to an executive agency.

Mr. David Davis: Next steps agency chief executives would usually be asked to reply to parliamentary questions about the day-to-day operational matters of their agency and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in their agency's framework document.

Bills (Drafting)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will consider allowing hon. Members to seek advice from parliamentary counsel on the drafting of parliamentary Bills which have been duly presented to the House.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the letter I sent him on 10 January.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Fraud

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many employees were judged to be guilty of fraud in his Department in each year since 1989; and how many were dismissed.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the Departments and agencies for which I am responsible, and in other areas which fall to the Cabinet Office vote, the figures are:

	Employees judged to be guilty of fraud	*Employees dismissed*
1989	Nil	—
1990	[1]Nil	—
1991	2	1
1992	Nil	—
1993	2	2

[1] Two loaned officers were included in the response of their parent Department.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his Department's policy for dealing with employees found guilty of fraud.

Mr. Waldegrave: Employees found guilty of fraud in my Departments are dealt with under their disciplinary procedures and where appropriate the criminal code. The disciplinary procedures provide for a range of penalties including dismissal.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the National Film and Television School.

Mr. Brooke: The current governors of the board of the National Film and Television School are:

Mr. David Puttnam (Chairman)
Mr. Andy Allan
Ms Moria Armstrong
Lord Brabourne CBE
Ms Barbara Grigor
Ms Linda James
Ms Sue Lawley
Mr. Gus MacDonald
Mr. Frank McGettigan
Mr. Jonathan Powell
Ms Sarah Radclyffe
Mr. Alan Sapper
Ms Noella Smith
Mr. Brian Tesler CBE
Ms Christine Walker
Mr. Charles Wesoky
Mr. Michael William-Jones
Mr. Euryn Ogwen Williams
Mr. Will Wyatt
Mr. Alan Yentob

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the regional councils for sport and recreation.

Mr. Brooke: I appoint seven members of each of the regional councils for sport and recreation, including the chairman and one vice-chairman. The current appointees are:

Northern
Sam Stoker (Chairman)
Michael Berry (Vice-Chairman)
Steve Cram MBE
Mrs. Joan Harrison
Ms Irene Lucas
Bobby Moncur
Ted Wrangham

North West
Jim Cochrane CBE (Chairman)
Richard Greenwood (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Marie Birkenhead
Tony Cann
Alan Pearson

Yorkshire and Humberside
David Oxley OBE (Chairman)
Brigadier Dennis Shuttleworth (Vice-Chairman)
John Cornwell
Roger Greenwood
Brian Hayhurst
Mrs. Stephanie Park
Professor Margaret Talbot OBE

East Midlands
Andrew Hancock (Chairman)
Chris Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Ms Eileen Langsley
Colin Rains

James Rawson
Peter Wright

Eastern
Trevor Brooking MBE (Chairman)
Mike Turner (Vice-Chairman)
Dr. Thomas Crisp
Peter Edwards
Ms Liz Hobbs MBE
Tom McNab
Ms Fatima Whitbread MBE

London
Fred Smallbone (Chairman)
John Lelliott (Vice-Chairman)
Peter Nathan
Andy Ripley
Reverend Theo Samuel
Reg Scarlett
Raman Subba Row CBE

South East
Geoffrey Dunn (Chairman)
Dr. Ida Webb (Vice-Chairman)
John Barclay
Miss Suzanne Law
Roger Quinton
Ms Dinah Simmons
Mike Whittingham

Southern
Mrs. Phyllis Avery (Chairman)
David Duckham MBE
Brian Hall
John Leaning
Mrs. Rosalie Monbiot OBE
Steven Redgrave MBE

South Western
Don Perry (Chairman)
Professor Neil Armstrong (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs. Linda Bishop-Bailey
Mrs. Christina Cahill
Robert Reeves
Dr. Ann Trotman MBE

West Midlands
Jim Munn MBE (Chairman)
David Moorcroft (Vice-Chairman)
Richard Callicott
Mrs Zabida Choudhry
Roger Pask
Harry Wrublewski

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Crafts Council.

Mr. Brooke: The current members of the Crafts Council are as follows:
Sir Nigel Broakes (Chairman)
Tony Doggart (Vice-Chairman)
Brian Asquith
Polly Binns
Michaela Butter
Elizabeth Esteve-Coll
Janet Fitch
Ewen Henderson
Luke Hughes
Jonathan Lane
Jeremy Newton
Professor Eric Spiller
Lady Vaizey
Professor David Vaughan
Moria Vincentelli

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Arts Council.

Mr. Brooke: The current members of the Arts Council of Great Britain are as follows:
Lord Palumbo of Walbrook (Chairman)
Denys Hodson (Vice Chairman)
Beverley Anderson
William Brown
Professor Christopher Frayling
Peter Gummer
Sir Ernest Hall
Michael Holroyd
Thelma Holt
Clare Mulholland
Mathew Prichard
Clive Priestley
Stella Robinson
Prudence Skene
Anthony Smith
Robert Southgate
Professor Colin St. John Wilson

Television Licence Fee

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when the reduction in the television licence fee for registered blind persons was first introduced; when it was set at £1·25; and what plans he has to increase it.

Mr. Brooke: The reduction in the television licence fee for registered blind people dates from the introduction of combined television and radio licences in 1946, when registered blind people became entitled to a reduction equivalent to the amount of the radio licence fee. This reduction replaced free radio licences for registered blind people, a concession believed to have been first introduced in 1926. Radio licences were abolished in 1971. The reduction in the television licence fee for registered blind people has remained at £1·25 ever since. The Government have no plans at present to increase the value of the concession.

National Lottery

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he proposes to take to ensure that tickets for the national lottery are not sold to children, or in inappropriate places.

Mr. Brooke: I have today laid before this House regulations under section 12 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 to establish a number of restrictions on the manner in which national lottery tickets may be sold. Specifically, these regulations prohibit:

the sale of tickets to any person under the age of 16;
the sale of tickets in the street or at a person's home;
sales of tickets in licensed betting offices, at racetracks, in amusement arcades, and in any bingo or gaming club;
the sale of tickets by unattended vending machines.

These regulations will ensure that the sale of national lottery tickets is properly controlled without creating unnecessary restrictions which would interfere with the selected operator's ability to make the lottery the great success we all expect.

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made as to the adequacy of the administrative arrangements for the Arts Council as a channel for distributing money flowing from the proposed national lottery.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The Arts Council has been selected as a channel for distributing national lottery money, because of its experience and expertise in arts funding. The council is currently setting in place the necessary administrative arrangements, which I have no doubt will be adequate to discharge its responsibilities effectively.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Brooke: There has been no change in this Department from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, columns *513-14*, regarding accommodation at the occupied royal palaces, on what basis and by whom it is determined which staff pay rent, how it is assessed and reviewed and by whom; to whom it is paid; and how many pay rent for accommodation relating to each of the households.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* As a general rule, more senior staff pay rent and more junior staff have the benefit of accommodation taken into account in determining wage levels. The postholders who pay rent were determined in discussion with the Treasury some years ago.

Rent, referred to as official accommodation deduction, is paid by 35 of the 220 employees to whom accommodation is provided. The rent or OAD is set at 8.5 per cent. of pre-tax salary, as notified by the Treasury. The amount deducted therefore increases automatically in line with salary increases. Those who pay rent are all employees of the Queen's household. The benefit of paying the reduced salary—the gross salary less the OAD—accrues to the account from which the salary is paid, principally the Queen's civil list or the grant in aid.

For other employees, the value of accommodation is taken into account in determining wage salary levels. In the past, this was not done on a consistent basis for all employees. However, since the revised civil list arrangements were entered into with effect from 1 January 1991, the household has undertaken a complete review of its grading and salary structure, including the introduction of performance-related pay, and pay levels for each post now take into account the value of the benefit of accommodation on a formalised basis. For the majority of the residences, which are modest flats or cottages, the value is taken as the local authority rent for a similar-sized property. The account from which the salary is paid again benefits from the reduced salary cost.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the maximum permitted speeds and minimum permitted altitudes for Royal Air Force Vulcan aircraft, prior to their withdrawal from the strike/attack role, during low-level sorties while deployed to Nellis air force base, Nevada, for Red Flag exercises.

Mr. Hanley: Although records of heights and speeds flown by RAF Vulcan aircraft overseas are not available, inquiries indicate that the maximum permitted speed of 350 knots and minimum height of 300ft, which applied in the United Kingdom low-flying system, were also observed by Vulcan aircrew participating in red flag exercises; where appropriate aircraft would, however, have been authorised to fly down to 100ft to allow them to take full advantage of the weather conditions and facilities offered by these exercises.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of recording the noise level generated by Hawk aircraft flying at 150ft during Exercise Luce Belle.

Mr. Hanley: A recording of the noise generated by the Hawk aircraft at 150ft was taken during Exercise Luce Belle on the basis that the minimum authorised altitude for the aircraft is 100ft above ground level as explained in my answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *819*, to the hon. Member.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level sorties were flown over the United Kingdom by each specified foreign air arm in each month since September 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of sorties flown by aircraft of foreign air forces in the United Kingdom low-flying system in each month since September 1993 to December 1993, the most recent month for which figures are available, were as follows:

	October	*November*	*December*
Netherlands	—	—	—
France	—	2	—
Italy	—	8	—
Denmark	—	—	3
United States of America	—	—	—
Germany	—	—	—
Belgium	—	—	—
Canada	—	—	—
Spain	—	—	—
Portugal	2	—	—
Turkey	—	—	—
Total	2	10	3

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of low-flying sorties carried out by each aircraft type in each month since June 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of low-flying sorties by aircraft type carried out in the United Kingdom for the period July 1993 to December 1993, the most recent month for which figures are available, were as follows:

Aircraft Type	July	August	September	October	November	December
Buccaneer	100	139	115	137	74	54
Harrier	733	406	388	543	486	471
Hawk	1,793	1,400	1,474	1,101	1,137	486
Jaguar	625	505	444	617	301	390
Jet Provost	76	69	50	43	—	—
Tornado	2,045	1,953	1,893	1,958	1,504	1,280
Tucano	871	939	801	636	468	380
F-15	235	325	352	178	279	288
F-111	266	205	130	62	34	5
Other Aircraft (including helicopters)	4,887	3,712	4,871	3,613	3,984	2,315
Total	11,631	9,653	10,518	8,888	8,267	5,669

The figures in the table do not include the number of sorties flown within LFA 10 as the information is not yet available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information was available to his Department on the frequency of night low flying over the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland when the decision was made not to include those areas in the system of numbered night low-flying areas; and if he will make a statement on the means used *(a)* to deconflict aircraft flying at low level at night over these areas and *(b)* to identify the aircraft involved in the event of a public complaint about military low flying at night over these areas.

Mr. Hanley: Information available to my Department indicates that only a small amount of night low flying is carried out in these areas, the majority of which is conducted during exercises. Deconflicting arrangements are made during the planning and briefing for such exercises. No complaints about night low flying over these areas have been received in the last five years.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of complaints received from addresses in each of the low flying areas in the United Kingdom in 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Low flying area	Numbers of complaints or inquiries
1	278
2	836
3	19
4	368
5	516
6	374
7	556
8	232
9	69
10	14
11	388
12	230
13	25
14	459
16	583
17	531
18	205

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current minimum annual number of low-level flying hours required for combat ready Tornado GR1 pilots to maintain their currency to fly at 250ft; and what is the specified period of time beyond which pilots who have not flown at 250ft are required to carry out requalification.

Mr. Hanley: A Tornado GR1 pilot is required to complete a minimum of 80 low level sorties during annual training. Each low level sortie must include a minimum of 20 minutes of low flying at 250ft. There is no specified period of time beyond which re-qualification becomes necessary. However, if a combat ready pilot is unable to fly at low level for a period of time his squadron will implement a programme of workdown training prior to authorising him to resume unrestricted low flying at 250ft.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which document contains the regulation requiring that fixed low-flying routes are *(a)* used as little as possible and *(b)* replaced are regular intervals; and what maximum interval between such replacements is stipulated.

Mr. Hanley: The regulation requiring fixed routes to be used as little as possible and to be replaced at regular intervals is contained in the United Kingdom military low flying handbook. The stipulation is that fixed routes must be replaced at least twice a year.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the maximum permitted speeds and minimum permitted altitudes for Royal Air Force Vulcan aircraft, prior to their withdrawal from the strike/attack role, while conducting low-level training from Goose Bay, Canada; and if any such training was conducted outside fixed low level training routes.

Mr. Hanley: Although records of heights and speeds flown by RAF Vulcan aircraft overseas are not available, inquiries indicate that the maximum permitted speeds of 350 knots and the minimum height of 300ft, which applied to the United Kingdom low flying system, were also observed at Goose bay, apart from rare occasions when Vulcans were permitted to fly down to 100ft in preparation for red flag exercises. None of these sorties would have taken place outside fixed low-level training routes.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the operating authorities of low flying areas 2P, 3, 9 and 10 are permitted to allow fast jet aircraft to enter their low flying area when helicopters are also operating in the area at low level.

Mr. Hanley: Yes, the co-ordinating authorities of low-flying areas 2P, 3, 9 and 10 may, at their discretion, authorise fixed wing aircraft to enter the areas when helicopters are operating at low level.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of low-flying movements in the United Kingdom low flying system in 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The number of low-flying movements carried out in the United Kingdom low flying system in 1993 was 262,973. These figures do not include the number of movements flown within the newly created low-flying area 10. Statistics for this area are not yet available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties were flown over the United Kingdom by *(a)* Hercules aircraft and *(b)* all types of helicopters during 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of low-flying sorties carried out in the United Kingdom by Hercules aircraft and helicopters during 1993 were as follows:

Year	*Hercules*	*Helicopters*
1993	2,242	41,493

These figures do not include the number of sorties flown within low-flying area 10 as this information is not yet available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to restricting the low flying avoidance area status of gliding sites on weekdays to those locations whose operators have been advised by his Department of specific weekday activity.

Mr. Hanley: The Civil Aviation Authority provide the location and operating times of all glider sites to the headquarters, military air traffic operations. Sites operating on a weekday are granted avoidance status on the basis of the information provided.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current minimum annual number of flying hours required for combat-ready Tornado GR1 pilots to maintain their currency to fly using terrain-following radar in instrument meteorological conditions *(a)* in daylight and *(b)* at night; what is the specified period of time beyond which a qualification to fly in these conditions lapses; and what changes have taken place in these requirements since 1989.

Mr. Hanley: A combat ready Tornado GR1 pilot is required to complete a minimum of eight hours automatic terrain following radar—TFR—flying per year. No distinction is made between TFR flying in instrument meteorological conditions—IMC—by day or night. IMC TFR currency lapses if no qualifying sortie has been flown in the last 30 days. Once a pilot's TFR currency has lapsed he is required to complete a single 20 minute TFR sortie in visual meteorological conditions—VMC—prior to recommencing IMC training. Since 1989 the currency requirement for IMC TFR flying has reduced from 60 days to 30 days.

USAF F-15E

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the report on the recent noise measurement trial involving the US air force F-15E aircraft.

Mr. Hanley: A final analysis of the results of the F-15E noise trial is not yet available. A copy of the report of the trial will be placed in the Library of the House when it has been completed.

Air Misses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the date, location, aircraft type involved, altitude and joint airmiss working group determination of risk category and cause, for each air miss involving a military aircraft in 1993.

Mr. Hanley: I will arrange for a copy of the list of all airmiss reports involving military aircraft in 1993, and which have been investigated to date by the joint airmiss working group, to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the joint airmiss working group report on the air miss between an RAF Tornado and a Jet Ranger helicopter over Caithness on 8 April 1992.

Mr. Hanley: A copy of the report is being placed in the Library of the House.

Salisbury (Disturbance)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement in respect of the disturbance caused by troops from the 22 Royal Engineers and the 1 Battalion Irish Guards in Salisbury.

Mr. Hanley: On the night of 20-21 January in Salisbury two groups of soldiers were involved in a fight near a taxi rank. The military authorities are taking appropriate disciplinary action.

No civilians were involved in the incident, no serious injuries were sustained and there was no damage to property.

HMS Birmingham (Sabotage)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the results of the investigations carried out in respect of the suspected sabotage on HMS Birmingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The investigations into the alleged sabotage onboard HMS Birmingham are continuing. I will write to the hon. Member once these have been completed.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Secretary of State in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence is not allocated his own individual budget for travel purposes.

From our records, the costs of his internal and overseas travel from 11 April 1992 to 31 January 1994 can be assessed as follows:

	Internal £	*Overseas* £
1992-93 (from 11 April 1992)	37,146	222,464
1993-94 (to date)	43,365	187,153

Figures are approximate and cover the costs of Royal Air Force and civil flights. The 'internal' column includes some flights to Europe which it has not possible to identify separately in the time available.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what ministerial visits have been made by representatives of his Department, over each of the last three years to *(a)* Indonesia, *(b)* Jordan, *(c)* Oman, *(d)* Nigeria, *(e)* Ecuador, *(f)* Malaysia and *(g)* India; and what was their main purpose in each case.

Mr. Hanley: Official visits by Ministers to the countries listed have been as follows:

Indonesia
Secretary of State—1991, 1993
Under-Secretary of State (Armed Forces)—1991

Jordan
None

Oman
Secretary of State—1992, 1994
Minister (Defence Procurement)—1991, 1992, 1993

Nigeria
None

Ecuador
Minister (Defence Procurement)—1992

Malaysia
Secretary of State—1991, 1993
Minister (Defence Procurement)—1991
Under-Secretary of State—1992, 1993
Under-Secretary of State (Armed Forces)—1991

India
Under-Secretary of State—1993

Ministerial visits are generally made to maintain and improve our defence relations with the host country. In each case a broad range of issues was discussed.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the value of all refurbishment, upgrading and new build work carried out at RAF Chivenor over the last five years.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the Answer I gave on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *918-19*.

HMS Britannia

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates and places visited by HMS Britannia during its 1993 Mediterranean, Gulf and Indian ocean tour; which United Kingdom companies used the tour to promote their wares; what was the total cost of the tour; and what percentage of this cost was met by the companies.

Mr. Hanley: During HM Yacht Britannia's 1993 tour of the Mediterranean, Gulf and Indian ocean, port visits were made on the following occasions:
Gibraltar—20-21 September
Malta—24 September-1 October
Souda Bay—3 October
Istanbul—5-9 October
Piraeus—11-14 October
Cyprus—16-25 October
Djibouti—1 November
Dammam—7-9 November
Abu Dhabi—10-12 November
Bombay—15-19 November
Aden—24-25 November
Suez—30 November
Souda Bay—2 December
Gibraltar—6 December

Opportunities were taken to promote British business during the vists to Istanbul and Bombay. At Istanbul the following companies attended, under the auspices of British invisibles:
Barclays de Zoete Wedd
Barings International Finance
Barings PLC
Barings Security Ltd
Clyde and Co
Coopers and Lybrand
Hill Samuel Bank
Kleinwort Benson PLC
McKenna and Co
SG Warburg and Co Ltd
SG Warburg Group PLC

At Bombay, the royal yacht hosted 95 British companies; I shall place a copy of the list of these companies in the Library of the House.

We do not maintain information on the costs of individual tours. Companies are required to pay additional costs associated with the hospitality afforded them.

Belize

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel are currently in Belize; and what plans there are to change this level in the next three years.

Mr. Hanley: Plans to evolve the British garrison in Belize into a training presence were announced to Parliament on 13 May 1993 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford at column *561*. The draw-down of the garrison accordingly began on 1 January 1994 and there are currently around 1,300 service and civilian personnel in Belize. The draw-down will be completed by the end of September 1994. Thereafter, we plan to begin a programme of jungle training deployments from the United Kingdom, hosted by a resident training team in Belize.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what recent assessment has been made of persistence in the oceanic environment of chemical weapon agents used in *(a)* Operation Harness, *(b)* Operation Ozone and *(c)* Operation Negation in the Bahamas in the 1940s and 1950s;

(2) what recent assessments have been made by his Department into the persistence in the environment of chemical pathogens used in Operation Cauldron in Scottish waters off Stornaway in 1952 and Operation Hesperus in Scottish waters in 1953.

Mr. Hanley: These are matters for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment—CBDE—under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham S. Pearson to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 9 February 1994:

Parliamentary Questions 26 and 519, Order Papers 2 and 3 February 1994

1. Your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what assessment has been made of the persistence in the environment of the biological agents used in Operations HARNESS, OZONE and NEGATION in the Bahamas in the 1940s and 1950s and in Operations CAULDRON and HESPERUS in the Scottish waters in 1952 and 1953 have been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The biological agents in these trials were disseminated from point sources either instantaneously or for a few minutes. As soon as the agents began their down-wind travel as an aerosol, the living microorganisms started to die naturally as a result of exposure to such factors as solar radiation. In addition, the agent would be diluted continuously to an increasing extent in the atmosphere so that the concentration rapidly dropped below one that might present any danger. Finally, gravitational forces would cause agent particles to be deposited on the sea. Any agent particles falling into the sea would be massively diluted as well as killed by the bactericidal and virucidal effects of the sea water.

3. Thus dilution into the atmosphere, deposition of particles into the sea and the progressive decay of the microorganisms with ensuing loss of viability and infectivity meant that the biological agent aerosols have a finite life. In effect, the biological agents ceased to exist after some period of time and distance down-wind.

4. Conditions were selected for these trials and downwind safety areas delineated from which shipping was kept away to ensure that there was no hazard to the public or to the environment.

Service Personnel (Scotland)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table showing the numbers of service personnel stationed in Scotland during each of the last 15 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of United Kingdom regular forces stationed in Scotland, as at 1 July 1993, were as follows:

	Number
1979	19,016
1980	18,088
1981	18,943
1982	19,005
1983	18,732
1984	20,646
1985	20,108
1986	19,701
1987	19,627
1988	19,288
1989	20,035
1990	19,253
1991	18,246
1992	18,760
1993	19,000

Gulf War (Foreign Government Payments)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what payments the British Government received from foreign Governments following the conclusion of the Gulf war; on what conditions the money was paid out; and on what it was spent;

(2) if he will list the items on which the £660 million donated by the Kuwaiti Government to the British Government following the conclusion of the Gulf war was spent;

(3) whether any of the £660 million paid by the Kuwaiti Government to the British Government following the conclusion of the Gulf war was given on the understanding that it would be paid to British service men as a bonus; and what amount was so paid;

(4) what conditions were attached to the payment by the Kuwaiti Government to the British Government of £660 million following the conclusion of the Gulf war.

Mr. Hanley: Cash contributions made by other Governments towards the cost of the Gulf conflict are detailed in the answer given my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) on 16 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *46-47*. These contributions, including that of the Government of Kuwait, were made unconditionally, save for those from Japan and Norway, who requested that their contributions be for logistical costs.

Apart from £25,000,000 contributed by Japan taken as an appropriation-in-aid of the Defence Budget in 1990-91, cash contributions were accounted for as consolidated fund extra receipts in the defence appropriation accounts, and thus offset the Government's increased expenditure arising from the conflict. Details of the Government's additional costs are listed in the minutes of evidence, pages 2 and 3, of the fifty-fifth report of the Committee of Public Accounts.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Hanley: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Dwellings

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number and location of *(a)* dwellings and *(b)* vacant dwellings by his Department in (i) London, (ii) Birmingham, (iii) Lancashire and (iv) Berkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: As at 31 December 1993 the Ministry of Defence owned the following dwellings and vacant dwellings in London, Birmingham, Lancashire and Berkshire.

Total dwellings	*London*	*Birmingham*	*Lancashire*	*Berkshire*
Service married quarters	3,764	102	425	1,245
MOD Civilian Houses	0	0	0	219
Total	3,764	102	425	1,464
Vacant Dwellings				
Service married quarters	567	40	46	71

Total dwellings				London	Birmingham	Lancashire	Berkshire
	MOD Civilian Houses	0	0	0	44		
	Total	567	40	46	115		

The majority of the vacant married quarters were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation or were already allocated to Service families who were due to move in shortly. In addition 229 vacant married quarters in London and 206 tenanted civilian houses in Berkshire were in the process of being sold.

Service Pay Award

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what savings will result from the decision to award pay rises to service personnel in two stages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The cost in 1994-95 of implementing in full the recommendations of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body from 1 April 1994, which were higher than for any other of the report groups, would be some £206,000,000. Staging of the award with all personnel receiving an increase of 2·7 per cent. on 1 April and the balance of the award on 1 January 1995, is estimaed to cost £166,000,000 in 1994-95. The saving is therefore £40,000,000.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what plans he has to review pay, allowances, and terms of employment for service personnel; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has for the appointment of an independent body who will review pay, allowances, and terms of employment for service personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: In the light of changes in military commitments and deployment patterns, plans are in hand for a major independent review of service career and manpower structures and terms and conditions of service, to ensure that we have arrangements which are appropriate to the early part of the 21st century. We envisage that a review team comprising an independent Chairman and some three or four independent members should undertake such a study, which is expected to last about a year. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, hopes to make appointments to the team shortly. The Armed Forces Pay Review Body will separately make recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the normal way on the levels of service pay in 1995-96.

Performance Pay

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which management consultants have been appointed to examine performance pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The MOD like other Government Departments, has introduced a system of performance related pay for its civilian staff based on overall annual staff report markings. This has been entirely achieved by the effective use of my Department's manpower and expertise, as well as through consultation with other Government Departments undergoing the same process. The use of external management consultants was unnecessary.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has one paper shredding machine in his private office. Records of the number of such machines in my Department are not held centrally and the information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

RAF Expenditure (Curtains)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total expenditure by the RAF on curtains in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* In common with many other Defence accommodation stores, curtains are purchased on a tri-service basis; expenditure on those bought for the RAF is not recorded separately and could not be made available without disproportionate cost.

RAF Innsworth (Accommodation)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been spent on improving accommodation assigned to *(a)* commanding officers, *(b)* other officers and *(c)* other ranks at RAF Innsworth in each year for the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* At RAF Innsworth, in financial year 1992-93 some £38,000 was spent on improving accommodation assigned to commanding officers and some £7,000 on improving accommodation assigned to other officers; there was no such expenditure on accommodation assigned to other ranks. There was no expenditure on improving accommodation in financial year 1991-92 and there has been no such expenditure in financial year 1993-94.

Haymes Garth

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what money has been spent on new curtains for Ministry of Defence property near Cheltenham known as Haymes Garth in each of the last three years;

(2) how much money has been spent on improving Ministry of Defence property near Cheltenham known as Haymes Garth in each of the last three years.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* Expenditure at Haymes Garth in financial year 1991-92 comprises some £3,000 on maintenance; in financial year 1992-93 comprised some £250,000 on maintenance,

fittings and improvements, which included some £33,000 on new curtains and window treatments and some £31,000 on improvements to the property. There has been no such expenditure in Financial Year 1993-94.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who are the members currently appointed to the Occupational Pensions board.

Mr. Hague: Members currently appointed to the Occupational Pensions Board are:

Mr. Peter D. Carr, CBE—chairman
Miss Harriet Dawes—deputy chairman
Mr. Ron Amy
Mrs. Rosemary Brown
Mr. Robin Ellison
Mr. Alan Herbert
Mr. Andrew Lyburn
Mr. Alan Pickering
Mr. William Ramsay
Mr. Martin Slack
Mr. Ken Thomas
Miss Patricia Triggs

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who are the members currently appointed to the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council.

Mr. Scott: The current members of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council are:

Professor J. M. Harrington CBE, chairman—Professor of occupational health, university of Birmingham.
Mr. P. E. Arscott OBE—Health and safety consultant.
Dr. J. Asherson—Head of health and safety and land use, CBI.
Miss J. C. Brown—Independent researcher in social policy.
Mrs. J. Carter—Member of TUC general council.
Professor M. J. Cinnamond—Professor of otorhinolaryngology, Queen's university of Belfast.
Dr. D. N. M. Coggon—Reader in occupational and environmental medicine, MRC environmental epidemiology unit.
Professor A. D. Dayan—Professor of toxicology, St. Bartholomews hospital medical college.
Dr. C. P. Juniper—Senior medical adviser, Unilever plc.
Mr. T. Mawer—Lawyer.
Professor A. J. Newman Taylor OBE—Consultant physician, National Heart and Lung Institute.
Mr. R. Pickering—National president, GMB.
Dr. L. Rushton—Senior lecturer in medical statistics, university of Nottingham.
Dr. C. Taylor—Chief medical officer, British Steel.
Mr. O. D. Tudor—Assistant secretary, TUC.
Mrs. M. Twomey—Member of TUC.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who are the members currently appointed to the Central Adjudication Services.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State appoints the chief adjudication officer, CAO, and the chief child support officer, CCSO. Mr. Ken Bellamy CBE, a full-time civil servant, is currently appointed as both CAO and CCSO. He heads Central Adjudication Services and is responsible for the recruitment of his support staff, who are also civil servants.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Secretary of State in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Hague: The travel and subsistence budget for all Department of social security Ministers and their private office staff was set at £364,817 for 1992-93 and £381,234 for 1993-94. There is not a separate allocation for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State within that.

Actual expenditure on the Secretary of State's travel within this country was £512·50 between 11 April 1992 and 10 April 1993 and £349·30 from 11 April 1993 to date. The expenditure on overseas travel for the same periods was £4,788·51 and £184·54 respectively.

In addition, the Secretary of State has the use of a car from the Government car service. The cost of this service was £48,642·40 for 1992-93 and £37,425·50 for 1993-94 up to the end of December 1993.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for sickness and incapacity benefits were referred to the regional medical services in each quarter since January 1992; how many of these cases resulted in medical examinations; and what were the outcomes *(a)* where examinations took place and *(b)* where they did not.

Mr. Scott: Latest available figures are in the table.

	March 1992	*June 1992*	*September 1992*	*December 1992*	*March 1993*	*June 1993*	*September 1993*
Total references cleared	222,000	201,000	219,000	227,000	225,000	210,000	262,000
Where examinations took place	76,000	76,000	75,000	78,000	72,000	65,000	87,000
Capable of alternative work	15,000	14,000	15,000	15,000	18,000	19,000	28,000
Capable of normal occupation	9,000	10,000	9,000	11,000	8,000	6,000	6,000
Incapable of work after examination	52,000	51,000	51,000	51,000	46,000	40,000	52,000
No examination	146,000	125,000	144,000	149,000	153,000	145,000	176,000
Incapable of work—not examined	128,000	106,000	125,000	130,000	134,000	127,000	152,000
Failed to attend examination	15,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	15,000	20,000
Claim terminated before examination	4,000	4,000	3,000	2,000	3,000	3,000	4,000

Notes:
1. Based upon a 100 per cent. count of cases, rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. Figures for England and Wales include severe disablement allowance references.

Correspondence

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to receive and respond formally to letters from right hon. and hon. Members

marked for his personal attention; if he will make it his policy to ensure that letters to him are not referred to the chief executives of executive agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Next steps agency chief executives are asked to reply on operational matters of their agencies and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in the agency's framework document. Before letters are transferred to chief executives they are always seen by Ministers to decide whether or not a ministerial response is appropriate.

Retirement Pensions (Women)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of women who could have received 25 per cent. retirement pension for some years before their husbands retired if they had revoked their election timeously and paid modest class 1 contributions.

Mr. Hague: Records are not kept in a way which would enable a reliable estimate to be made.

Benefits Agency

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) in what circumstances the Benefits Agency informs citizens of gaps in their contributions; and if it is practice to inform citizens in time to make up these contributions before the year in which they reach pensionable age;

(2) what policy or guidelines his Department has laid down for the executive agency on advising married women who have elected to pay reduced contributions about the state of their contribution record;

(3) if he will issue new instructions that married women or widows paying reduced contributions are advised about their records several years before reaching pensionable age in order to be in time to make a choice on changing to full contributions.

Mr. Hague: Approximately 18 months after the end of each tax year the Contributions Agency issues statements to those people who, according to their records, have paid insufficient national insurance contributions for that year to count towards entitlement for the basic state retirement pension or widows pension.

The statement gives details about the amount of voluntary contributions the person needs to pay to make up the deficiency for that year. Voluntary contributions must be paid within six years of the end of the tax year in question, but in any case they should be paid before the date of claim to retirement pension in order to maximise benefit entitlement.

The statements are targeted towards those who are most likely to benefit from information about the deficiency in their contribution record. There are therefore a number of circumstances where the statements are not issued, for example where the person is aged 59 or over for a woman or aged 64 or over for a man, where no currrent address is held or the person is known to be abroad or where no contributions were received for the year in question and the preceding year. Even so, the latest issue entailed some 3·5 million statements.

Married women who have elected to pay reduced rate contributions were exercising a free choice, no longer available, and would usually expect to rely on their husband's national insurance contribution record in order to qualify for a basic retirement pension. The implications of that choice were set out in an explanatory leaflet accompanying the election form.

This Department does not inform such women of deficiencies in their contribution record because they have exercised a choice not to pay standard rate contributions. It is however open to any person, including women who have elected to pay reduced rate contributions, to request information about their contribution record or a forecast of their expected state retirement pension from the Benefits Agency. If a woman has elected to pay reduced rate contributions, the pension forecast will tell her that if she wishes to improve her benefit position by paying more years of full conrtributions, she will have to cancel her election to pay reduced rate contributions. From then on she would be able to pay contributions which do count towards retirement pension, subject always to her achieving a minimum entitlement of 25 per cent.

The Department is continually looking at ways of developing procedures to make information even more readily available to people about benefits and contributions.

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, for each year since 1989, by institution or individual the total level of award, all research grants awarded by the DSS/DHSS which have involved research into occupational diseases.

Mr. Scott: Since 1989 this Department has commissioned one piece of research into occupational diseases, a study of lung cancer risk in pottery, refractory and sandstone workers. The value of the award is £36,400 to the department of occupational medicine at the National Heart and Lung Institute, and the centre for occupational health at the university of Manchester. Further details are in the Department's research yearbook, for 1992-93, copies of which are available in the Library.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review the industrial injuries benefit scheme.

Mr. Scott: Last year, the Government announced a long-term review of social security expenditure. Under the long-term review, each part of the social security programme will be examined to ensure that the objectives are right for the 1990s. Nothing is exempt from that review.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column 628, how many Christmas cards he and his Ministers sent out in 1993; and at what cost.

Mr. Hague: Seven hundred and ten cards were obtained from the Charity Christmas Card Council at a cost of £282·49. Most of the cards were sent out by second-class post.

Disablement Benefits

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the results of studies carried out in the course of developing the new incapacity for work test for incapacity benefit.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 31 January, *Official Report*, columns *583-84*.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy that attendance at rehabilitation courses will be regarded as a period of incapacity to work in relation to eligibility for disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration his Department has given to defining unemployment benefit as a passport for disability working allowance for otherwise eligible people.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Alfred Moris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to increase the margin above family credit to provide an incentive for appropriate persons to claim disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the difference between the current number of disabled people receiving the disability working allowance and his Department's original forecast; and how he accounts for the difference.

Mr. Scott: The current caseload is 3,405. The original estimate was that about 50,000 people might be entitled to disability working allowance, which was introduced as a completely new benefit in April 1992 and can, of course, be expected to take a number of years to become established. We have commissioned extensive independent research to help evaluation and this is expected to be completed in 1996.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his present estimate of the number of people now receiving invalidity benefit who will not qualify for the benefit by which it is being replaced;

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of people now receiving invalidity benefit who will not qualify for the proposed new incapacity benefit and who, being unable to work full time, will have to seek income support.

Mr. Scott: Our current estimate is that around 200,000 people receiving invalidity benefit in April 1995 may be excluded from receiving incapacity benefit by the proposed new medical test during the first two years. It is not possible to give an accurate assessment of how many will have to seek income support.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had from national organisations of and for disabled people about his proposal to discontinue invalidity benefit; what replies he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have received a large number of comments on our proposals, mainly in response to the consultation document on the proposed new medical incapacity test. We will be publishing a report on the outcome of the consultation exercise, which ends on 11 February. The national disability organisations which have responded include the following:

Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund
The Churches Council for Health and Healing
The Disabled Living Foundation
The Disability Alliance
The Disability Benefits Consortium
The Disablement Income Group
Ileostomy Association of Great Britain and Ireland
The Mental Health Foundation
Mobility Trust
The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Pensioners and Disabled Alliance
National Back Pain Association
National Schizophrenia Fellowship
National Advisory Council on Employment of People with Disabilities
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
The Neurofibromatosis Association
The Pain Society
Scottish Association for Mental Health
The Stroke Association

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) for each of the administrative regions of the Benefits Agency in the United Kingdom, how many women have *(a)* had an increase of invalidity benefit suspended, *(b)* applied for that suspension to be lifted and *(c)* had the suspension lifted;

(2) for each of the Benefits Agency district offices in Wales, how many women have *(a)* had an increase of invalidity benefit suspended, *(b)* applied for that suspension to be lifted and *(c)* had the suspension lifted.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Ron Davies, dated 8 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about women in receipt of invalidity Benefit (IVB) in the United Kingdom, and more specifically Wales, who, at age 60, have had an increase of IVB suspended.

The information is not available in the exact format requested. This is because the statistics provided are for Great Britain rather than the United Kingdom (the United Kingdom including Northern Ireland). I have therefore appended the information that is available for the United Kingdom which has been collated into Benefits Agency Area Directorates, within which there are a number of District and Benefit Offices. The information for Wales has been broken down by Benefit Agency District, each District comprising of a District Office and one or more Benefit Offices.

The information given is that available at the last working day of August 1993, the last for which detailed information is, at present, held.

Benefits Agency Scotland and Northern Territory

Benefits Agency area directorate	*Number of IVB cases suspended*	*Applications for suspension to be lifted*	*Number of cases where suspension lifted*
Tyne Tees	3,237	258	230
South Yorkshire and Humberside	997	33	29
North and West Yorkshire	1,604	28	20
Scotland and Northern	2,585	37	1
North, Central and West Scotland	4,151	267	218
East of Scotland	1,630	18	12
Totals	14,204	641	510

Benefits Agency Wales and Central Territory

Benefits Agency area directorate	*Number of IVB cases suspended*	*Applications for suspension to be lifted*	*Number of cases where suspension lifted*
East Midlands	855	28	18
Midlands South West	637	9	3
West Mercia	1,843	20	7
Wales	2,906	44	19
Merseyside	1,779	81	71
Greater Manchester	1,590	63	18
Lancashire and Cumbria	2,244	34	21
Totals	11,854	279	157

Benefits Agency southern territory

Benefits Agency area directorate	*Number of IVB cases suspended*	*Applications for suspension to be lifted*	*Number of cases where suspension lifted*
Anglia	580	16	8
Chilterns	1,146	12	7
South London and West Sussex	658	16	12
West Country	811	31	9
East London and Essex	508	3	1
South East	548	20	10
Wessex	960	5	0
TOTALS	5,211	103	47

Wales area directorate

District	*Number of IVB cases suspended*	*Applications for suspension to be lifted*	*Number of cases where suspension lifted*
Gwyneddigion	176	9	5
North Wales Coast	307	13	3
Mid Wales and Maelor	9	2	1
West Wales	0	0	0
Swansea	0	0	0
Ogwr Afan Nedd	405	4	0
South Glamorgan	434	6	1
South Gwent and Islwyn	254	8	8
Cynon, Merthyr and Rhymney Valley	687	0	0
Taff Rhonda	282	1	0
North Gwent and Brecon	352	1	1
TOTALS	2,906	44	19

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what basis he will assess extreme hardship in individual cases of women over 60 years whose invalidity benefit increase is being suspended;

(2) what discretion he has to lift the suspension of invalidity benefit increase for women over 60 years in Wales in cases of extreme hardship; and what are the limits on the lifting of the suspension in terms of the income of the women concerned.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's discretion to take account of extreme hardship in deciding whether to impose or lift suspension of benefit is exercised on his behalf by Benefits Agency staff. Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency will write to the hon. Member with further information.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Ron Davies, dated 8 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Services has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about women in receipt of Invalidity Benefit (IVB), who at age 60 have had an increase of IVB suspended.

Regulation 37A of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations provides that where a decision by a Social Security Commissioner is being appealed to the Courts, payment of benefit in any cases affected by the decision may be suspended by the Secretary of State (SoS) pending the outcome of the appeal. Payments of Invalidity Benefit to women over 60 are currently being suspended under this regulation pending the resolution of a case which is before the Court of Appeal.

The power to suspend is discretionary. The SoS therefore also has discretion not to susped if it would be inappropriate to do so, for example if it would cause exceptional hardship in an individual case. This discretion is exercised on the SoS's behalf by Benefits Agency (BA) staff.

There are no set criteria for lifting suspensions. Each case is considered in relation to the personal circumstances of the customer. However, the BA, conscious of the requirement to treat all customers fairly, has recently issued guidelines on the question of hardship to all local offices. They stress that cases have to be looked at individually and that, while it is not possible to state in hard and fast terms what constitutes exceptional hardship, a number of factors need to be borne in mind by staff considering hardship applications.

These include the fact that hardship will arise only in exceptional circumstances; that prior to the Commissioner's decision IVB would have been reduced to the rate of the Retirement Pension that would otherwise have been payable; that Income Support and Social Fund are available to meet financial hardship; and that the onus is on the customer to prove that hardship exists rather than on the Agency Department to disprove hardship.

The guidance also gives two examples of circumstances in which exceptional hardship might be considered. These are:—

(i.) where it is already known or suspected that a customer has a terminal illness and is likely to die before the outcome of the appeal is known; and

(ii.) where the customer has been led to believe that benefit will continue at the higher rate and has entered into a financial commitment on that basis.

It is not inevitable that exceptional hardship would be found to exist in these sort of situations. Nor are they the only situations in which exceptional hardships would be considered. Nevertheless they provide examples of what "exceptional hardship" might mean and indicate that such cases can be expected to arise only rarely.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Scott: There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Overseas Pensions

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many United Kingdom citizens are entitled to overseas pensions not exceeding £500 per annum to which contributions were made before 1970 and which are not remitted to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hague: The Department does not hold this information.

Benefits Office, Paisley

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the planned operational opening date of the new Benefits Agency office in Paisley; how many staff will be deployed to this office; how many new *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time jobs will be created; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The opening of a new Benefits Agency office in Paisley is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Gordon McMaster, dated 8 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the new Benefits Agency office in Paisley.

The planned operational opening date of the new office is Spring 1995. At this stage I cannot give a more specific date as work on the site commenced in November 1993 and we have assumed approximately 18 months for a new building from start to finish.

As the 1995/96 resource allocations are not yet known it is not possible to be precise about the number of staff in the new office. However, on current projections, the new office is expected to house around 245 staff in total—around 220 Benefits Agency staff (including Sector Fraud), around 15 Contributions Agency staff and around 10 Child Support Agency staff.

It is not anticipated that any new jobs, either full time or part time, will be created in Benefits Agency, Contributions Agency or Child Support Agency. This is a move of an existing organisation from a very poor and inadequate building to a new custom built premises to provide improved quality services for customers and staff alike.

The Renfrew District Manager, Colin Wright, will be happy to provide you with any further progress reports should you require them.

I am sorry that I cannot be more precise with the information I have provided at this stage, but I hope you find my reply helpful.

Local Offices

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many Benefits Agency local offices displayed information on their local performance in July 1993; and what indicators were used;

(2) what new national targets for benefit services were published in 1992-93; and what reports were published by the Benefits Agency on how it performed against existing targets;

(3) how many Benefits Agency districts had published local performance targets by July 1993; and to what extent they were being met.

Mr. Burt: Performance targets within the Benefits Agency are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the agency's chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 8 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions asking about local and national performance targets within the Benefits Agency (BA).

I am pleased to say that by the end of January 1993 all BA districts had published Local Charter Standard Statements which included local performance targets. Information as to how individual districts performed against these targets is not available as it is not collated centrally. I have, however, provided at appendix A the national year to date performance against targets, as at December 1993, for District benefits.

Local Charter Standard Statements are displayed in all local offices and contain local standards of service. As many local standards are focused on the specific needs of the local customer population it is not possible to give a complete list of all indicators used. However, in general, Income Support clearance targets, Social Fund clearance targets, and waiting times are the most likely, and most usually displayed.

From April 1994 we will be collecting centrally information on how districts are performing against national targets.

Details of the new national targets for benefit services published in 1992-93 are provided at appendix B. These include targets for new benefits introduced, and new targets for existing benefits. The Benefits Agency Annual Report and Account published in July 1993 provides details on how the Agency performed against existing targets.

I hope you find my reply helpful.

Appendix A

Field operations—year to date performance 1993-94

	Target	*Achievement to December 1993*
Income support		
Claims	71 per cent. in 5 days	74·3
	90 per cent. in 13 days	89·9
Accuracy	96 per cent.	90·8
Changes	65 per cent. in 2 days	91·3
	95 per cent. in 6 days	96·2
Appeals	68 per cent. in 28 days	72·1
	95 per cent. in 90 days	94·5
Social Fund		
Crisis Loans	on the day the need arises	96·3
Community Care Grants	65 per cent. in 7 days	78·7
	95 per cent. in 20 days	96·7
Budget Loans	65 per cent. in 6 days	75·3
	95 per cent. in 20 days	97·3
Incapacity Benefits		
Sickness Benefit/Invalidity Benefit Claims	65 per cent. in 10 days	72·2
	95 per cent. in 30 days	94·2
Accuracy	96·5 per cent.	96·1
Retirement Pension		
Claims	65 per cent. in 60 days	68·7
	95 per cent. in 60 days	94·5
Changes	65 per cent. in 5 days	83·4
	95 per cent. in 15 days	96·1

Appendix B

New Target Areas—1992-93—Plus improvements to 1991-92 Targets

Benefit Area	*Per cent.*	*Target Days*
Retirement Pension Post Award System Activity (PASA)	65	5
	95	15
Disability Living Allowance Claims	60	30
	95	55
Disability Living Allowance Accuracy	96	—
Disability Living Allowance Special Rules Cases	80	10
	90	15
Disability Living Allowance Reviews	60	55
	95	75

Benefit Area	Per cent.	Target Days
Disability Working Allowance Claims	95	5
Disability Working Allowance Accuracy	95	—
Disability Working Allowance Renewal Claims—Employed	60	15
	75	25
Disability Working Allowance Renewal Claims—Self Employed	60	20
	90	30
Disability Working Allowance Reviews	75	10
	90	20
Disability Working Allowance Appeals	30	15
	60	25
	90	35
Attendance Allowance 65+ Claims	60	35
	95	60
Attendance Allowance 65+ Reviews	60	61
	95	81
Attendance Allowance 65+ Special Rules Cases	80	10
	90	15
Income Support Claims	—	5
Income Support Accuracy	94	—
Family Credit Claims	60	13
Family Credit Accuracy	94	—
Social Fund Budget Loans	—	5
Invalid Care Allowance Claims	60	29
	95	129
Legal Aid Applications	80	20
Central Pensions Branch Appeals	65	30
Overseas Branch Appeals	55	30

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of local offices have been refurbished since June 1991.

Mr. Burt: The refurbishment of DSS local offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 8 Feburary 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the proportion of local offices which have been refurbished since June 1991.

All local offices will undergo some form of refurbishment in the course of the year. This can range from simple redecoration, through the upgrading of specific areas, to large scale works involving the decanting of staff whilst major structural work is carried out.

Minor refurbishment (costing less than £5,000), to improve both staff and public areas as part of general building management, is carried out at the discretion of local management. Records of this type of work are not collated centrally, and it is not therefore possible to give details of this work since June 1991.

However, figures for refurbishment projects costing more than £5,000, ie the refurbishment of a public caller area, are collated centrally, and are available. Records of these projects indicate that since the start of the 1991-92 financial year 68 per cent. of DSS local offices have been refurbished in some way or another since April 1991.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Visits to Employers

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many special educational visits to employers were made by the Contributions Agency for the year 1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993.

Mr. Hague: The administration of national insurance is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 8 February 1994:

As Chief Executive of the Contributions Agency I am responsible for answering questions about relevant operational matters. I have been asked to reply to your question about how many educational visits the Agency made to employers between 1 July 1992 and 30 June 1993.

The Agency makes two types of visits to employers for educational purposes—educational visits and educational surveys. An educational visit is normally undertaken at an employer's request to provide assistance and advice on any aspects of the National Insurance (NI), Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) schemes. An educational survey, in addition to providing such assistance and advice, also includes a detailed examination of the employers NI, SSP and SMP records. Educational surveys are usually initiated by the Agency and are undertaken where employers are considered, in the light of the Agency's experience, likely to be at a greater risk of making mistakes in fulfilling their NI, SSP or SMP responsibilities. They can also be undertaken in response to an employer's request.

In the year between 1 July 1992 and 30 June 1993 the Agency made 2,318 educational visits and 27,569 educational surveys.

Service by Telephone

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what new measures the Benefits Agency took in 1992-93 to improve service by telephone.

Mr. Burt: Measures to improve the standard of telephone service within the Benefits Agency are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the agency's chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 8 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about measures taken by the Benefits Agency took in 1992-93 to improve service by telephone.

On 9 September last year the Secretary of State announced a national programme whereby all Benefits Agency District Offices will provide a One Place service by July 1994, and part of this service includes customers being able to obtain, by telephone, advice and information on Benefit Agency benefits from their local office.

The National Customer Service Definition issued to all managers states the minimum hours that local office switchboards must be open, and offices are required to publish these hours. Offices will also make provision for dealing with customers who contact the office outside normal switchboard hours.

The Benefits Agency is committed to improving accessibility for all our customers, including those who are hard of hearing. All offices/units have been encouraged to install the Minicom and/or Typetalk facilities (both are text telephone services).

The Department has, for some years, operated a policy of replacing old and new inadequate telecommunications equipment. In April 1992 this was turned into a formal roll out programme which identified and replaced ageing and substandard switchboards in offices, with modern, digital switchboards. These replacement switchboards provide the technical platform and facilities to support the customer services and organisational initiatives developed in other areas of the Benefits Agency.

In April 1993 this roll out programme was integrated with Benefits Agency Estates' programme and the implementation of IT equipment, to provide a comprehensive technical base from which to provide a uniform service. This integrated programme is ongoing and will continue for the next 3-5 years.

At the Fylde Benefit Directorate there has been an enhancement to the telephone service provided during 1992-93. Measures undertaken include an increase in the number of consoles on the Fylde switchboard together with requisite staffing, and also the introduction of Direct Dial IN (DDI) to the 8,000 or so telephone extensions located on sites occupied by the directorate lines. The Central Inquiry Handling Service (CEHS),

renamed Customer Care Helpline in early October 1993, has had line capacity increased from 120 to 192 with staffing to match. Additionally opening hours were extended in March 1993 to cover the timeband 07.30 to 18.30.

The Family Credit helpline launched in April 1993 deals with an average of 35,000 calls per week and on average 85 per cent. of those calls are answered within five rings.

The Benefit Enquiry Line (BEL) was also extended in April 1993 to provide a form completion service for a range of incapacity and disability benefits. Its opening hours were extended to cover the time band 8.30-18.30 Monday to Friday and 9.00-13.00 Saturday. The equipment was further enhanced in March 1993 and now has the capacity to cope with over 100 work stations. In April 1992 40 advisers were employed with the number rising to 81 by March 1993. During 1992-93 approximately 17,000 customers telephoned BEL and used the Forms Completion Service.

The Child Benefit Centre ran a pilot study last year offering a more personalised and complete service for its customers. Following the success of this pilot, the Centre embarked on a major overhaul of its internal structure, and widely publicising a list of direct dial numbers. The Child Benefit Centre is now handling three times as many calls compared to this time last year.

Following a review of the Freeline service, a project manager was appointed last year to take forward a programme of improvements aimed at making the service more widely available to customers. Five Freeline centres have installed Automatic Call Distribution (ACD), which allocates calls to lines on a strictly first come first served basis. The indications are that the ACD has been effective in reducing call waiting times. It is hoped to install ACD equipment in the remaining five centres, and to open an 11th Freeline centre later this year, which will improve the service still further.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Privatisation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 24 January, *Official Report*, column *15*, regarding firms which do not comply with his department's guidelines over privatisation bids, what plans he has to disqualify CNN Data Company from tendering for the DSS Longbenton national insurance computor processing contract.

Mr. Hague: The administration of national insurance is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Nicholas Brown, dated 8 February 1994:

As Chief Executive of the Contributions Agency I am responsible for answering questions about relevant operational matters. I have been asked to reply to your question about possible plans to disqualify CCN Datacom BV from tendering for the computer processing of National Insurance records.

When I wrote to you on 24 January 1994 in response to your earlier question I explained the procurement policy adopted by this Agency in its Market Testing (not privatisation) activities. CCN Datacom BV were invited to tender for the Contributions Agency's Data Entry operation along with the current In-House service provider and 3 other private sector companies. As part of that process, everyone invited to tender is entitled to seek clarification of the Agency's requirements.

A representative of CCN Datacom BV, apparently acting on her own initiative, telephoned an ex-colleague who now works within the data Entry Group of this Agency, seeking information about the current operations. This approach was not in accord with the Agency's requirements for the supply of information. The incident was immediately and thoroughly investigated. It was concluded that no evidence exists that any information of a confidential nature or which could give the company an unfair advantage had been disclosed.

CCN Datacom BV has stated that it was unaware of the action of the employee and has apologised for the breach of procedure.

After a careful review of the facts it was decided that there were insufficient grounds for excluding the company from the tender exercise. The 2 key issues in reaching this decision were that the approach was at a level where information of any significance was unlikely to be forthcoming and in fact no information of any importance was passed over to the company. Nevertheless, CCN Datacom are now well aware of the Agency's view on the matter, and that even relatively minor breaches of the correct procedure will be taken extremely seriously.

I hope that I have clarified the facts of the matter but if you do have any further queries I would be pleased to discuss them with you.

National Insurance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make an estimate of the cumulative spending and savings made on the various changes to national insurance benefits since 1979, in the format of his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) of 6 July 1992, *Official Report*, columns *85-86*.

Mr. Hague *[holding answer 25 January 1994]:* Such information as is readily available is given in the table. Meaningful estimates of the cumulative expenditure effects of earlier policy measures could not be derived, except at disproportionate cost.

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*Total*
Offset of occupational pension against unemployment benefit	−15	−63	−66	—	—	—	−173
Unemployment benefit rules changes	—	−21	−49	−55	—	—	−141
Widows benefit measures	—	22	13	13	13	—	69
Abolition of pensioners earnings rule	—	190	386	401	412	—	1,529
Statutory sick pay measures	—	—	−72	−86	−92	—	−269
New RMO procedures	—	—	—	−8	−8	−8	−25
Statutory sick pay: 80 per cent. reimbursement	—	—	—	−181	−190	−197	−587
Statutory sick pay higher rate freeze	—	—	—	−109	−119	−125	−365
Statutory sick pay/child benefit measures	—	—	—	3	3	3	9
Statutory sick pay standard rate freeze	—	—	—	—	−20	−21	−42
Carer's package	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Invalidity benefit: new medical control procedures	—	—	—	—	—	−108	−108
Statutory sick pay higher rate freeze	—	—	—	—	—	−21	−21

Notes:

(a) All figures are expressed in millions. They are in cash terms except for the totals which are expressed in real terms (1993-94 prices).

(b) It should be noted that only the costs/savings to National Insurance benefits have been shown. The figures therefore should not be regarded as the actual costs/savings arising from individual policy measures.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what rate the Child Support Agency charges interest on arrears.

Mr. Burt: Where an absent parent does not within 28 days enter into an arrears agreement or where he does not keep to the terms of the agreement interest is charged on the arrears of child maintenance at a rate of 1 per cent. above the base rate current at the time. Where an agreement is entered into and for as long as its terms are adhered to no interest is payable.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many of the applications to the Child Support Agency between April and December 1993 involved absent parents on income support; and how many of these absent parents on income support are now having £2·20 deductions made from their benefit;

(2) how many section 18 reviews of child support officers' decisions had been requested by the end of 1993; how many of these had been resolved by that date; in how many of those the decision had been advised; and what is the average number of weeks that the outstanding reviews have been awaiting decision in each Child Support Agency centre;

(3) how many section 6 child support applicants have argued that they are at risk of harm or undue distress to date; in how many of these cases the reasons were accepted by the Child Support Agency; in how many of those cases the reasons were accepted by the Secretary of State without the need for an interview, by the Secretary of State after interviewing the parent with care, or by the child support officer; how many parents with care subsequently gave the authorisation or information; and how many reduced benefit directions have been issued in the first nine months of the Child Support Agency's activity;

(4) how many maintenance applications had been terminated without a maintenance assessment by the end of 1993; and if he will give a breakdown of these cases, in particular giving the numbers due to section 6 applicants withdrawing claims for income support and family credit;

(5) how many child support accounts had been set up by the Child Support Agency by 31 December 1993; how many of these accounts had arrears outstanding at that point; how many arrears notices had been issued; and how many deductions of earnings orders had been issued by the Child Support Agency by the same date;

(6) how many maintenance application forms have been issued to family credit claimants to date; how many of these have resulted in a maintenance assessment to date; and of those how many of the accounts are in arrears;

(7) what proportion of the existing income support parent with care caseload has been taken on by the Child Support Agency by the end of 1993; and what proportion he estimates will be taken on by April 1994;

(8) how many maintenance assessments had been issued by the end of December 1993; how many of these were category A interim assessments; how many category B interim assessments; and how many were nil assessments;

(9) how many of the letters requesting appeals against child support officers' decisions to child support appeal tribunals have been received within the 28-day limit; and how many of those received after the 28-day limit were accepted because of special reasons;

(10) how many appeals had been made to child support appeal tribunals by the end of 1993; how many of these appeals have been heard by that date; and in how many of those the child support officer's decision has been overturned.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 8 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security on a number of aspects about the operations of the Child Support Agency.

The number of maintenance assessments made in the period from 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993 involving absent parents who were in receipt of income support was 24,300. I understand that to the quarter ending 30 November 1993, the Benefits Agency had made deductions from income support in 6,330 cases.

From 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993, section 18 reviews had been requested in 12,000 cases. 2,100 of these had been cleared and the decision revised in 1,100, of them. The 9,900 cases in action reflects a rise in numbers in recent weeks. Information on clearance times is being collected but, because of relatively low volumes of cleared cases, is not yet statistically valid.

From 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993, the cases of 35,600 parents with care were considered in relation to the requirement to cooperate. Of cases so far completed, good cause was accepted in 20,500, the absent parent was named in 7,100, and 160 were referred to the Benefits Agency to consider implementation of a Reduced Benefit Direction. No information is kept as to the numbers of cases where good cause was accepted without any interview of the parent with care by a member of the Agency's staff.

From 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993, 79,800 cases were cleared without a maintenance assessment. Of these, 32,600 were withdrawn. As, to date, 96 per cent. of parents with care have been in receipt of a prescribed benefit, it can be assumed that this will apply to nearly all the withdrawn applications.

From 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993, 183,000 maintenance application forms were issued to parents with care on family credit. You also asked how many of these have resulted in a maintenance assessment, and how many of the accounts are in arrears. I am afraid that we do not collect information that breaks down maintenance assessments or account activity according to the benefit status of the parent with care.

At 31 December 1993 the Agency had taken on 275,700 existing income support cases. It is estimated that by April 1994, around 290,000 cases will have been taken on.

At 31 December 1993, a total of 121,600 maintenance assessments had been completed. Of these 41,000 were interim maintenance assessments, where the Agency did not have sufficient information to make a full assessment, and 28,300 were assessments where the absent parent was assessed as having insufficient income to pay any maintenance other than the £2·20 deduction from benefit. It is not possible to provide separate figures for Category A and Category B interm maintenance assessments.

At 31 December 1993, I understand that the Child Support Appeal Tribunal Central Office (CSATCO) had received 577 valid letters of appeal within the 28 days time limit. A total of 81 letters of appeal had been received that were outside the 28 day time limit, and all of these were accepted as valid by the resident chairman of the Child Support Appeals Tribunal.

At 31 December 1993, the Agency had received 535 appeals from CSATCO and 48 resulted in tribunal hearings. Of those heard, 10 resulted in the Child Support Officer's decision being overturned.

You also requested information on child support accounts, arrears and deductions from earnings orders. I regret that the information is not currently available.

I hope that you find this reply helpful.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of replies issued by the Child Support Agency in response to individual inquiries from right hon. and hon. Members are in standardised format; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Gordon McMaster, dated 9 February 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the use of standardised replies from the Child Support Agency to Members' letters.

The Agency does not issue standardised replies to Members although standard paragraphs may be included, for example, to explain the provisions of legislation or to give some background to the Agency's operations. Where correspondence concerns an individual client, the Agency seeks to address the specific concerns raised by the Member on behalf of the constituent.

I hope that you find this reply useful.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 10 February 1994

NATIONAL FINANCE

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Departments each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Nelson: The table gives the value of committed expenditure, at current prices, for consultancy contracts awarded to Her Majesty's Treasury since August 1991. Information going back beyond August 1991 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Year	*Value (excl. VAT) £*
[1]1991	210,310
1992	851,640
1993	1,004,407
[2]1994	446,645

[1] August-December.
[2] To date.

Similar information relating to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's other Departments is not held centrally.

Insurance Premium Tax

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his plans for the rate of insurance premium tax, which is currently charged at 3 per cent.

Sir John Cope: The Government's proposals for the insurance premium tax are included in the Finance Bill currently in Committee. The rate chosen reflects careful consideration of a range of factors, particularly the revenue yield and the impact on the taxpayer.

Utilities (Privatisation)

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table outlining privatisation receipts for *(a)* BT, *(b)* British Gas, *(c)* regional electricity companies and PowerGen and National Power and *(d)* regional water boards for each year following privatisation of each utility until 1993 and also including projections to 1994-95.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the information requested. In addition to proceeds from the sale of shares, privatisation proceeds include the redemption of preference shares, loan stock and debentures.

Net privatisation proceeds

£ billion

	BT	*British Gas*	*Electricity (England and Wales)*	*Water companies*
1984-85	1·4	—	—	—
1985-86	1·3	—	—	—
1986-87	1·4	2·6	—	—
1987-88	0·3	1·8	—	—
1988-89	0·3	1·8	—	—
1989-90	0·1	0·8	—	0·5
1990-91	0·1	0·5	3·1	1·5
1991-92	1·8	—	3·4	1·5
1992-93	3·7	0·4	1·5	—
[1]1993-94	3·8	—	0·7	—
[1]1994-95	1·7	—	0·3	—

[1] Estimated outturn.

Subcontractors (Taxation)

Mr. Burns: To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer if he intends to take forward the proposals for the construction industry tax deduction scheme in the 1991 Inland Revenue consultative document, "Taxation of Subcontractors in the Construction Industry".

Mr. Dorrell: It is the Government's intention, subject to other priorities, to include measures in the next Finance Bill to implement some of the recommendations in the 1991 consultative document "Taxation of Subcontractors in the Construction Industry", together with the recommendations of a later efficiency scrutiny. These changes will come into effect after the introduction of the proposals for self-assessment and the simplification of personal tax in the current Finance Bill. The Inland Revenue will be consulting on how this will be done.

Capital Allowances

Mr. Burns: To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the availability of capital allowances for enterprise zone buildings brought into use two years ago.

Mr. Dorrell: Under section 10B of the Capital Allowances Act 1990, capital allowances at the 100 per cent. enterprise zone rate remain available for a period of two years after a building is brought into use, so long as the building was brought into use on or after 16 December 1991.

As announced on 13 January, *Official Report*, column *249*, the Government will be bringing forward legislation during the Committee stage of the Finance Bill to amend a defect in the capital allowances legislation as it affects long leases given in return for a capital sum. The Government are conscious that, until the legislation is published, there will inevitably be some uncertainty for investors about the detailed conditions under which capital allowances will be available. In cases where entitlement to capital allowances under section 10B's two-year rule was shortly to expire at the time of the announcement, this uncertainty may have had the effect of preventing some investors from making a claim under the rule. That is clearly an unfair situation in which to place such investors.

Accordingly, we propose to bring forward a provision in the Committee of the Finance Bill which will give until 31 August 1994 for qualifying expenditure to fall within

the section 10B rule. This will apply to cases where, under this section, the two-year period would have expired on or after 13 January 1994 and not later than 31 August 1994.

Maintenance Payments (Taxation)

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the number of taxpayers who will be affected by the restriction of tax relief on the first £1,720 of maintenance payments to 20 per cent. in 1994-95 and 15 per cent. from 1995-96;

(2) what will be the effect on revenues in 1994-95 and in a full year of *(a)* restricting tax relief on maintenance payments up to £1,720 to 20 per cent. and *(b)* the withdrawal of relief on payments made to or for the benefit of children when they reach 21 years;

(3) what he estimates to be the effect on revenues in 1995-96 and in a full year of proposals to reduce tax relief on the first £1,720 of maintenance payments from 20 per cent. in 1994-95 to 15 per cent. in 1995-96.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 1 February 1994]:* It is thought that some 400,000 people making maintenance payments may be affected, although payers who are liable to tax at the lower rate only will not be affected by the restriction of relief to 20 per cent. in 1994-95. Approximate estimates of the revenue effects of restricting the relief based on a projection of information from the 1991-92 survey of personal incomes are given below.

£ million

	Revenue yield in	
	1994-95	*A full year*
Restriction to 20 per cent.	25	30
	1995-96	*A full year*
Further restriction to 15 per cent.	15	20

It is not possible to provide a precise estimate of the small yield from the withdrawal of relief on payments made to or for the benefit of children when they reach 21 years.

Contraband

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what quantities and value of contraband *(a)* tobacco, *(b)* drugs, *(c)* alcohol and *(d)* other was seized by Customs and Excise in the last year for which statistics are available and in each of the five previous years;

(2) what quantity of and value of contraband alcohol was seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in the last year for which statistics are available; how it was disposed of, and at what cost; and what are the comparable figures for any previous years for which statistics are available.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* The amounts and street level values of the main drug types seized by Customs and Excise for the past six calendar years are as below.

Drug type	*Weight (kilogrammes)*	*Total value (£ millions)*
1993		
Synthetics	1,096	
Cannabis	53,157	
Cocaine	748	518
Heroin	561	
1992		
Synthetics	348	
Cannabis	44,556	
Cocaine	2,250	545
Heroin	449	
1991		
Synthetics	473	
Cannabis	2,285	
Cocaine	1,061	309
Heroin	409	
1990		
Synthetics	89	
Cannabis	24,581	
Cocaine	561	244
Heroin	588	
1989		
Synthetics	23	
Cannabis	50,715	
Cocaine	424	258
Heroin	331	
1988		
Synthetics	18	
Cannabis	44,018	
Cocaine	283	185
Heroin	230	

For single market excise-related offences the quantities of goods seized, and the amount of duties involved, for 1993 are as follows:

	Duty £
1,355,485 cigarettes and cigars	132,059
10,191 kg tobacco	945,684
753,012 litres alcoholic drinks	590,025

Methods of disposal of alcoholic drinks include pouring down the sewer and the use of land-fill sites. Further details of contraband seizures before 1993 and of methods and costs of disposal could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department and its predecessors each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is available for the period 1987 to 1993, and details are shown in the table. Other information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Value of consultancy contracts, including amendments, awarded by the Department of Trade and Industry, 1987-93, current prices

Calendar year	*Value £*
1987	18,814,000
1988	15,831,000
1989	26,578,000

Calendar year	Value £
1990	27,620,000
1991	38,491,000
1992	36,612,000
1993	29,369,000

Value excludes consultancy contracts let independently by the Department's executive agencies.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Standards, Quality and Measurement Advisory Committee.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Standards, Quality and Measurement Advisory Committee currently consists of 12 members and chairman:

Professor P. Payne, Chairman
Dr. L. Holt
Professor W. Gelletly
Professor K. Grattan
Professor A. Olver
Mr. H. Berridge
Mr. R. Brook
Mr. G. Matthews
Professor J. Metcalfe
Professor W. Stewart
Dr. M. A. Ford
Dr. E. Ellis
Dr. T. Wilkins

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee.

Mr. McLoughlin: The current members of the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee are:

Mr. J. Puttick, Chairman, Warwick Manufacturing Group
Mr. A. B. M. Braithwaite OBE, The Welding Institute
Professor A. de Pennington OBE, University of Leeds
Dr. F. K. Garas, Taylor Woodrow Construction Holdings Limited
Mr. P. W. Harrisson, Linread plc
Mr. N. McArthur MBE, Thurnall plc
Professor A. Muhlemann, University of Bradford
Mr. J. K. Overstall, Kewill Group
Dr. A. G. Parker, Lucas Automotive Limited
Professor A. Pugh FEng, University of Hull
Mr. D. Walker, Defence Research Agency

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what ministerial visits have been made by representatives of his Department, over each of the last three years to *(a)* Indonesia, *(b)* Jordan, *(c)* Oman, *(d)* Nigeria, *(e)* Ecuador, *(f)* Malaysia and *(g)* India; and what was their main purpose in each case.

Mr. Needham: There have been no visits by DTI Ministers in the last three years to Jordan, Oman, Nigeria or Ecuador. One is planned, however, by me to Oman in April this year for trade promotion purposes. Details of other visits are shown in the table.

Year and month	Market	Minister	Purpose
1993			
January	Indonesia	The Minister for Trade	Trade promotion
June	Indonesia	The Minister for Trade	Trade promotion
September	Indonesia	The Minister for Energy	Trade promotion
September	Malaysia	The Minister for Trade	Trade promotion
September	Malaysia	The Minister for Trade	Trade promotion
November	India	The Minister for Trade	Indo-British Bombay week/trade promotion
November	Malaysia	The Minister for Trade	Trade promotion
December	Indonesia	The Minister for Trade	Trade promotion
1992			
September	India	The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh)	Trade promotion
1991			
February	India	The former Secretary of State	Ninth Indian engineering trade fair/trade promotion
November	India	Lord Reay	British energy seminar/trade promotion

Disqualification Unit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many cases have been reported to his Department's disqualification unit in each year since 1987; how many of these have been subject to full investigation; and how many have been successfully prosecuted.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Detailed information is not available in this form requested by the hon. Member. The following information is however available:

	Reports of misconduct made to disqualification unit	Cases identified as prima facie meeting evidential criteria	Number of individual directors whom directions given	Number of directors against who disqualification orders were made
1987-88	3,499	n/a	251	130
1988-89	4,209	n/a	419	293
1989-90	3,444	n/a	462	288
1990-91	4,508	n/a	449	251
1991-92	6,171	906	700	326
1992-93	6,710	877	564	446

Notes:

1. The figures quoted in the first two columns are for the number of companies reported on or identified.
2. The number of directions given or disqualification orders made in a particular year do not necessarily relate to reports made or cases identified in that year.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the average length of time taken to investigate a case reported to his Department's disqualification unit in each year since 1987; and what was the median time taken to investigate such reports.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The information requested by the hon. Member for Newcastle Upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) is not maintained by my Department.

Teaching Company Schemes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the distribution of live teaching company schemes as at 31 December 1993, by region; and which schemes started and terminated in 1992 and 1993.

Mr. McLoughlin: Tables showing the requested information relating to teaching company scheme, TCS, programmes are as follows:

1. TCS Programmes by region as at 31 December 1993

Region	*Company sites*	
	Number	*Percentages*
East Midlands	35	7·2
London	22	4·5
North East	87	17·8
Northern Ireland	35	7·2
North West	52	10·7
Scotland	30	6·1
South East	77	15·8
South West	66	13·5
Wales	23	4·7
West Midlands	61	12·5
Totals	488	100

2. TCS Programmes starting and ending in 1992 and 1993.

Region	*Company sites*			
	1992		*1993*	
	Started	*Ended*	*Started*	*Ended*
East Midlands	10	8	20	14
London	6	6	14	0
North East	45	16	33	30
Northern Ireland	10	6	20	14
North West	15	23	24	20
Scotland	14	14	12	10
South East	34	25	34	16
South West	20	26	39	9
Wales	15	8	6	5
West Midlands	33	21	24	18
Totals	202	153	226	136

Government Chemist

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions within the last five years the laboratory of the Government chemist has been asked to advise on export licence applications; and what internal transfers of resources are made to the laboratory in recognition of these services.

Mr. McLoughlin: Between 1989 and 1994 the LGC has provided advice to the relevant parts of DTI on 312 occasions. The LGC has charged the DTI the full economic cost of providing this service.

Expo '92

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the final accounts have now been settled for his Department's costs towards Expo '92 in Seville; what was his Department's total contribution; and whether this figure includes the costs of meeting the costs of Joanna Bickerton Associates.

Mr. Needham: The final accounts for DTI's contribution towards Expo '92 in Seville are nearing completion and should be finalised by the end of March. These accounts will include the costs of settlement with Joanna Bickerton Associates.

Disqualification Unit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many cases were reported to his Department's disqualification unit for each year since 1987 which failed to come before the court because they had exceeded the statutory limitation period.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The precise details requested by the hon. Member are not maintained by the disqualification unit. However, expiry, actual or imminent, of the two-year period is the principal reason why cases which otherwise broadly meet the evidential requirements are not pursued. The number of such cases was as follows:

Financial year	*Number*
1991-92	369
1992-93	332
[1]1993	551

[1] Nine months to 31 December 1993.

Information on prior years is not available.

Timeshare

Mr. Hunter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make representations to the European Commission for the inclusion in the draft directive on timeshare of payment of limited deposits by timeshare purchasers, as requested by the United Kingdom timeshare industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am aware of the concerns expressed by the timeshare industry in this matter, but I regard the prohibition on the payment of deposits during the cooling-off period proposed in the draft timeshare directive as important for consumer protection. In any event, political agreement on the directive has been reached.

New Businesses

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many new businesses were started in the past year; how many people they employ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* Estimates of numbers of small business start-ups are produced by Barclays and NatWest. Their latest estimates indicate that there were around 400,000 new start-ups in 1993.

Estimates of employment in new firms are not available.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* There has been no change from the practice of this and previous administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Indonesians have been supported by Her Majesty's Government since 1975 to study in Britain.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since 1975 we have provided some 3,000 awards for Indonesians. Precise figures could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who are the members currently appointed to the Wilton Park International Advisory Council.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Wilton Park International Advisory Council consists of the ambassadors and high commissioners of all OECD embassies and high commissions in London. The countries currently represented are: Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the USA.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Accounting Officers

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions since 1979 a Foreign Secretary has issued a direction to an accounting officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Since 1979, there has been a ministerial direction to ODA's accounting officer on one occasion, in 1991 in respect of the Pergau hydro-electric project in Malaysia. No ministerial directions to the FCO's accounting officer have been issued since 1979.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the subjects on which his Department formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now referred by him to an executive agency.

The Attorney-General: No parliamentary questions have to date been referred by me to the Government Property Lawyers, the only executive agency in the Departments for which I am responsible. The subjects which I would normally expect to refer are the day-to-day operational matters of the agency and the provision of conveyancing and lands advisory services by the agency, subjects for which the chief executive has delegated responsibility as set out in the agency's framework document.

Prosecution Witnesses

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Attorney-General what proportion of prosecution witnesses in July 1993 had to wait more than two hours before being called to give evidence.

The Attorney-General: No figures are available for July 1993. A census of six CPS areas during the last two weeks of March 1993 showed that 42 per cent. of witnesses waited less than two hours and 58 per cent. had to wait more than two hours.

A further pilot study in four Crown court centres between 1 September 1993 and 30 November 1993 showed that 48·5 per cent. of witnesses waited less than two hours and 51·5 per cent. more than two hours. A nation-wide monitoring survey will commence on 1 April 1994.

The samples to date have been analysed to identify the principal reasons for extended waiting time for witnesses. The objective is to use such information in co-operation with other agencies to bring about reduced waiting times in future.

Hizb ut Tahrir

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General what action is being considered by the prosecution authorities over racist material issued by the Hizb ut Tahrir organisation; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service does not maintain a central record of cases referred to it. Inquiries have been made of CPS headquarters staff but no cases concerning the Hizb ut Tahrir organisation are presently being considered at headquarters. If the hon. Member will identify to me when and where any such material has been referred to the CPS I will make further inquiries.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who are the members currently appointed to the disability living allowance advisory board.

Mr. Scott: The current membership of the disability living allowance advisory board is as follows:—

Chairman—Professor R. Grahame, MB BS MD FRCP,
Deputy Chair—Miss S. Knibbs, CQSW,
Mrs. J. Allen-King, MBE, Mrs. J. Ashcroft MBE,
Mrs. P. Case CBE BA,
Dr. A. Clarke, BSc MB BS FRCP, Miss E. Fanshawe, OBE DipCOT,
Mrs. J. Franklin, CQSW, Mr. S. Gallop OBE MA,
Mrs. C. Henry RGN,
Dr. J. Hunter BSc MB ChB, FRCP, Sir Peter Large CBE BSc,
Mr. C. Laurenzi BSc CQSW, Dr. R. Lucas BSc MB BS MPhil FRCPsych,
Dr. I. McKinlay, BSc MB ChB FRCP DCH,
Dr. T. Phillips, MB BS FRFPS MRCP MFOM,
Mrs. S. Philbrook BA MCSP,
Dr. M. Piper MB BS FRCP, Dr. M. Richards BSc MB BChir FRCGP,
Dr. S. Shorvon, MB BChir MD FRCP.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who are the members currently appointed to the Social Security Advisory Committee.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is as follows:

Mr. M. Bett, CBE *(Chairman)*
Mrs. J. Anelay, OBE JP
Mr. A. Dilnot
The Reverend G. H. Good, OBE
Mr. D. Guereca
Mr. N. Hardwick
Mr. M. Hastings
Professor A. Ogus
The Hon. Mrs. R. H. Price CBE
Esme Scott, CBE
Professor O. Stevenson
Dr. A. V. Stokes, OBE
Mr. O. Tudor
Mr. R. Wendt, DL

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who are the members currently appointed to each of the war pensions committees.

Mr. Hague: In view of the considerable length of this reply, I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who are the members currently appointed to the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions.

Mr. Hague: The members currently appointed to the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions, who all act in a voluntary capacity, are as follows:

Membership of the Central Advisory Committee

Mr. M. B. Day, MBE
Councillor T. S. Deeming, MBE
Mr. P. H. Dixon, OBE, MA
Mr. I. Duncan-Smith, MP
Mr. W. R. Dunn, MBE, JP
Mr. C. G. Fox, FRSH, FCIArb
Mr. I. Grainger
Mr. D. B. Hilton
Mr. R. R. Holland, MBE
Lt. Col. R. W. E. House, MBE
Col. J. Hughes, CBE
Mr. E. R. Jobson, OBE
County Councillor T. J. Jones, MBE, JP
Captain O. C. S. Light, MBE
Lord Mackie of Benshie, CBE
Mr. A. Meale, MP
Mr. G. R. Miller
Mrs. H. Murphy
Mr. W. S. Mutimer, MBE, JP
Mrs. M. F. K. Neale, MBE
Mrs. P. L. Newnes, OBE
Mr. F. E. Onyon, MBE
Air Chief Marshall Sir Roger Palin, KCB
Mr. H. L. Payne, OBE
Mr. C. G. S. Pigott, MBE
Mr. J. J. Ray, MBE
Brigadier H. L. B. Salmon, OBE
Major J. Paxman

Child Support

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the regulations under the Child Support Act 1991 affecting the definition of a second family and on his proposals for phasing in of payments where there is another child in a second marriage.

Mr. Burt: The term "second family" is not used in the Child Support Act or associated regulations. The previous phasing in provisions have been extended to include absent parents whose new child support liability is over £60 a week. An absent parent can qualify for phasing if he is part of a family containing children, including step-children, or has care of a child for at least two nights a week, had an existing court order or written agreement for maintenance at 4 April 1993, and has his payments increased by more than £20 a week when maintenance is assessed under the Act.

Under the original phasing arrangements, where the new assessment does not exceed £60 weekly, the increase is limited to £20 for the first 12 months. Under the new arrangements, where the assessment is over £60, the increase is phased in over an 18-month period, in six monthly steps of £20, or 25 per cent. of the difference between the old and new amounts if this is higher.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what definition he has accepted as a second family in the operation of the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Act does not use the term "second family". It does, however, contain provisions which take account of the presence of a new partner or step-children in the household or new children of the absent parent.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the operation of the Child Support Agency where existing court arrangements are satisfactory to both parties concerned.

Mr. Burt: Parents are free to come to, or continue with, their own arrangements for child maintenance, where the parent with care is not receiving income support, family credit or disability working allowance.

However, when one of these benefits is in payment then the taxpayer also has an interest, and it is right that the Child Support Agency should become involved to ensure that a realistic level of maintenance is paid.

Mr. Renton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to propose further changes in child support maintenance in respect of partners who have remarried and are now bringing up a second family; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The changes to the child support scheme which were introduced from 7 February, particularly the extension to the provision for phasing in payments of maintenance and the significant increases in the protected income margins, will help many absent parents with second families. The Government intend to monitor the effects of these changes carefully, and will continue to keep the scheme under scrutiny.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the timing of changes announced to the operation of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The changes were introduced from 7 February. The formula changes will apply from that date; the new phasing provisions are being implemented over three months, with the phasing period running from the date of reassessment.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the United Kingdom, under 21 years of age, are currently unemployed but not in receipt of unemployment benefit.

Mr. Burt: From the latest available information in the 1990 and 1991 family expenditure surveys, the number was 340,000.

Notes:

1. In the family expenditure survey people referred to as the economically active unemployed are those who are out of work, available for work, intending to work, and have either sought work within the last four weeks or are waiting to start a job already obtained.
2. This estimate will include some people who have made a claim for unemployment benefit but have not yet received it.
3. The family expenditure survey is based on a sample of households and therefore subject to sampling error.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many men in the United Kingdom are currently unemployed and economically active, but are not receiving unemployment benefit, or any other social security benefit;

(2) how many women in the United Kingdom are currently unemployed and economically active but are not receiving unemployment benefit or any other social security benefit.

Mr. Burt: From the latest available information in the 1990 and 1991 family expenditure surveys, it is estimated there were 260,000 men and 130,000 women.

Notes:

1. In the family expenditure survey people referred to as the economically active unemployed are those who are out of work, available for work, intending to work, and have either sought work within the last four weeks or are waiting to start a job already obtained.
2. This estimate will include some people who have made a claim for state benefits but have not yet received benefit.
3. The family expenditure survey is based on a sample of households and therefore subject to sampling error.

Sickness Benefit

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the United Kingdom are unemployed and receiving sickness benefit to the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested.

In the period 1 April 1991 to 4 April 1992—the latest period for which information is available—802,000 spells of sickness benefit commenced. In 405,000 of the spells the person stated they had not been in employment prior to claiming.

Notes:

1. Figures based on a 1 per cent. sample of claims in Great Britain rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. Sickness benefit will not have been paid in all spells.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children there were in families receiving supplementary benefit in *(a)* England and *(b)* the north-west region of England in 1979; and how many children there were in families receiving supplementary benefit/income support in (i) England and (ii) the north-west region of England at the latest available date.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the tables:

Number of children in families receiving supplementary benefit in 1979

Region	*Number of children*
North West England	Not available
England	757,000

Number of children in families receiving income support in 1993

Region	*Number of children*
North West England	426,000
England	2,550,000

Notes:

1. *Sources:* Supplementary Benefit Statistics Annual Inquiry, November 1979.
   Income Support Statistics Quarterly Inquiry, February 1993.
2. The figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. Children are defined as being under 16 years of age.
4. The North West Region is the North West Social Security Administrative Region as used by the Department prior to 1988. Information for this region is not available for 1979.
5. Income support replaced supplementary benefit in April 1988.

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council to complete its inquiry into occupational rhinitis.

Mr. Scott: A report from the council is expected within the next few months.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when each current member was appointed to the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council; what was their date of appointment and expected duration of service; and what are the companies, organisations or bodies they represent and their particular professional expertise or specialisation.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

Member	Date first appointed	Profession
Professor J. M. Harrington, CBE, *chairman*	14 August 1981	Professor of occupational health
Mr. P. E. Arscott, OBE	14 March 1991	Health and safety consultant
Dr. J. Asherson	9 January 1990	Head of health and safety, CBI
Miss J. C. Brown	1 October 1986	Researcher in social policy
Mrs. J. Carter	1 March 1993	Member of TUC General Council
Professor M. J. Cinnamond	1 January 1987	Professor of otorhinolaryngology
Dr. D. N. M. Coggon	9 December 1987	Reader in occupational and environmental medicine
Professor A. D. Dayan	17 May 1990	Professor of toxicology
Dr. C. P. Juniper	5 May 1986	Senior medical adviser in industry
Mr. T. Mawer	1 September 1992	Lawyer
Professor A. J. Newman Taylor, OBE	1 December 1983	Consultant physician
Mr. R. Pickering	12 February 1991	National trade union president
Dr. L. Rushton	31 January 1994	Senior lecturer in medical statistics
Dr. C. Taylor	10 May 1993	Chief medical officer in industry
Mr. O. D. Tudor	12 February 1991	Assistant secretary, TUC
Mrs. M. Twomey	1 May 1992	Member of TUC

Note:

Chairman and members are normally appointed for a period of three years and can be reappointed for further three-year terms. Members are appointed for the expertise they bring to the council's deliberations, rather than to represent particular organisations, although the CBI and TUC each nominate four members.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Scott: The last formal meeting took place on 21 November 1991 when I was invited by the council to attend one of its regular meetings. Informal meetings with the chairman are held about once a year to discuss matters of current interest. The last meeting took place on 23 December 1992.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when his Department last discussed occupational rhinitis with the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council.

Mr. Scott: There have been no formal discussions about occupational rhinitis between the Department and the council. Members of the Department attend council meetings on a regular basis as observers and provide information on request. The council last discussed occupational rhinitis at its meeting on 18 November 1993.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Renton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average time that it takes the Child Support Agency to answer letters from hon. Members; and if he will issue instructions that this time should be at least halved.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my right hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Tim Renton, dated 10 February 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your Question to the Secretary of State about the time it takes the Agency to respond to letters from honourable Members.

All letters from Members of Parliament addressed to me are acknowledged and I aim to respond within an average of 20 working days. Press interest has stimulated a great deal of correspondence from constituents and although that target is not being met at the moment, the necessary steps are being taken to ensure that correspondence from Members will be answered as promptly as possible.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington may expect a reply from the Child Support Agency to his detailed written representations on behalf of Mrs. Fiona Dennehy of Leamington Spa, made on 25 September 1993, 26 October 1993, 24 November 1993 and 5 January 1994.

Mr. Burt: I understand that Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency replied to my hon. Friend about this case on 8 February 1994.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which benefit or benefits claimants of incapacity benefit will receive while their claims after 197 days are being assessed and in the 1994-95 financial year, what level of funding this will represent *(a)* for each individual per week and *(b)* in the full financial year per individual; what is the total spend nationally on such benefits in the financial year 1994-95; and what is his planned spend on incapacity benefit for the financial years 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98.

Mr. Scott: After 28 weeks of incapacity, incapacity benefit recipients will receive the higher rate short-term benefit. They will receive this rate of benefit while they are being assessed under the new objective medical incapacity test. As the new benefit will not be implemented until April 1995, there are no financial implications for the financial year 1994-95. The estimated total cost of incapacity benefit for the years 1995-96 and 1996-97 is £8,100 million and £7,550 million respectively. A figure for 1997-98 is not yet available.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list, by county area, those magistrates courts which have been closed since April 1992 and those magistrates courts which he expects to be closed by April 1995.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The provision of magistrates' courthouse accommodation is a matter for the courts'

committee for the area concerned in conjunction with the local paying authority; there is no requirement of notification to the Lord Chancellor. The Department has no central record of the number of magistrates' courthouses that have been closed or are scheduled to be closed. A local authority that is aggrieved by a decision of a magistrates court committee to close a courthouse has the right of appeal to the Lord Chancellor. In 1993 the Lord Chancellor dealt with six appeals. There are no appeals currently outstanding.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received from representatives of outer London magistrates courts concerning the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has received 118 responses from representatives of the outer London magistrates courts service to the consultation documents issued by his Department. In addition to this he has received in the region of 80 letters from hon. Members for constituencies in the outer London area concerning the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill. There have been approximately 300 letters from members of the magistrates courts service overall and other interested bodies; it is not possible, however, to give an accurate figure of those from representatives of the outer London service since this information is not recorded. The Lord Chancellor and I have also met representatives of the outer London action group, and the Lord Chancellor will continue to correspond with them.

Courts (Opinion Surveys)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what surveys to obtain the views of those using the courts system were carried out between 1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993; and what were the results of these surveys.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Between 1 July 1992 and 30 June 1993, local surveys of court users were conducted by 15 courts and a national survey of court users was conducted by the National Consumer Council. Generally, the surveys showed that the improved standard of customer service in the courts was well received, although areas for improvement were also highlighted.

Crown Courts

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many Crown court centres *(a)* had and *(b)* had not established an information point by July 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Eighty eight Crown court centres had established information points and four had not.

Juveniles (Non-attendance at Court)

Mr. Marland: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, on how many occasions cases have had to be postponed because juveniles in the care of a local authority have failed to attend in the latest convenient period for which figures are available; and what is the average cost of each such case.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Juries

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what proportion of jurors sat on trials on days when they attended a Crown court in 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Of the total number of days attended by jurors in the Crown court during 1993, days or part-days spent sitting on trials accounted for just over 77 per cent.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when new versions of *(a)* the summons letter to jurors and *(b)* the explanatory leaflet for jurors were last issued.

Mr. John M. Taylor: New versions of the jury summons and the explanatory leaflet for jurors were issued in April 1993. These were brought into immediate use except in London where, for technical reasons, introduction was deferred until November 1993.

Witness Summonses

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures have been taken since July 1992 to make the order to witnesses to attend court clearer and less formal.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since last May, recipients of witness orders have also been given an explanatory letter from the clerk to the justices which sets out in clear, easily understood terms, what the witness can expect to happen in the Crown court. We will be putting forward proposals to remove the requirement to serve witness orders, when the next legislative opportunity arises. Witnesses will continue to receive the explanatory letter as this contains all the relevant information about their attendance at court.

Visa Applications's

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current waiting time for appeals to be heard against refusal of settlement visa applications from spouses and fiances or fiancees in India.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The immigration appellate authorities do not differentiate between countries of origin in allocating hearing dates. The current average time between the IAA receiving a certificate of readiness from a party to the date of a long, three-hour, hearing in London and at the provincial centres are as follows:

	Weeks
Thanet House	14
Hatton Cross	12
Birmingham	10
Manchester	14
Leeds	8
Glasgow	11

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current waiting time for appeals to be heard against refusal of settlement visa applications from spouses and fiances or fiancees in Pakistan.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The immigration appellate authorities do not differentiate between countries of origin

in allocating hearing dates. The current average time between the IAA receiving a certificate of readiness from a party to the date of a long, three-hour, hearing in London and at the provincial centres are as follows:

	Weeks
Thanet House	14
Hatton Cross	12
Birmingham	10
Manchester	14
Leeds	8
Glasgow	11

Legal Aid

Mr. Steen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the hon. Member for South Hams may expect an answer to his letter of 24 January concerning the matter of Miss Hale's court case proceedings with the central London county court and the legal aid system.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I aim to reply to hon. Members' letters within 20 working days of receipt, although of course I always attempt to deal with urgent matters well within that time. I expect to reply to the substantive issues raised in the letter referred to within the normal target period, but there are a number of issues which may require further investigation.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to each of the advisory committees on legal education and conduct.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The current membership of the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct is set out below. The membership of sub-committees of the main committee is an internal matter for the main committee, which is independent of the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Membership of the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct—at 3 February 1994

Mrs. Liliana Archibald
Professor Richard Card
His Honour Judge John Gower QC
Eric Hammond OBE
Brian Harvey
John Hosking CBE
Patrick Lefevre
Luke March
The Reverend Dr. Colin Morris
Dr. Claire Palley
Ms Usha Prashar
Nicholas Purnell QC
Peter Scott QC
Graham Smith CBE
David Ward
David Wilkins
The Committee's current chairman is Lord Justice Steyn.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to each of the advisory committees on general commissioners of income tax.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost. At 1 January 1994 there were 78 advisory committees with a total of 483 members. If the hon. Member wishes me to give the names of members of particular advisory committees I shall be pleased to do so.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to each of the advisory committees on general commissioners of income tax for Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The names of the members currently appointed to the two advisory committees on general commissioners of income tax for Northern Ireland are as follows:

Eastern advisory committee

Chairman:
Colonel J. E. Wilson

Members:
W. J. Hall, Esq
M. W. S. MacLaran, Esq
Miss C. MacMahon
Mrs. J. Stewart
Sir Myles Humphries
J. J. Leslie, Esq, DL

Western advisory committee

Chairman:
J. T. Eaton, Esq

Members:
G. Broderick, Esq
D. F. Desmond, Esq
J. Grew, Esq
Mrs. M. I. G. Welsh
R. W. Wilson, Esq
C. A. J. Anderson, Esq
W. D. Smyth, Esq

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to each of the advisory committees on justices of the peace in England.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The Lord Chancellor is responsible for the appointment of members of advisory committees in England and Wales with the exception of the Duchy of Lancaster where it is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy. Within the Lord Chancellor's area of responsibility there are 94 advisory committees with a total membership of 940. There is no secrecy about the membership of advisory committees but to provide the names of every member could only be achieved at disproportionate cost. If the hon. Member wishes to know the names of the members of a particular advisory committee, the Minister responsible will be pleased to oblige.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, what is the total rent received from the accommodation of the occupied royal palaces listed in his answer; what is the range of rentals; and how many of the rented units have *(a)* four bedrooms and *(b)* five bedrooms.

Mr. Sproat: Of the 54 properties listed rent is paid by those occupying 11. The rent amounts in aggregate to

£22,704 per annum. The rent is set at 6 per cent. of the occupant's after-tax salary, which is equivalent to a deduction of 8·5 per cent. of pre-tax salary. Of the 11 apartments in respect of which rent is paid, five have four bedrooms, one has five bedrooms and one has six bedrooms. A further £46,000 per annum is paid in respect of other residential properties not included in the 54 referred to above, making a total rent deduction of £69,000 per annum. In addition to this the benefit of housing taken into account in determining wage and salary levels in the household's new grading structure amounts to approximately £480,000 per annum.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what records are kept of the official use of the official reception rooms at the accommodation for members of the royal family in the occupied royal palaces;

(2) by what criteria residents are selected for the grace and favour accommodation at the occupied royal palaces.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* My Department has overall responsibility for the maintenance of the properties within the occupied royal palaces estate. How these properties should best be used, either by members of the royal family or by employees and pensioners, in fulfilling the requirements and functions of the head of state is however a matter for Her Majesty the Queen.

Grace and favour accommodation is provided to members of the royal family in accordance with long-established practice. It is in keeping with the style and dignity of the monarchy and national prestige that the more immediate members of the royal family should be appropriately housed and a London residence is needed to entertain and undertake official duties on behalf of the Queen. How members of the royal family use the apartments allocated to them in fulfilling their duties in support of the Queen as head of state, including the use of official receptions rooms, are also matters for Her Majesty the Queen.

The criteria adopted when allocating residential accommodation to employees and pensioners are summarised below.

As regards employees, accommodation is provided to facilitate the better performance of the person's duties and recruitment and retention, in line with long-established practice. Apartments are allocated to employees by broad category of post and by location—for example, mews stable staff in London are housed in the flats above the London mews stables—or according to the post which they hold—for example, there are apartments in St. James's palace which have been occupied by successive masters of the household, marshals of the diplomatic corps and keepers of the privy purse—or according to need and availability, with available accommodation being allocated to staff whom the household most requires to be housed. There are approximately 500 official employees in the royal households and accommodation is not therefore available to all staff.

Official staff may be provided with accommodation on retirement if they have been housed as employees for 20 years or more and if finding their own accommodation after such a long period would cause difficulties and be a poor reward for long and loyal service. It is accordingly generally only the more junior employees who are provided with pensioner accommodation.

There are in addition to the 23 pensioners who were previously official employees and who are provided with accommodation, four grace and favour pensioners, all of whom were provided with accommodation some time ago. There are unlikely to be grace and favour pensioners in the future. Grace and favour pension accommodation is provided at the Queen's discretion. The military knights are retired Army officers who have some ceremonial duties to perform at Windsor castle and are required to live there. Nominations are submitted by the Defence Secretary for approval by the Queen.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report,* columns *846-47,* to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West on the costs of refurbishment at occupied royal palaces, what information is available on refurbishment costs in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* In 1990-91 information on recorded expenditure is not readily available. However, the following sums were included in budgets:

	£ 000s
Kensington palace	
Apartment 1A (HRH The Princess Margaret)	25
Apartment 1 (TRH The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester)	8
Apartment 10 (TRH The Prince and Princess Michael of Kent)	11
St. James palace	
Clarence House	
Apartment in the occupation of Her Majesty	
Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother	35
TOTAL	79
In 1989-90, the expenditure was:	
Kensington palace	
Apartment 1A	19
Apartment 1	13
Apartment 10	23
TOTAL	55
St. James's palace	
No recorded expenditure	

National Lottery

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the percentage restriction on the commission of the national lottery pools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: None. The percentages will be proposed by the applicants within the competitive tendering process organised by the director general.

Unicorn Heritage plc

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report,* column *621,* on remission of debts on grants, (1) what alternatives were considered before writing off the loss of Unicorn Heritage plc on what grounds none of them were considered feasible; and what actions were taken to effect recovery of the sum loaned;

(2) what appraisal was made of Unicorn Heritage plc before writing off its losses and the money loaned to it.

Mr. Sproat: The alternative to writing off the debt owed by Unicorn Heritage plc would have been to ask the English tourist board to continue to seek recovery of the debt. This alternative was not considered feasible because it was clear there was no further practical action that the board would take, since the company's liquidators had stated categorically that there were no funds available to repay unsecured creditors.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible have *(a)* been abolished or *(b)* created since the establishment of his Department.

Mr. Sproat: Since the establishment of my Department, none of the non-departmental public bodies which it sponsors have been abolished and none have been created.

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are his powers of direction in respect of chairmen of non-departmental public bodies funded by his Department.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not have powers of direction in respect of the chairman of non-departmental public bodies funded by my Department. It is the boards of such bodies which are subject to certain provisions as regards direction in legislation and the financial memoranda setting out the relationship between the Department and each body.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) which of the public appointments for which he is responsible require advance notice to and consultation with the Chief Whip's office; and which appointments have been so notified and consulted upon since the establishment of his Department;

(2) which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's Office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Sproat: It is not the practice of Her Majesty's Government to answer parliamentary questions about discussions and consultations between Departments and offices of Government relating to public appointments.

Grants (Remission of Debts)

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *621*, on remission of debts on grants, what is the delegated limit of a grant that can be written off by a sponsored body.

Mr. Sproat: Different conditions and levels of delegation have been agreed over time for each body sponsored by my Department. The levels are set in the bodies' financial memoranda and may be changed when the financial memoranda are reviewed or when new central guidance is issued. If the hon. Member would care to write to me separately saying which particular body or bodies he is interested in, I will provide him with the appropriate information.

Taiwanese Tourists

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many tourists are reported to have arrived in this country from Taiwan in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sproat: According to the international passenger survey, the number of Taiwanese residents visiting the United Kingdom was 32,000 in 1990, 34,000 in 1991 and 40,000 in 1992, the latest available year. All these estimates are subject to sampling error.

Paper Shredders

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many paper shredding machines there are *(a)* in his private office and *(b)* in his Department.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* My Department has two paper shredding machines, one of which is in the Secretary of State's private office.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with Ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with Ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has had from professors of law in Scotland about the issue of precedent, and the possibility of holding a trial of the alleged Libyan suspects for the bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received no such representations.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy at his forthcoming meeting with his Irish counterpart to discuss the Irish Government's view of THORP.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *702*, if he will raise with the Presidents of the European Commission and European Council of Ministers

the possibility of making an exception to the convention of confidentiality covering correspondence between the Commission and member states in the case of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

The Prime Minister: No.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will seek to establish from Lord Justice Scott whether he objects to the release by Government Departments of memoranda and other documents that they have submitted for consideration by his inquiry.

The Prime Minister: No. Lord Justice Scott has discretion, subject to consultation on sensitive and classified material, to publish evidence submitted to his inquiry in his final report. The Government do not intend to anticipate his decisions.

Cabinet Committees

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish an updated list of the ministerial committees of the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister: An updated list of the ministerial committees of the Cabinet, giving their composition and terms of reference, is given below. Copies of this list are available in the Library of the House.

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND DOMESTIC POLICY (EDP)
Composition
Prime Minister *(Chairman)*
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Lord Privy Seal
Lord President of the Council
Secretary of State for the Environment
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Secretary of State for Employment
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Secretary of State for Wales

Other Ministers will be invited to attend for items in which they have a departmental interest.
Terms of Reference
"To consider strategic issues relating to the Government's economic and domestic policies."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND OVERSEAS POLICY (OPD)
Composition
Prime Minister *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Defence
Attorney-General

The Chief of Defence Staff will attend as required, as will the Chiefs of Staff when necessary.

Terms of Reference
"To keep under review the Government's defence and overseas policy."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON THE GULF (OPDG)
Composition
Prime Minister *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Secretary of State for Defence
Attorney General

The Chief of the Defence Staff will be invited to attend meetings of the Committee, others will be invited to attend as appropriate.

Terms of Reference
"To keep under review developments in the Gulf region and to co-ordinate any necessary action."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON NUCLEAR DEFENCE POLICY (OPDN)
Composition
Prime Minister *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for Defence

Terms of Reference
"To keep under review the Government's policy on nuclear defence."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN SECURITY (OPDSE)
Composition
Prime Minister *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for Defence

Terms of Reference
"To keep under review arrangements for defence and security in Europe."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON HONG KONG AND OTHER DEPENDENT TERRITORIES (OPDK)
Composition
Prime Minister *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Defence
Lord President of the Council
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Others, including the Attorney General, the Governor of Hong Kong, and the British Ambassador in Peking may be invited to attend as appropriate.

Terms of Reference
"To keep under review the implementation of the agreement with the Chinese on the future of Hong Kong and the implications of that agreement for the Government of Hong Kong and the wellbeing of its people; and to keep under review as necessary the Government's policy towards other Dependent Territories."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON NORTHERN IRELAND (NI)
Composition
Prime Minister *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Secretary of State for Defence
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Attorney General

Other Ministers will be invited to attend as the nature of the business requires.

Terms of Reference
"To oversee the Government's policy on Northern Ireland issues and relations with the Republic of Ireland on these matters."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (EDS)
Composition
Prime Minister *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Secretary of State for Defence
Secretary of State for the Environment

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Chief Secretary, Treasury

The Chief Scientific Adviser is in attendance

Terms of Reference
"To review science and technology policy"

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES (IS)
Composition
Prime Minister *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Secretary of State for Defence
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

The Lord President of the Council and the Attorney General may be invited to attend as appropriate.

Terms of Reference
"To keep under review policy on the security and intelligence services."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (EDI)
Composition
Lord Privy Seal *(Chairman)*
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Lord President of the Council
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Employment
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Secretary of State for Wales

Terms of reference
"To consider industrial, commercial, and consumer issues including questions of competition and deregulation."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT (EDE)
Composition
Lord Privy Seal *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for National Heritage
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Secretary of State for Wales

Terms of Reference
"To consider questions of environmental policy."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON HOME AND SOCIAL AFAIRS (EDH)
Composition
Lord Privy Seal *(Chairman)*
Lord Chancellor
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Lord President of the Council
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Wales
Secretary of State for Social Security
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for National Heritage
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Secretary of State for Employment
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Attorney General, the Lord Advocate and the Captain of the Gentlemen at Arms also receive papers and are invited to attend as necessary.

Terms of reference
"To consider home and social policy issues."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT (EDL)
Composition
Lord Privy Seal *(Chairman)*
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Secretary of State for Transport
Lord President of the Council
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for National Heritage
Secretary of State for Social Security
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Minister of State, Department of the Environment (Minister for Local Government and Planning)
Secretary of State for Wales

Terms of Reference
"To consider issues affecting local government, including the annual allocation of resources."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON REGENERATION (EDR)
Composition
Lord Privy Seal *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Employment
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Education
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Minister of State, Department of the Environment (Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction)

The Secretaries of State for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales should be invited to attend as appropriate.

Terms of Reference
"To consider regeneration policies and their co-ordination."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EXPENDITURE (EDX)
Composition
Chancellor of the Exchequer *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Lord Privy Seal
Lord President of the Council
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Chief Secretary, Treasury

Terms of Reference
"To consider the allocation of the public expenditure control totals and make recommendations to the Cabinet."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON THE QUEEN'S SPEECHES AND FUTURE LEGISLATION (FLG)
Composition
Lord President of the Council *(Chairman)*

Lord Chancellor
Lord Privy Seal
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Attorney General
Lord Advocate
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury
Financial Secretary, Treasury
Captain of the Gentlemen-at-Arms

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs should be invited to attend or be represented for discussion of the Queen's speeches.

Terms of Reference
"To prepare and submit to the Cabinet drafts of the Queen's Speeches to Parliament, and proposals for the Government's legislative programme for each Session of Parliament."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATION (LG)
Composition
Lord President of the Council *(Chairman)*
Lord Chancellor
Lord Privy Seal
Secretary of State for Wales
Secretary of State for Scotland
Attorney General
Lord Advocate
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Minister of State, Home Office
Financial Secretary, Treasury
Captain of the Gentlemen-at-Arms

Terms of Reference
"To examine all draft Bills; to consider the Parliamentary handling of Government Bills, European Community documents and Private Members' business, and such other related matters as may be necessary; and to keep under review the Government's policy in relation to issues of Parliamentary procedures."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON HEALTH STRATEGY (EDH(H))
Composition
Lord President of the Council *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Transport
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Social Security
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Secretary of State for Wales
Paymaster General
Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry
Minister of State, Department of Employment
Minister of State, Department of Health (Minister for Health)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of National Heritage

The Chief Medical Officer is in attendance.

Terms of reference
"To oversee the development, implementation and monitoring of the Government's health strategy, to co-ordinate the Government's policies on United Kingdom-wide issues affecting health, and report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Home and Social Affairs."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECTOR PAY (EDI(P))
Composition
Lord Privy Seal *(Chairman)*
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Secretary of State for Defence
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Employment
Secretary of State for Social Security
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Chief Secretary, Treasury

Terms of reference
"To co-ordinate the handling of pay issues in the public sector and report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Industrial, Commercial and Consumer Affairs."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN QUESTIONS (OPD(E))
Composition
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Chairman)
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Lord President of the Council
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Employment
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Secretary of State for Wales
Attorney General
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Other Ministers will be invited to attend as the nature of the business requires

The United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the European Communities is also in attendance.

Terms of reference
"To consider questions relating to the United Kingdom's membership of the European Community and to report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Defence and Overseas Policy."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON EASTERN EUROPE (OPD(AE))
Composition
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Chairman)
Chancellor of the Exchequer
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Defence
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Employment
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Minister for Overseas Development
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Other Ministers may be invited to attend as the nature of the business requires.

Terms of Reference
"To consider questions relating to Britain's policy of assisting change in the former Soviet republics and other former Communist countries in Europe and report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Defence and Overseas Policy."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON TERRORISM (OPD(T))
Composition
Secretary of State for the Home Department (Chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Secretary of State for Defence
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Attorney General

Terms of Reference
"To keep under review the arrangements for countering terrorism

and for dealing with terrorist incidents and their consequences and to report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Defence and Overseas Policy."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON LONDON (EDL(L))
Composition
Secretary of State for the Environment *(Chairman)*
Minister of State, Home Office
Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Minister for Industry)
Minister of State, Department of the Environment (Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction)
Minister of State, Department of the Environment (Minister for Local Government and Planning)
Minister of State, Department of Social Security (Minister for Social Security and Disabled People)
Minister of State, Department for Education
Minister of State, Department of Health (Minister for Health)
Minister of State, Department of Employment
Economic Secretary, Treasury
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Transport (Minister for Transport in London)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of National Heritage
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science

Terms of Reference
"To co-ordinate the Government's policies on London."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON DRUG MISUSE (EDH(D))
Composition
Lord President of the Council *(Chairman)*
Solicitor General
Paymaster General
Minister of State, Home Office
Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence
Minister of State, Scottish Office
Minister of State, Department of Health (Minister for Health)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, Department for Education

Others, including the Minister for Overseas Development and Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State from the Departments of the Environment and Employment may be invited to attend as appropriate and should receive all papers.

Terms of Reference
"To co-ordinate the Government's national and international policies for tackling drugs misuse, and report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Home and Social Affairs."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES (EDH(W))
Composition
Secretary of State for Employment *(Chairman)*
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Paymaster General
Minister of State, Department for Education
Minister of State, Scottish Office
Minister of State, Welsh Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms, Department of Trade and Industry
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Social Security
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Employment

The Minister of State, Minister for the Armed Forces, Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office will also receive papers and be invited to attend as necessary.

Terms of Reference
"To review and develop the Government's policy and strategy on issues of special concern to women: to oversee their implementation; and to report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Home and Social Affairs".

MINISTERIAL GROUP ON REFUGEES FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA (GEN 24)
Composition
Secretary of State for the Home Department *(Chairman)*
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
The Lord President of the Council
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Employment
Secretary of State for Social Security
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Secretary of State for Employment
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Secretary of State for Wales
Attorney-General
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, (Minister for Overseas Development)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office

The Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will also receive papers and be invited to attend as necessary.

Terms of Reference
"To consider whether a visa regime should be instituted for citizens of former Yugoslavia in the context of the Government's overall policy towards that region and to review the practical arrangements for the reception and subsequent support of those arriving in the United Kingdom from this area taking account of the implications for the treatment of refugees from other parts of the world, and to report to Cabinet."

MINISTERIAL GROUP ON SANCTIONS AGAINST THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (GEN 27)
Composition
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office *(Chairman)*
Paymaster General
Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Minister for Trade)
Minister of State for Aviation and Shipping, Department of Transport
Minister of State for Defence Procurement, Ministry of Defence
Economic Secretary, Treasury

Terms of Reference
"To keep under review the implementation of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia imposed under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 757, 787 and 820, and to report to the Ministerial Committee on Overseas and Defence Policy as necessary."

Press Secretary's Office

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Prime Minister what is the salary, grading and scale attaching to the post of press secretary to the Prime Minister, the number of staff accountable to the press secretary and the total cost of the press secretary's office in the last financial year.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* My present press secretary holds a rank equivalent to home civil service grade 2, the salary range for which is £64,307 to £75,328. Nine members of staff are accountable to him. The total cost of the No. 10 press office for the financial year 1992-93 was £621,760.

Regional Airports

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *702*, if he will be replying direct to the representations made to him by the chief executive of Manchester Airport plc. in regard to liberalising access to regional airports; if a copy of the reply will be placed in the Library; and by when he expects the reply to have been sent.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* A reply will be sent shortly.

Moscow (Visit)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise the issue of the slaughter of seal pups in Russia with Boris Yeltsin during his visit to Moscow.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* I do not expect to do so. However the Russian authorities are aware of the public concern in the United Kingdom, and our embassy will continue to raise this subject with the Russians whenever the opportunity arises.

EMPLOYMENT

Manufacturing Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the weekly United Kingdom earnings figures for manufacturing shown in the November issue of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development main economic indicators adjusted to the same base date as the corresponding figures in table 18.11 of the September issue of the "Monthly Digest of Statistics"; what is the figure in the latter table; and what factors lay behind the discrepancy.

Miss Widdecombe: The weekly manufacturing earnings figures for Great Britain, compiled by the OECD from published figures and shown in the November issue of OECD main economic indicators are incorrect. The figures in the latest, January 1994 edition, accurately reflect the manufacturing earnings figures published in the monthly digest of statistics converted to a base date of 1985.

The earnings indices shown in table 18.11 of the monthly digest of statistics are the results of the monthly wages and salaries survey by the Employment Department.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Women's National Commission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As Government co-chairman, Baroness Denton of Wakefield, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, is the only appointed member of the Women's National Commission, WNC. The 50-member organisations of the WNC chooses its own representatives to sit on the commission.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the United Kingdom are currently unemployed, economically active, but not in receipt of unemployment benefit; and what were the equivalent figures for May 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: For the current data, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlisle) on 26 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *285-86*. The equivalent information for 1979 is not available.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people would have been registered as unemployed in 1978 if the figures had been treated on the same basis as 1994.

Miss Widdecombe: Claimant unemployment figures based on the current coverage of the count are available from the Department's consistent seasonally adjusted series. This gives the average level of claimant unemployment in the United Kingdom in 1978 as 1,144,000.

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met representatives of organisations representing housing co-operatives to discuss funding and strategy; what is his policy regarding the development of housing co-operatives; what criteria he applies when determining financial assistance to housing co-operatives; what plans he has to encourage the development of housing co-operatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: There is no housing co-operative movement in Northern Ireland. As there is no demand for housing co-operatives, there are no plans at present to encourage their development.

General National Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what plans he has to introduce general national vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland's schools and colleges; what representations he has received concerning GNVQs in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what study his Department has made of the provision of general national vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland's schools and colleges; what reports his Department has commissioned into their provision; if he will make the results of the reports available to both the House and the general public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: General national vocational qualifications, GNVQs, were introduced into a small number of schools and further education colleges in Northern Ireland in September 1992. The Northern Ireland Department of Education inspectorate carried out a survey of this provision during the 1992-93 academic year, which concluded that a satisfactory start had been made. Indeed, first results indicate that the proportion of Northern Ireland students who achieved a full GNVQ at intermediate level at the end of 1992-93 was significantly higher than the national average. While I have no plans to publish that survey I intend to publish a report on the present, much larger, phase of GNVQs at the end of current academic year.

Private Patient Facilities

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much income by region has been generated by private patient facilities in national health service hospitals in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Amcram: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*£*
1987-88	1,551,399
1988-89	1,941,697
1989-90	1,954,145
1990-91	2,049,903
1991-92	2,429,774
1992-93	3,179,440

NHS Redundancies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of redundancies among national health service hospital staff *(a)* by grade and *(b)* by reason for each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Ancram: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The latest available information is for external consultancy contracts awarded in the 1992-93 financial year, which amounted to the value of £16,399,560. This, at constant 1994 prices, would be £16,932,545.

SCOTLAND

Minor Surgery

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will increase the amount of minor surgical procedures which can be undertaken by each general practitioner in each quarter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 26 May 1993, *Official Report*, columns *498-99*.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the *(a)* date, *(b)* country of destination, *(c)* purpose and *(d)* cost of each official visit abroad made by (i) the Lord Advocate and (ii) the Solicitor-General for Scotland since their appointments; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The details of the overseas visits by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and the Solicitor-General for Scotland are as follows:

Date	*Country*	*Purpose*
Lord Advocate		
16–17 May 1992	France	Franco-British Legal Conference
19–22 May 1992	Belgium	Meeting of Presidents and Senior Prosecutors of the Supreme Courts of the Member States of the European Communities
7–8 October 1992	United States of America	Meeting with Assistant Attorney General Mueller regarding Lockerbie investigation
14 November 1992	France	Speech to Journées sur les Justices D'Europe
26–27 March 1993	Eire	Address on Subsidiarity to Bar European Group Conference
13–15 September 1993	United States of America	Meetings regarding Lockerbie with new Assistant Attorney General
9 October 1993	Austria	Council of Europe Summit Meeting
15–19 November 1993	Mauritius	Conference of Commonwealth Law Ministers
Solicitor-General		
9–10 June 1992	Cyprus	18th European Ministers of Justice Conference
3–7 August 1992	Canada	Reform of Criminal Evidence Conference
8 December 1992	France	Representing Her Majesty's Government in case of McMichael v. United Kingdom
3–8 May 1993	Cyprus	10th Commonwealth Law Conference
22 June 1993	Switzerland	Informal meeting of European Ministers of Justice

The cost of such travel is not recorded in a form which allows the amounts for each visit to be identified, and not all costs are necessarily borne by the Crown Office. Nevertheless, the total cost of Ministers' overseas visits is estimated to be in the order of £10,000.

Forestry Commission (Privatisation)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek the advice of the new advisory panel on sustainable development on the issue of the privatisation of the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro: The forestry review group has been asked to review the options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands in which privatisation is only one of the options being considered by the group. Forestry Ministers will consider what advice, further to that to be offered shortly by the review group, we should seek in coming to decisions. A full process of consultation is planned.

Cervical Smears

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the average time that patients currently wait for the results of cervical smear tests in each health board area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe), *Official Report*, 21 January column *759*, 3 February, column *929* and 4 February, column *962*.

Stolen Equipment

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen or lost from his Department in the last five years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Lang: A variety of minor items are periodically reported missing. The following more substantial items have been formally recorded since 1988 as losses to the Scottish Office, including those attributable to theft.

Year and Item	*Approximate value* £
1988	
Cash	400
1989	
Motor Car	2,000
Furniture/Machinery	3,800
1990	
Furniture	1,595
1991	
Video Equipment	749
1992	
Video Equipment	359
Motor Car	2,650
Computer Equipment	3,500

Scottish Grand Committee

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to implement the changes to the procedures of the Scottish Grand Committee set out in the White Paper, "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good".

Mr. Lang: I am today placing in the Library of the House proposed amendments to standing orders and an explanatory note. The amendments will implement our commitment in the White Paper to expand the role of the Scottish Grand Committee. They reflect discussions I have had with the Opposition parties. The amendments provide for the Grand Committee:

to consider the principle of Bills relating exclusively to Scotland;
to hold debates on subordinate legislation;
to hold up to 12 general debates a year, with Opposition parties able to choose subjects for some of them;
to put questions to Ministers, both from the House of Commons and the House of Lords;
to receive oral statements from Ministers; and
to hold adjournment debates.

The amendments will be tabled in due course.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to each of the health boards in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, (Dr. Godman), *Official Report*, column *52*.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to each of the national health services trusts in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), *Official Report*, column *53*.

HEALTH

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practices have received the preparatory management allowance for general practice fundholding in two or more years running; and in which family health service authority and regional health authority they are located.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is available from regional health authorities, which manage the general practitioner fundholding scheme.

Patient Transport Service

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether she has received a copy of the arbitration decision in respect of the patient transport service contract for North Staffordshire;

(2) who were the arbiters in respect of the appeal by the Staffordshire ambulance trust against the letting of the patient transport services contract in North Staffordshire by the North Staffordshire hospital trust in respect of services for the North Staffordshire trust and North Staffordshire health authority combined health care;

(3) if she will place in the Library a copy of the arbitration procedure and decision in respect of patient transport services contract for North Staffordshire.

Mr. Sackville: The issue was the subject of conciliation, not arbitration. The conciliators were the

chief executive of West Midlands health and a representative of the National Health Service Management Executive. Copies of the letters sent to all parties following conciliation, along with guidance on the conciliation process used, EL(91)11 and EL(93)10, will be placed in the Library.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultation the North Staffordshire district health authority undertook with local authorities in respect of the comprehensiveness of their patient transport services specification in so far as it related to combined health care services in accordance with the commitments given in "Forward in Health: Health Strategy and the Authority's Business Plan in 1993-94 and 1994-95."

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for North Staffordshire health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Mr. M. J. Proctor, for details.

NHS Management Costs

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the annual cost of national health service management in the parliamentary constituency of Dewsbury *(a)* in 1987-88 and *(b)* in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: The pay costs for national health service managers within Dewsbury health authority, amounted to £97,529 in 1987-88 and £1,125,119 in 1992-93. The figures need to be treated with great caution. Managerial staff consists of general and senior managers who did not exist as a separate staff group prior to 1986.

The number of managers in the NHS generally has been deliberately increased since the mid-1980s—not just since the reforms—as the service was previously under managed. Much of the increase arises from the re-classification of existing professional and administrative staff. Salaries and wage costs incurred by family health services authorities are excluded, as corresponding costs are not identified on the same basis.

Source: Health authority accounts.

NHS Private Facilities

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been treated in national health service hospitals private facilities in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table. Data from the hospital episode statistics for earlier years are incomplete and do not provide sufficient coverage to make reliable estimates.

England: Private Patients—1989-92

Year	*Number*
1989-90	83,478
1990-91	81,366
[1]1991-92	89,863

[1]Provisional estimates.
Source: SD2A, Hospital Episode Statistics.

Chatham Dockyard

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to conduct a joint survey with the Ministry of Defence and the Medway community health doctor to monitor the health of the former work force of the nuclear division of Chatham dockyard.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has no immediate plans to undertake such a survey.

Birth Defects

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment has been made of the proportion and number by which folic acid intake by mothers-to-be would reduce spinal and related developmental problems in babies;

(2) what action is being taken with the Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus to make sure that mothers-to-be are aware of the importance of folic acid;

(3) for how long before conception and for how long after mothers-to-be are recommended to consider folic acid intake; and what proportion of mothers-to-be know of the need to consume folic acid;

(4) if she will promote in medical and general media issues of pre-conception and pre-birth maternal health as news and current affairs issues;

(5) what assessment has been made by her Department as to whether folic acid reduces spinal and related development problems in babies.

Mr. Sackville: The report of the Medical Research Council study in July 1991 showed that women who had had a previous baby affected by neural tube defect, such as spina bifida, who increased their intake of folic acid prior to and during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy significantly reduced the risk of having a further affected baby by 72 per cent. The Government set up an expert advisory group at once and its report "Folic Acid and the Prevention of Neural Tube Defects" confirmed this advice. In addition all women who were planning a pregnancy were also advised to take folic acid but in a lower dose. A copy of this report is available in the Library.

This advice was disseminated very widely to the health services. The Health Education Authority updated its publications to include the new guidance. The Department of Health has also publicised these findings in the press and media and this will continue. Posters and leaflets which complement those issued by the Association of Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus have been distributed widely within the national health service and to professional and voluntary bodies and continue to be available free of charge. The Government are also promoting advice to eat a healthy diet which includes more fresh fruit and vegetables. This will also increase folic acid intakes.

Road Accidents

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who is responsible for liaison with the Department of Transport in respect of the implications of road traffic accidents on health policy; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: A task force, which comprises representatives of 11 Government Departments, including the Departments of Health and of Transport, has been

established to advise on the achievement of the targets for reductions in accidents set in the "Health of the Nation" White Paper. It has set two main objectives: the identification of outstanding research needs for the prevention of accidents and the improvement of the range and compatibility of information collected on the cause, severity and consequences of accidental injuries. A progress report will be issued later this year.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to instigate a cancer screening programme for men over 50 years of age, for the detection of bowel of prostate gland cancer.

Mr. Sackville: The key aim of any screening programme must be to secure a demonstrable improvement in health by increasing length of life and enhancing quality of life. For neither of these cancers have effective screening methods yet been found, though with regard to bowel cancer especially, substantial research is underway into possible screeing methods and the identification of people at higher risk. Prostate cancer screening is a research priority for the Department of Health.

Elderly People

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how may and what proportion of the total population was aged *(a)* over 60 and *(b)* over 65 years in 1978 and the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Estimated resident population of England and Wales

(thousands)

	Mid-1978	*Mid-1992*
Total population	49,443	51,277
Population aged 60 and over—	9,865	10,695
Percentage of total population	(20·0)	(20·9)
Population aged 65 and over—	7,316	8,162
Percentage of total population	(14·8)	(15·9)

EC Services Directive

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health with effect from what date she has applied the EC services directive to *(a)* the notification to existing contractors that the contract they currently hold is being let, *(b)* the timetable for the preparation of bids, *(c)* the timetable for the evaluation of bids, *(d)* the notification of the announcement of the successful bid and *(e)* the time-lapse between the start of the process and the announcement of the successful bidder.

Mr. Sackville: The European Community services directive has applied to all services market tested, if listed in the directive, since 1 July 1993.

Psychiatric Facilities

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the total capital receipts from sale of psychiatric facilities in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not separately identifiable in the information collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of regional health authorities for details.

Fertility Treatment

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients each English health authority has treated for subfertility for the last five years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not available centrally. It is for district health authorities in consultation with the providers of health services to determine the level of provision of subfertility services locally. The hon. Member should write to the chairman of the relevant health authority requesting this information.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *528*, if she will publish the independent, specialist consultancy advice on the future of the NHS Supplies Authority.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to do so.

Paediatric Nurses

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has on the minimum number of trained nurses on paediatric wards per patient.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 3 February, *Official Report*, column *851*.

AIDS

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which local authorities receive grants from central Government to offset work they do on AIDS.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 4 February, *Official Report*, columns *979-80*.

Sunderland City Hospitals Trust

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names and salaries of the members of the Sunderland City hospitals trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chairman of City Hospitals Sunderland national health service trust is Mr. D. Graham and the non-executive directors are Mrs. R. Blacklock, Mr. C. Storey, Mrs. M. Mason, Mr. E. Timmins and Mr. J. Sadlik. The chairman's remuneration is £19,285 per year: all non-executive directors receive £5,000 per year. The appointment and salaries of executive directors are matters for the trust itself.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has given to local authorities regarding access to the contents of registration and inspection

officers' reports on residential care homes by local authority staff considering the placement of clients in the homes concerned.

Mr. Bowis: Local authority staff considering the placement of clients in residential care homes are covered by the Department's general guidance to local authorities that—subject to legal advice—there should be public access to inspection reports on individual homes.

Public Bodies

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current membership of the advisory panel on the importation of sexually explicit films for health purposes.

Mr. Sackville: The advisory panel was disbanded with effect from 1 February. I am grateful to the members who have served on it in the past 11 years.

Care in the Community

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total funding of care in the community in 1993-94; and what the amount will be in 1994-95.

Mr. Bowis: In recognition of their new community care responsibilities we are making available to local authorities in England a special transitional grant of £565·4 million in 1993-94.

For 1994-95 the cumulative total of new resources for community care will be £1,274·5 million. The figures are in addition to amounts already spent by health and local authorities on community care services from their baseline resources.

Severalls Hospital, Colchester

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the annual cost of upkeep of a psycho-geriatric bed in Bartons ward, Severalls hospital, Colchester for the last available year.

Mr. Bowis: This is a matter for North East Essex mental health services national health service trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. David Holt, the chairman, for details.

EDUCATION

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Boswell: The value of consultancy contracts awarded by the Department each year since 1987 was as follows:

	Value of Consultancy Contracts (£,000)	
Year	*Actual Prices*	*At 1994 Prices*
1987	364	532
1988	438	600
1989	555	711
1990	974	1,155
1991	1,517	1,691
1992	1,994	2,141
1993	1,629	1,694

Information for the years before 1987 is not available in the form requested.

Expenditure (Essex)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money has been made available for spending on primary and secondary education in Essex in each of the last three financial years; what is the figure for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: For the purpose of calculating authorities' standard spending assessments, education standard spending is divided into five sub-blocks—under-fives, five to 10, 11 to 15, 16 plus, and "other education". The table below sets out the changes in five to 10, 11 to 15 and 16 plus sub-blocks for Essex for 1994-95. Expenditure on under-fives at primary schools is notionally supported through the under-fives sub-block.

Year	*1991-92 £ million*	*1992-93 £ million*	*1993-94 £ million*	*1994-95 £ million*
5-10 Sub-block	183·498	196·384	203·468	214·362
11-15 Sub-block	218·819	232·814	240·749	246·484
16 plus Sub-block	90·652	102·760	34·788	34·373

Notes

1. 1993-94 figure for the 16 plus sub-block reflects LEAs' loss of responsibility for most further education.
2. 1994-95 figures reflect LEAs' loss of responsibility for the careers service and school inspections.

Education standard spending assessments are not earmarked. Each authority is free to determine its spending priorities between the services for which it has responsibility.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many visits abroad the Minister of State made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has made one visit abroad on official business during 1993, to attend and address a conference organised by the Organisation for the Development of Freedom of Education. The total cost to public funds was £728.

Surplus Places

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of surplus places in *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* special schools in the London boroughs.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) on 31 January 1994, *Official Report*, columns *517-21*.

Assisted Places Scheme

Sir David Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make a statement about the level of parental contributions to the fees of pupils in the assisted places scheme in the next academic year.

Mr. Forth: Remission of tuition fees under the assisted places scheme is dependent on the level of fees at participating schools and the amount parents can afford to contribute. Subject to parliamentary approval, the parental contribution scales will be adjusted upwards for the school year 1994-95 as set out in the table below. Where the relevant income for the appropriate financial year does not exceed £9,352 the tuition fees will be wholly remitted.

Part of relevant income to which percentage applies	*One assisted pupil*	*Each of two assisted pupils*	*Each of three assisted pupils*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
That part which exceeds £9,186 but does not exceed £9,988	9	6·75	5·25
That part if any, which exceeds £9,988 but does not exceed £10,804	12	9	7
That part, if any, which exceeds £10,804 but does not exceed £12,422	15	11·25	8·75
That part, if any, which exceeds £12,422 but does not exceed £14,913 (over)	21	15·75	12·25
That part, if any, which exceeds £14,913 but does not exceed £18,163	24	18	14
That part, if any, which exceeds £18,163	33	24·75	19·25

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides.

Mr. Soames: The members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides are:

Chairman:
Professor Sir Colin Berry, DSc, MD, PhD, FRCPath, FFPM
Members:
Dr. Andrée Carter BSc, MISoilSci, MIWEM
Professor Nicola Cherry BSc, MSc, MPhil, PhD, MD
Professor Michael Claridge, MA, DPhil, FIBiol, FLS, FRES
Professor Anthony Dayan, BSc, MD, FRCP, FRCPath, FFPM, FIBiol
Mr. John Leahy MA(Oxon), CChem, MRSC
Professor Donald Lee BSc, PhD, FIBiol, FRSA
Dr. Alex Proudfoot BSC(Hons), MB, ChB, FRCPE
Dr. Eve Roman BSc, PhD
Professor Geoffrey Sagar CBE, BA, MA, DPhil(Oxon)
Mr. Roger Taylor BSc(Agric), Postgrad Dip Agric, NDA, CBiol, MIBiol
Professor J. Paul Webster BSc, PhD, FBIM, FRSA

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Salmon Advisory Committee.

Mr. Jack: Present membership of the Salmon Advisory Committee are listed:

Chairman:
Professor G. M. Dunnet, CBE OBE, Emeritus Regius Professor of Natural History, Aberdeen University.
Members:
Mr. G. H. Bielby
Mr. C. G. Carnie
Mr. R. M. Clerk
Mr. J. H. Ferguson
Mr. D. Heselton MBE
Dr. L. Laird
Mr. I. Mitchell
Mr. M. Owens
Mr. D. R. Paton
Dr. D. J. Solomon

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the board of the royal botanic gardens, Kew.

Mr. Jack: They are:
Mr. Robin Herbert *(Chairman)*
Mr. Robert Bauman
The Viscount Blakenham
Mr. Christopher Brickell
Professor William Chaloner
Sir Phillip Dowson
Mrs. Arabella Lennox-Boyd
Professor Robert May
Mr. Julian Pettifer
Lady Renfrew
The Earl of Selborne
Mrs. Victoria Wakefield

Tobacco

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current subsidy for tobacco growers in the European Community; what is the projected cost for the next financial year; what levels of intervention stocks of tobacco are held; and what amount of tobacco stock has been destroyed over the last five years.

Mr. Jack: The provisional outturn for Community expenditure in 1993 is 1,165 mecu—£917 million—compared to a budget provision of 1,401 mecu. The 1994 budget for tobacco has been set at 1,235 mecu—£933 million. Following substantive reform of the tobacco regime in 1992, from the 1993 harvest onwards, intervention arrangements no longer exist. The European Commission's most recent figures show 10,344 tonnes of tobacco from harvests prior to 1993 remain in intervention stores. No figures are available for tobacco which may have been destroyed, but the tobacco regime does not provide for destruction of stocks which have received EC support. Tobacco eligible for EC support must be of sound and fair merchantable quality and free of characteristics which would otherwise pevent normal marketing.

The effect on expenditure on tobacco resulting from the reform of the regime agreed in 1992 will not begin to show in expenditure figures until at least 1994 and the regime is to be reviewed again in 1996. Nevertheless tobacco is still the most heavily subsidised common agricultural policy crop per hectare and we will continue to press for greater reforms.

Budgetary ecu rates; 1993 £1=1·2700 ecu; 1994 £1=1·3234 ecu.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response she has given to the letter from the president of the Nuclear Control Institute in regard to the economic viability of reprocessing at THORP; and when he received this letter.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry received a letter from the Nuclear Control Institute dated 28 January. This appears to raise issues which fall outside the areas for which this Department is responsible. I shall be replying in due course.

EC-Canada Fisheries Agreement

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made to the Commission of the European Communities regarding the proportion of the Canadian catch that United Kingdom vessels may be expected to fish as a result of the European Communities-Canada fisheries agreement.

Mr. Jack: Throughout the negotiations with Canada, the United Kingdom has stressed the traditional importance of these waters to our distant water fleet.

Once the agreement has been ratified by Canada, the United Kingdom will press for an appropriate share of any opportunities which become available.

Coarse Fishing

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to alter the current coarse fishing close season.

Mr. Jack: Responsibility for fixing annual close seasons for fishing for coarse fish rests primarily with the National Rivers Authority. It is currently reviewing the various coarse fishing close seasons which apply in different parts of England and Wales. If it concludes that changes are required, these will have to be introduced by way of new byelaws which would be subject to statutory advertisement and ministerial confirmation. In dedciding whether or not to confirm any byelaws, Ministers would take account of any objections they received.

British Columbia

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether she or officials from her Department met the Premier of British Columbia on his recent visit to the United Kingdom to discuss British Columbia's new forest practices code.

Mr. Jack: The Premier of British Columbia was on a private visit and did not meet Government Ministers or their officials.

Sample Management System

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information has been made public by her Department or by agencies of her Department concerning the commissioning, costs and subsequent cancellation of the project to establish a sample management system;

(2) if she will set out all provisions requiring her Department to make public details of the setting up, costs and progress of all computer projects undertaken or commissioned by her Department or by agencies of her Department;

(3) how much money was spent by *(a)* the Central Veterinary Laboratory and *(b)* her Department and other agencies of her Department on the sample management system;

(4) what sum was received by the Central Veterinary Laboratory in respect of the legal settlement with ACT over the failure by ACT to carry out the development of the sample management system.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A contract for the development of a sample management system, funded by the Ministry's information technology directorate was awarded to ACT Medisys in November 1990. On completion of the development of the project, its ownership was to have been taken over by the Central Veterinary Laboratory. Serious development delays were however identified early in the project, which was then suspended in August 1991. Following a review and subsequent negotiations, there was a mutual agreement to cease the contract in December 1992.

The terms of the contractual arrangements for this project, including those covering the termination, are commercially confidential, although the figures are open to scrutiny by the Comptroller and Auditor General in the usual way. Under the terms of the settlement secured by the Ministry, compensation—in the form of computer hardware, software and a cash sum—fully recompensed the Ministry for the costs involved. As the value of the compensation covered the relevant expenditure, there was no loss to report in the Ministry's appropriation accounts. Those accounts were duly audited by the National Audit Office.

The Ministry's requirement to provide, publicly, details of computer projects is generally limited to the advertising of major projects—as required in accordance with the EC's supplies and services directives and appropriate General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade regulations—in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities. Details of any subsequent award of contract are similarly advertised. Additionally, agency accounts, audited by the National Audit Office, will be prepared in accordance with commercial style accrual accounting principles and include information at appropriate levels of detail.

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by her Department each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Jack: The annual costs of external consultants employed by the Department—excluding agencies—since 1984-85 are set out. Data for earlier years can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Financial year	*Expenditure (£)*	*Constant 1994 prices (£)*
1984-85	27,110	[1]43,617
1985-86	174,724	[1]266,339
1986-87	135,279	[1]200,346
1987-88	44,105	[1]61,887
1988-89	1,174,114	1,547,016

Financial year	Expenditure (£)	Constant 1994 prices (£)
1989-90	2,972,150	3,661,506
1990-91	4,495,793	5,123,327
1991-92	5,374,284	5,761,968
1992-93	7,010,814	7,238,665

[1] Excludes computer consultants.

Animal Feeding Stuffs

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of processing plants producing animal protein for incorporation into animal feeding stuffs, in each year since 1981; and how many such plants were inspected by her officials in each of those years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of plants varied from year to year as plants opened or closed or in some cases did not operate on any continual basis. All plants when actually producing animal protein for incorporation into animal feeding stuffs have been subject to official inspection during the year. Their numbers are as follows:

Year	Number
1981	Not available
1982	107
1983	108
1984	107
1985	106
1986	99
1987	84
1988	75
1989	85
1990	79
1991	53
1992	47
1993	45

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will review the need for withdrawal from sale of cows and calves potentially affected by bovine immunodeficiency virus, and milk from affected herds, and for appropriate compensation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There is no evidence that the bovine immunodeficiency virus will affect humans, whether through contact with animals, or through drinking milk or eating meat. Experimental studies indicate that the virus has little effect on cattle: the only symptom being a transient rise in temperature which soon passes. Against that background, we have no plans for the type of review mentioned by the hon. Member.

Protected Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list each licence her Department has issued for the killing of protected birds under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1991 in 1993 and 1994 to date by *(a)* location and *(b)* the species involved.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* The latest figures available are for 1992 and this information is given in the table.

	Region																	
	Headquarters		South West		Wessex		South East		Anglia		South Mercia		North Mercia		East Midlands		North East		Northern	
Bird species	Issued	Killed	Issued	Killed	Issued	Killed	Issued	Killed	Issued	Killed	Issued	Killed	Issued	Killed	Issued	Killed	Issued	Killed	Issued	Killed
Bullfinch	1	587	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brent Goose	—	—	—	—	—	—	38	772	160	1,944	—	—	—	—	16	81	—	—	—	—
Cormorant	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0	—	—	1	10	—	—	—	—	2	0
Robin	5	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blackbird	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Heron	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Thrush	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blue Tit	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pied Wagtail	1	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wren	1	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Canada Goose[1,2]	—	—	—	—	3	17	14	218	10	240	11	145	21	520	27	1,153	5	39	3	405
Greylag Goose[1,2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	0	4	22	—	—	1	0	2	0	4	15	—	—
Pink-footed Goose[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0
Mallard[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moorhen and Coot[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	30	—	—	—	—
Wigeon[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0	—	—	—	—
Feral Pigeons and House Sparrow[3]	22	[4]—	2	0	32	504	16	587	7	321	34	183	59	3,400	115	607	38	885	8	96
Herring Gull[3,5]	1	1,546	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Includes the pricking of eggs.
[2] These birds have an open season when they may be killed without a licence. The licences shown are to kill during the close season.
[3] A general licence has been issued to kill these birds throughout the year. The licences shown are to use methods otherwise prohibited under the act.
[4] These licences were issued on behalf of the regions and the number of birds shot are included in the regional returns.
[5] Including the taking of eggs and nests.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Ministery of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assurances were given to the farmers who appeared in the video on sheep dipping, produced by the agricultural health and safety information centre of the Health and Safety Executive; what is the purpose of this project; to whom it is available; and on what terms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

The video on sheep dipping was produced by the Health and Safety Executive by an independent producer. It describes symptoms of ill-health alleged to be associated with dipping, alternative ways of controlling sheep parasites, guidance on good and poor sheep dipping facilities and practical ways to comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988.

The video is primarily to assist in training and is in a format which makes it suitable as guidance to sheep farmers. Participants were given the assurance that they would each receive a copy of the finished video.

Approximately 200 copies of the video have been sent to various individuals, agricultural training organisations and other bodies with an interest in this subject. The video is also available for anyone to purchase—£45 including VAT—or hire—from £11·49 plus VAT—from CFL Vision, PO Box 35, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7EX.

WALES

NHS Staff

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of total National Health Service expenditure has been spent on the employment of managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff within the whole of the NHS in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The proportion of total NHS expenditure that was spent on the employment of managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff within the whole of the NHS in Wales in each of the last three years for which figures are available was as follows:

	Per cent.
1990-91	5·6
1991-92	6·0
1992-93	5·9

Sources:
Health Authorities Annual Accounts/Financial Returns.
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust Financial Returns.
Welsh Office Public Expenditure Records.

Notes:
1. Expenditure spent on the employment of managers, advisers, adminstrators and clerical staff is taken to be that covering salaries and wages. Expenditure in respect of advisers relates to Family Health Service Authorities only.
2. Figures include expenditure by Health Authorities, the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, Family Health Service Authorities, Pembrokeshire NHS Trust (1992-93 only), and the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.
3. It should be noted that since 1989 senior managers' terms and conditions of service have been extended to second and third level managers and some senior nurses and other professional staff have also transferred to senior management grades.

Labour Statistics

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of employing managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff in the NHS in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The total cost of employing managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff in the NHS in Wales in each of the last three years for which figures are available was as follows:

	£000s
1990-91	86,599
1991-92	106,742
1992-93	117,386

Source:
Health Authorities Annual Accounts/Financial Returns Pembrokeshire NHS Trust Financial Returns.

Notes:
1. The total cost of employing managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff is taken to be that covering salaries and wages. Costs in respect of advisers relates to Family Health Service Authorities only.
2. Figures include expenditure by Health Authorities, the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, Family Health Service Authorities, Pembrokeshire NHS Trust (1992-93 only), and the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.
3. It should be noted that since 1989 senior managers' terms and conditions of service have been extended to second and third level managers and some senior nurses and other professional staff have also transferred to senior management grades.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much funding has been made available to each TEC in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94, expressed in cash terms and real terms and *(c)* giving a real terms percentage change from the previous year, for (i) youth training and credits, (ii) training for work and the programmes it replaced and (iii) business start up allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The figures requested are provided in the following tables.

These show a real terms increase in provision in 1993-94 for both the youth training and business start-up programmes. The reduction in provision for training for work is the result of targeting this programme on training for the longer-term unemployed.

I am advised that the funding to be made available in 1994-95 for training in Wales will enable the youth training "guarantee" to be met and, on the basis of TEC assessments, training places will be available for all eligible adults who wish to train.

Comparison of 1992-93 expenditure with 1993-94 budgets

TEC	*1992-93* *Actual £ million*	*1992-93* *Real terms £ million*	*1993-94* *Budget £ million*	*Percentage change in real terms from 1992-93 to 1993-94*
Youth training and credits				
Gwent	7·11	7·34	7·07	−3·67
Mid Glamorgan	7·90	8·15	9·20	12·78
North East Wales	4·95	5·11	5·24	2·54
Targed	5·01	5·17	5·63	8·88
Powys	1·62	1·67	1·65	−1·35
South Glamorgan	4·12	4·26	4·54	6·75
West Wales	10·66	11·01	11·74	6·66

TEC	1992-93 Actual £ million	1992-93 Real terms £ million	1993-94 Budget £ million	Percentage change in real terms from 1992-93 to 1993-94
Training for work				
Gwent	5·94	6·14	4·85	−20·90
Mid Glamorgan	6·76	6·98	5·00	−28·40
North East Wales	2·10	2·17	2·08	−4·03
Targed	3·45	3·56	3·06	−14·02
Powys	1·03	1·06	0·93	−12·03
South Glamorgan	4·17	4·30	3·22	−25·21
West Wales	7·96	8·22	6·54	−20·47

TEC	1992-93 Actual £ million	1992-93 Real terms £ million	1993-94 Budget £ million	Percentage change in real terms from 1992-93 to 1993-94
Business start-up				
Gwent	0·80	0·82	0·95	15·43
Mid Glamorgan	0·83	0·86	0·51	−40·00
North East Wales	0·34	0·35	0·45	26·65
Targed	0·73	0·75	0·78	4·19
Powys	0·26	0·27	0·29	7·92
South Glamorgan	0·41	0·42	0·61	42·76
West Wales	1·62	1·68	1·74	3·91

Private Patient Facilities

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much income has been generated by private patient facilities in national health service hospitals in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The amount of income generated by private patient facilities in national health service hospitals in each year since 1987-88 was as follows:

	£000s
1987-88	1,213
1988-89	1,388
1989-90	1,638
1990-91	1,855
1991-92	2,173
1992-93	2,099

Source:
Health Authorities' Annual Accounts.
Pembrokeshire NHS Trust Accounts.
Notes:
[1] Consists of money received from NHS patients paying for accommodation in single rooms or small wards (Section 63 NHS Act), private in-patients (Section 65), private non-resident patients (Section 66) and accommodation and services provided under Section 58 of the NHS Act 1977.
[2] Overseas visitors (Section 121) not eligible for free treatment have been excluded.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients have been treated in national health service hospitals private facilities in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information available, which relates to private patient attendances at national health service hospitals, is given in the following table. The figures do not relate to the number of people treated because an individual person may be treated more than once.

	In-patient cases	Out-patient attendances	Day case attendances	Regular day attendances
1987-88	1,717	11,210	1,221	—
1988-89	1,775	10,737	1,396	—
1989-90	1,994	8,956	1,851	—
1990-91	1,760	9,712	1,225	—
1991-92	1,558	9,015	1,147	5
1992-93	1,257	7,948	1,024	—

National Curriculum Review

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list those organisations and individuals who have made representations orally or in writing to him personally or to the Welsh Office regarding the review of the national curriculum and its assessment in Wales;

(2) if he will place in the Library copies of the minutes of the four conferences of teachers held by the Curriculum Council of Wales during its review of the national curriculum and assessment in Wales, together with details and an analysis of evidence provided to these conferences;

(3) if he will place in the Library copies of the written responses to the Curriculum Council of Wales in its review of the national curriculum and its assessment framework in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 5 January when the final reports by Sir Ron Dearing and the Curriculum Council for Wales and the Government's response were published, the Department has received representations from over 70 individuals and organisations regarding the impact of the review of the national curriculum and its assessment in Wales. Those who made representations have a right to assume that their views have been submitted in confidence and I am not therefore in a position to identify the individuals or organisations concerned.

Quangos (Membership)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to establish a register of interests of all members of the boards of Welsh quangos, which is open to inspection by members of the public, giving details of party political membership, other positions held and paid employment in the private sector.

Mr. Redwood: It is good practice for executive non-departmental public bodies—like other public bodies—to keep a register of the interests of members of their boards and I encourage them to do so.

Welsh Language

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many county councils wrote to the Curriculum Council for Wales during its review of the national curriculum and assessment in Wales, expressing the view that the teaching of Welsh as a foundation subject of key stage 4 should not remain part of the national curriculum;

(2) how many secondary schools in Wales wrote to the Curriculum Council for Wales expressing an opinion against including the Welsh language as a foundation subject at key stage 4 as part of the national curriculum; and how many of those schools had already been the subject of a deferment order regarding the teaching of Welsh at key stage three or four;

(3) how many secondary schools reported to the Curriculum Council for Wales or his Office that they had encountered difficulties recruiting an adequate number of teachers qualified to teach the Welsh language in their response to the review of the curriculum and assessment in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Curriculum Council for Wales conducted extensive consultations on changes to the national curriculum at key stage 4 as part of the review of the national curriculum and assessment which I commissioned last year. The consultations included conferences and the invitation to submit written representations. In its final report which it submitted to me in December, the council summarised the views expressed during this consultation exercise, and made recommendations in the light of them. Copies of the report have been sent to all Welsh Members of the House and further copies are available in the Library of the House.

Details of the conduct of the consultations are described in the report. Individual responses to the council cannot be made available for public inspection as individuals who wrote to the council are entitled to consider that their submissions have been made in confidence.

In response to the review I have received two reports from secondary schools about the recruitment of teachers qualified to teach Welsh.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the Welsh Language Board was first consulted regarding impending changes to the national curriculum in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There were no formal consultations with the Welsh Language Board on changes to the national curriculum in Wales since the review by the Curriculum Council for Wales and Sir Ron Dearing was conducted prior to the establishment of the board on 21 December 1993.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools requested exemption, as opposed to deferment, of the requirement to provide Welsh in the national curriculum at key stage 3 or 4 in response to the invitation in his consultation document issued on 7 May 1991.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Schools were not directly invited to respond to this consultation exercise which was carried out under the terms of section 21 of the Education Reform Act 1988. However, copies of the consultation document were sent for school governors to information. In response, 17 schools made direct representations to the Welsh Office.

Of these, 16 requested exemption from the national curriculum requirements for Welsh at key stages 4 and 2 also requested exemption from the key stage 3 requirements. One school also sought deferment of the key stage 3 requirements.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consult with the Welsh Language Board on the implications of the Welsh Language Act 1993 for treating Welsh and English on a basis of equality in the national curriculum.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Language Board is responsible for taking a broad overview of Welsh medium and Welsh second-language education. The Government and the new Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales will be consulting the language board regularly on Welsh language issues which impact on the national curriculum.

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department and its predecessors each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

New Towns

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the transfer of properties from the Commission for New Towns to British housing associations and Basildon council.

Sir George Young: In accordance with the results of the tenants' ballot, 85 per cent. of the rented housing stock held by the Commission for the New Towns at Basildon was transferred to Basildon district council on 31 January 1994. Responsibility for the management of the remaining 15 per cent. was taken over by the Basildon Community housing association on the same day, with a view the freehold being transferred as soon as the housing association is able to complete the necessary arrangements.

Playgrounds

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department has issued to local authorities concerning the siting of playgrounds and other leisure facilities near to electricity sub-stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Planning advice is not issued by the Department on such sites. Electricity companies are required by the Electricity Supply Regulations 1988, as amended, to take note of the nature and use of land adjacent to their installations, and to take appropriate measures to protect and warn the public of the associated dangers.

North Peckham Task Force

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which projects have been and currently are funded by the North Peckham task force.

Mr. Baldry: Since the North Peckham task force opened in April 1986, it has funded well over 300 projects, of which 30 are still being funded. In some of these, funding will extend up to two years after the task force formally closes on 31 March 1994. I will write to the hon. Member with a full list.

Tarmac Ltd.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Tarmac Ltd. may award itself contracts paid for by public money following its acquisition of PSA projects.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the changed proposals put forward by the Greek Presidency of the EU regarding the phase-out period for the co-disposal of hazardous and domestic waste.

Mr. Atkins: The Greek Presidency has suggested that the landfill directive should provide for the co-disposal of hazardous waste with municipal waste to be phased out over a period of 10 years rather than five years proposed by the European Commission. The United Kingdom reiterated its view in working group discussions on the Greek proposal that the directive should recognise that properly controlled co-disposal is an environmentally sound waste management option, and provide for it to continue to be practised by those member states which wish to do so. The Government agree that the directive should place a ban on the uncontrolled mixing of hazardous waste with municipal waste.

Groundwork Foundation

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the efficiency of the Groundwork Foundation in terms of the percentage of the grant-in-aid from his Department which is passed on to Groundwork trusts; and what alternative arrangements he has considered to ensure value for money.

Mr. Atkins: The Groundwork Foundation administers its grant-in-aid in accordance with the provisions of a grant memorandum, the terms of which are kept under review by my Department. All payments made by the foundation towards the approved running costs of Groundwork trusts are subject to the prior approval of the Department. The forecast funding requirement of existing and planned trusts is an element of the foundation's corporate strategy considered by the Department in the annual public expenditure round.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effects of the funding arrangements of the Groundwork Foundation on existing environmental trusts.

Mr. Atkins: The Groundwork Foundation is funded to support and develop the Groundwork trust network. Groundwork trusts are formed and managed by local people. The trusts are encouraged to complement the work of existing environmental bodies and collaborate with them. The trusts stimulate increased expenditure on environmental improvements, from which the other bodies can benefit.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *443*, what consideration he has given to enabling existing environmental charities to bid for the grant-in-aid paid to the Groundwork Foundation.

Mr. Atkins: None. Grant-in-aid is allocated to the Groundwork Foundation specifically for the purposes of developing, managing and supporting the network of Groundwork trusts.

Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the conditions under which architectural services and other specialised agencies of county councils can be offered for privatisation; and how many offers constitute the level of competition he requires.

Mr. Baldry: If an authority chooses to invite private contractors to carry out these services, then the basis on which they do so is a matter for them, subject only to the requirements of the EC public procurement directives and their general fiduciary duty. The Government intend to require authorities to seek competitive tenders before their own staff are allowed to undertake this work and will be consulting on detailed proposals shortly.

Biodiversity Action Plan

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which recent policy commitments and initiatives in the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan were *(a)* not previously announced and *(b)* do not result from the Government's legal obligations under the European Union habitats directive.

Mr. Atkins: The goal, principles and objectives contained in the plan are in themselves a significant re-definition of policies. The most important new initiative is to establish a biodiversity action plan steering group, which will be a partnership between central and local government, the conservation agencies, scientific and academic institutions and voluntary bodies. The group will have four specific remits in overseeing:

the development of range of specific costed targets for key species and habitats for the years 2000 and 2010 to be published in European Nature Conservation Year 1995;

a working group already established following the May Seminar designed to improve the accessibility and co-ordination of existing biological datasets, to provide common standards for future recording and to examine the feasibility in due course of a single UK Biota Database;

the preparation and implementation of a public strategy which could:

support initiatives that enhance people's understanding of what is special about their local environment;

encourage the creation of a network of community wardens;
support initiatives that promote local action to conserve and improve local biodiversity;
the establishment of a review process for the delivery of the commitments contained in the plan.

In addition, the plan contains 59 action points and broad targets which take forward, accelerate and extend existing policies and programmes. A number of these are new commitments or initiatives, and I will write to the hon. Gentleman with details of these.

Barnoldswick Sewage Treatment Works

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to inform the National Rivers Authority if phosphate removal will be required at Barnoldswick sewage treatment works.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will make an announcement in due course about those areas to be identified as sensitive under the EC's urban waste water treatment directive and which of the sewage treatment works discharging into them will be required to install phosphate removal equipment.

Nitrates Directive

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which are *(a)* the vulnerable zones designated under EC nitrates directive 91/676/EC and *(b)* the sensitive and less sensitive areas designated under EC urban waste water treatment directive 91/271/EC.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Food will shortly be consulting about the areas proposed to be designated as vulnerable zones under the nitrates directive.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will make an announcement in due course about the areas to be identified as sensitive and less sensitive under the urban waste water treatment directive.

Land Contamination

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what future meetings he plans to hold with representatives of Barnet council in connection with contamination of land at Coppetts wood, Finchley.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for resolution between the Department of Transport and the London borough of Barnet.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *565*, *(a)* on what date and by whom his Department was first made aware of contamination of land to be given in exchange for land required for the trunk road improvement east of Fallowden way and east of high road, Finchley, *(b)* on what date and to whom his Department first notified Barnet council that testing of the site would take place, *(c)* on what dates and by whom testing of the site took place, *(d)* on what date and by whom his Department was first notified of the results of the test, *(e)* on what date and to whom his Department notified Barnet council of the results of the test, *(f)* by what date his Department told Barnet council that it would require the council's response and *(g)* if he has now received the council's response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The contamination to which the hon. Member refers became apparent only after the exchange land certificate for this site had been issued. In these circumstances, the problem was a matter for the Department of Transport as the acquiring authority and the London borough of Barnet as the owner of the land. My Department has not been involved in any ensuing correspondence.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department undertakes, or what information his Department requires from local councils, regarding condition, and possible contamination, of land when considering options for possible sites to be subject to exchange land certificates.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has to be satisfied that there has been compliance with the appropriate procedures and requirements under the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 before exchange land certificates are issued. It relies on the Department of Transport, as the acquiring authority, and the local authority to supply information about the condition and possible contamination of potential exchange land sites. Where trunk road proposals are the subject of a public inquiry and an exchange land certificate is sought, the Secretary of State will rely on evidence presented at the time about the condition and possible contamination of exchange land, as reported on by the inspector, in considering options for potential sites.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what instructions or advice of recommended procedure his Department issues to councils regarding allowing access by elected councillors to information provided by his Department to the council in relation to possible contamination of land within their wards; if he will make representations to Barnet council regarding council officers' refusal to allow access to such information to councillors in connection with contamination of land at Coppetts wood, Finchley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has not issued instructions to local authorities on this. Authorities are independent, but must, of course, comply with the relevant law including the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. We understand that the Department of Transport has sent a report of the tests on the Coppetts wood site to council officers to enable them to prepare their report to council members. The DOT said that council officers could show the report to Members.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of all correspondence since January 1988 between his Department and the London borough of Barnet relating to *(a)* issuing of exchange land certificates in connection with the widening of the north circular road, east of Falloden way and *(b)* condition and possible contamination of land at Coppetts wood in Finchley; what was the date of each piece of correspondence; who was the sender and recipient in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Department of Transport. My Department has not been in correspondence with the London borough of Barnet on the subjects raised.

Canadian Rain Forest

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he or officials from his Department met the Premier of British Columbia on his recent visit to the United Kingdom to discuss British Columbia's new forest practices code.

Mr. Atkins: The Premier of British Columbia was on a private visit and did not meet Government Ministers or their officials.

Rural Housing Associations

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of state for the Environment (1) what representations he has received urging the encouragement of a proliferation of smaller, more local, rural housing associations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representation he has received from the Association of National Parks, regarding the occupation of rural housing association homes; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Association of National Parks met recently to consider a report on housing in national parks and has written to me to draw a number of points to my attention, including the role of rural housing associations and the occupation of the homes they provide.

Eighteen rural housing associations are registered with the Housing Corporation, including one which registered during the past year. Despite the reduction that was necessary in the Housing Corporation's development budget for 1994-95, the corporation expects to maintain the target of 1,850 allocations for the rural programme next year. For the four years from 1989-90 over 6,000 units were approved—some 800 above target.

Rhinoceros Horn

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends to take to persuade the Governments of China and Taiwan to fulfil their obligations under CITES resolutions to enforce the ban on trade in rhinoceros horn.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom together with our European partners, fully supports the decision of the CITES standing committee to send technical and high-level delegations to rhino horn-consuming countries to assess the effectiveness of their efforts to combat illegal trade in rhino horn and to offer advice and assistance. We have contributed £5,000 towards the costs of the high-level delegation which has recently visited China and Taiwan. The Government will be represented at the standing committee meeting next month which will consider what further action should be taken in the light of the delegations' reports. We shall also continue our bilateral contracts with the relevant authorities.

The United Kingdom Government have taken a leading role in encouraging greater efforts to conserve rhinos. On 3 February my Department announced a grant of £60,000 towards a project co-funded by the European Commission and the Worldwide Fund for Nature to appoint a scientific officer to co-ordinate rhino conservation activities throughout Africa.

Associated Octel (Fire)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the environmental pollution consequences of the fire at Associated Octel's plant in Cheshire on 2 February.

Mr. Atkins: On the basis of their preliminary assessments, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has concluded that it is unlikely there are any significant environmental effects of the fire.

HMIP will continue to keep the situation under review.

Municipal Homes

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to undertake a feasibility study into the re-introduction of a municipal homes construction programme, with particular reference to the Greater London area and other large conurbations.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* The Government's policy is that housing associations should be the main providers of new social housing, while local authorities concentrate on their enabling role and on managing their existing housing stock. This diversifies the tenure of the social housing stock and helps to attract private finance to supplement public expenditure, so providing more homes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Special Constables

14. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives he is planning to encourage the recruitment of special constables.

Mr. Howard: Our police reform White Paper announced the Government's commitment to increase the number of special constables by 10,000 by the end of 1996. As a start, I am about to launch a new advertising campaign to recruit specials. The first phase of the campaign will begin in the north-west this April.

Night Club Licensing

15. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the workings of the night club licence, pursuant to section 68 of the Licensing Act 1964.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have no present plans to review the operation of that particular section of the Licensing Act.

Prison Security

16. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on security and public safety issues affecting the prison service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Prison Service aims to hold in secure custody those committed to it by the courts. A massive prison building programme has contributed to this in recent years. Six new prisons are planned. All will be built to modern security standards to ensure the safety of the public.

Private Sector Prisons

17. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the Director General of the Prison Service Agency to discuss the management of private sector prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has no specific plans to do so. He and I have regular meetings with the director general at which any issue relating to the operation of the Prison Service, including private sector involvement, may be discussed.

Bail Offenders

18. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences were committed while on bail; and how many offenders committed offences while on bail in each of the last five years and in each quarter of 1993 to date.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not, at present, available. Research evidence suggests that the proportion of persons granted bail by the courts who were later found guilty of offences committed on bail has remained at between 10 and 12 per cent. over the last few years. It seems likely, therefore, that at least 50,000 offences each year are committed by people on bail.

Young Offenders

19. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research he has undertaken into the effectiveness of the Government's policies for combating juvenile offending.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office has commissioned more than 47 research projects on various aspects of juvenile crime since 1979. A report of research specifically into persistent juvenile offending will be published shortly.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young people have been re-classified from young offender to adult who are at present in *(a)* Her Majesty's prison Frankland, *(b)* Her Majesty's prison Acklington, *(c)* Her Majesty's prison Holme House, *(d)* Her Majesty's prison Kirklevington, *(e)* Her Majesty's prison Full Sutton, *(f)* Her Majesty's prison Everthorpe, *(g)* Her Majesty's prison Durham and *(h)* Her Majesty's prison Haverigg.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

26. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take to ensure that local authorities deal responsibly with young offenders in their care.

Mr. Maclean: As my right hon. and learned Friend announced in Blackpool on 6 October 1993, the national standards for the supervision of offenders in the community will be reviewed to ensure that these sentences provide a proper punishment for offenders who receive them. These national standards cover supervision provided by local authority social services departments as well as by the Probation Service.

War Crimes Act

20. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the planned expenditure for his Department for 1994-95 and 1995-96 on police work resulting from the War Crimes Act 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Provision for police specific grant will include £500,000 to support the Metropolitan police for their work in 1994-95 on the investigation of war crimes. I anticipate this work will be completed by the end of the next financial year.

Retail Crime

21. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been donated by Whitbread to his retail crime document and initiative.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Current Home Office initiatives on business crime do not include a retail crime document. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has however provided a forward to the shopfront security report published by the British Retail Consortium. I understand that Whitebread plc made a contribution to the cost of that document but the details are a matter for the company and the BRC.

Right to Silence

22. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about his proposals for abolishing the right to silence.

Mr. Maclean: I refer to my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates)

Recorded Crimes

23. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for recorded crimes.

Mr. Maclean: The latest available figures for recorded crime were published on 3 November 1993 in a home office statistical bulletin issue 31/1993, a copy of which is in the Library.

Prison Population

24. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received encouraging him to reduce the prison population.

Mr. Maclean: I have received a number of such representations.

Identity Cards

25. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration is being given to the introduction of identity cards as a means of curbing illegal immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The question of a national identity card scheme is kept under review. It is a matter of balancing potential benefits against costs.

Home Dependent Territories

27. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to visit Jersey to discuss matters within his responsibility for home dependent territories.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to visit Jersey, or otherwise for discussions with the Jersey authorities, although he hopes in due course to be able to visit the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, in the same way as have a number of previous Home Secretaries.

Police Administration

28. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding administrative burdens on the police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the light of Government concern and representations from the police and members of the public at the excessive paperwork faced by the police, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) commissioned a study by consultants to identify ways of reducing the burden. My right hon. and learned Friend the present Home Secretary announced the Government's acceptance of all 16 of the report's recommendations on 6 October 1993. The police are keen to see these recommendations implemented and are making a valuable contribution to taking forward this work in conjunction with the other criminal justice agencies.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had to reduce administrative burdens on the police; and what legislative proposals he has on the subject.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the light of Government concern and representations from the police and members of the public at the excessive paperwork faced by the police, in June 1993 the then Home Secretary commissioned a study by consultants to identify ways of reducing the burden. My right hon. and learned Friend announced the Government's acceptance of all 16 of the report's recommendations on 6 October 1993. Work is under way on their implementation. I have no plans to introduce any legislation on the subject.

Racial Incidents

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prosecutions there were in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993 for incitement to racial hatred under sections 17 to 23 of the Public Order Act 1986; and how many of these prosecutions were successful;

(2) what penalties have been imposed upon conviction for people successfully prosecuted for incitement to racial hatred under sections 17 to 23 of the Public Order Act 1986 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Maclean: I will write to the hon. Member.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will report on proceedings taken under section 57 of the Race Relations Act 1976; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Police Manpower

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the pay of the average police officer; how many police officers are curently in post; what were the comparable figures for 10 and 15 years ago in real terms in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the table. It should be noted that the data exclude officers on central service.

	1978-79 £	*1983-84* £	*1993-94* £
Average pay costs of police officer	5,881	13,387	30,142
Average real terms pay costs of police officer[1]	16,870	22,621	30,142
Number of officers[2]	111,792	120,595	127,294

[1] Average pay costs brought up to 1993-94 prices.
[2] As at 31 March 1979, 31 March 1984 and 31 October 1993 (which is the latest date for which figures are available).

Gambian Visitors

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the guidelines relating to persons from the Gambia wishing admittance to the United Kingdom for purposes of holiday.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Instructions are not issued on the basis of nationality.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not held centrally, and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Sentence Discounts

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what decision he has reached on the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice about sentence discounts.

Mr. Howard: I have decided to accept the Royal Commission's recommendation that the courts' existing practice of giving credit for early guilty pleas in the form of discounts on sentence should be more clearly articulated, by putting it on to a statutory basis. I therefore intend to table an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, requiring those passing sentence to take account of the timing and other circumstances of a plea of guilty, and, where a discount is given, to indicate the fact. In so doing I have taken into account that early pleas of guilty not only save valuable court time, but also spare the victims of crime the anxiety which many feel at the prospect of describing their ordeal in evidence.

Christmas Parole

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners were given Christmas parole;

(2) how many prisoners given Christmas parole failed to return at the arranged time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Warren Hawksley, dated February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the number of prisoners who were given Christmas parole, and how many of them failed to return at the arranged time.

Christmas parole has been taken to be any form of home leave or temporary release granted specifically to cover the period including Christmas Day and Boxing Day, 1993. The figures are as follows:

Release granted	*Failed to return on time*
1,395	39

Parents and Guardians (Recognisance)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in 1992 the courts used their powers under section 58 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to order a parent or guardian to enter into a recognisance.

Mr. Maclean: The power in section 58 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 came into effect on 1 October 1992. It was used on 95 occasions during 1992.

Bewsey Street Hostel, Cheshire

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were remanded in Bewsey street hostel; and how many are *(a)* black males and *(b)* black females, at the latest date available.

Mr. Maclean: In the three months to 30 November 1993, 72 residents were admitted to the hostel. I understand from inquiries of the hostel that, in this period, one black male and no black females were resident there.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the occupancy rate of the Bewsey street hostel for each of the last 10 quarters.

Mr. Maclean: Occupancy figures for the period April 1991 to March 1992 are not readily available on a quarterly basis. The occupancy figures for the most recent six quarters, and for December 1993, are as follows:

	Per cent.
April—June 1992	56
July—September 1992	62
October—December 1992	72
January—March 1993	75
April—June 1993	76
July—September 1993	85
December 1993	85

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what advice will be given to the magistrates courts regarding any future bail hostel remands following the closure of Bewsey street hostel;

(2) what provision will be made to enable courts in Cheshire to make probation orders with conditions of residence.

Mr. Maclean: It will be for the Cheshire probation service to bring to the attention of the courts which it serves the facilities offered by other approved hostels.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the average cost of a weekly place in the Bewsey street hostel, *(b)* the average length of stay and *(c)* the average cost of a prison remand place in the Cheshire area.

Mr. Maclean: (a) The current weekly cost is £221.

(b) This information is not readily available in the form requested.

(c) In 1992-93, the average weekly net operating cost per prisoner at Her Majesty's prison Risley, in Warrington, was £304. Costs for remand prisoners are not kept separately.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who will be consulted about the proposed closure of the Bewsey street hostel in Cheshire.

Mr. Maclean: The Cheshire probation service was notified on 1 December of our closure proposals and given the opportunity to comment.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many residents of Bewsey street hostel were, on the latest date available, *(a)* under 17, *(b)* between 17 and 21 and *(c)* 21 years and over.

Mr. Maclean: There were 19 residents at the hostel on 30 November 1993. The breakdown requested is *(a)* 0; *(b)* 7; *(c)* 12.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were either re-arrested and charged or breached for failure to comply with requirements at the Bewsey street hostel for the latest period for which statistics are available.

Mr. Maclean: In the three months to 30 November 1993, one resident was re-arrested and charged, and seven residents were breached for failure to comply with requirements.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has of the numbers of people who might be remanded into custody per annum as a result of the closure of Bewsey street hostel in Cheshire.

Mr. Maclean: It is for the courts to decide who should be remanded in custody. There are approved hostel facilities available to them in Cheshire and neighbouring probation areas.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are likely to be made redundant in the event of the closure of the Bewsey street hostel; and what would be the financial costs.

Mr. Maclean: It will be for the Cheshire probation committee, as employer, to decide how to manage the

consequences of closure, in terms of redeployment or redundancies; we have not yet received a full account of its conclusions.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the annual saving as a result of the closure of the Bewsey street hostel in Cheshire.

Mr. Maclean: We expect the saving to be in the order of £100,000 in 1994-95 and £200,000 in 1995-96.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what capital and revenue expenditure will be available for hostel provision in the Cheshire probation area for 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Maclean: Revenue grant for 1994-95 and 1995-96 will be about £400,000 a year. The level of capital grant will depend on the scrutiny of spending proposals submitted by all probation areas.

Police Recruits

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had suggesting that the published numbers of established police officers should not include recruits undergoing basic training; and if he will give the total number of recruits undergoing training for the most recent date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No such representations have been received.

On 31 December 1992 there were 10,692 police constables in England and Wales who were going through their two-year probationary period. About one third of these were still undergoing their foundation training.

Figures for 31 December 1993 are not yet available.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if any designated breeders of dogs registered under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to supply animals to laboratories have bred greyhounds since 1991;

(2) if any exemptions to allow non-purpose-bred greyhounds to be used in research in 1992 were granted under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Purpose-bred greyhounds were available from a designated breeder for about 12 months from July 1991. Breeding ceased in June 1992.

No exemptions to allow the use of non-purpose-bred greyhounds were granted in 1992. This would not have precluded the use of such animals under pre-existing authorities.

Blakenhurst Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the key problems which have compromised security at Her Majesty's prison Blakenhurst; and what action has been taken to minimise these faults.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. J. Pearson to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about key problems that have compromised security at HMP Blakenhurst.

An article about Blakenhurst in the "Birmingham Post" of 17 June 1993 was accompanied by photographs, one of which showed a hand holding a bunch of prison keys. The management contractor at Blakenhurst, United Kingdom Detention Services, took the view that the photograph could enable an expert locksmith to copy the keys. They agreed to change the locks believed to have been at risk at no cost to the Prison Service.

United Kingdom Detention Services have used this experience to reinforce to all staff the importance of constant vigilance in keeping keys out of sight of people not authorised to see or use them.

Special Parish Constables

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress made in developing the experiment of special parish constables, giving numbers appointed, their terms and conditions and geographical areas covered.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are 20 schemes involving parish special constables already in operation around the country with more in development. The number of special constables involved varies from scheme to scheme. In most schemes existing special constables have volunteered to be redeployed for the purpose, although some forces have started a recruitment programme to persuade volunteers to train specifically for such work.

Parish special constables are appointed under the same terms and conditions as other special constables and as such are under the operational control of their chief constable. However, the local parish council, or councils, is consulted about some of the duties that the parish special constable might perform, and about particular local concerns.

The size of the geographical area covered by parish special constables will vary from community to community. In general we have recommended that the schemes stay closely linked to parish boundaries. However, this is a matter for chief constables to decide after consultation with the communities involved.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had about the value of special parish constables from *(a)* the Police Federation, *(b)* chairmen and members of police authorities, *(c)* hon. Members and *(d)* members of the public in the areas currently affected by the experiment.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No such representations have been received.

Remand

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the latest year available, how many people were remanded in the west midlands area; and how many were *(a)* black males and *(b)* black females.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Reliable information on the total numbers of defendants remanded in the west midlands is not available centrally. Neither is any regular information collected regularly on the ethnic origin of those proceeded against in court. Some information on the ethnic origin of

those remanded in custody in the west midlands was given in my reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 25 January, *Official Report*, column *155*.

Prison Education

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what sum of money has been allocated to education in prisons over each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Sir Ivan Lawrence, dated February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the sum of money allocated to education in prisons over the past five years.

The total expenditure on education services in prisons in England and Wales in the past five years was as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1988-89	19·5
1989-90	22·9
1990-91	25·5
1991-92	29·5
1992-93	31·5

Moorlands Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide details of the cell of the month bonus scheme at Her Majesty's prison Moorlands.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Moorland prison and young offender institution.

An incentive scheme to raise standards of cleanliness in cells has been introduced at Moorland prison. A weekly bonus of £2 is paid to the prisoner(s) whose cell is judged to be the cleanest. This practice is consistent with the rules governing the prisoners' earnings scheme. It is an example of a system of rewards to maintain standards within a prison. The governor will keep the scheme under review in order to evaluate its effectiveness.

Youth Custody

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each year since 1989 the total number of young people serving youth custody sentences who have been reclassified from young offender to adult status before reaching 21 years of age.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Pearson to Mr. Bill Etherington, dated February 1994:

AVERAGE AGE AND AVERAGE SENTENCE LENGTH

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking if he will list for each year since 1989, (a) the average age and (b) the average length of sentence of the total number of young people serving youth custody sentences, who have been reclassified from young offender to adult status prior to reaching 21 years of age.

The readily available information is for prisoners held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1993. On that date the average age of all young offenders who had previously been reclassified to adult status prior to reaching 21 years of age is provisionally estimated as 20·3 years. The average sentence length (excluding those sentenced to life imprisonment and those for whom a sentence length was not recorded) was nearly five years.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each year since 1989, *(a)* the average age and *(b)* the average length of sentence of the total number of young people serving youth custody sentences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Pearson to Mr. Bill Etherington, dated 10 February 1994:

Average Age and average sentence length of young offenders

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking if he will list for each year since 1989, *(a)* the average age and *(b)* the average length of sentence of the total number of young people serving youth custody sentences.

The information requested is given in the attached table. Information on the average length of sentence of young offenders received into Prison Service establishments is published annually in Chapter 3 of "Prison statistics, England and Wales".

Average age and average sentence length of young offenders in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June, 1989-1993

Dated (30 June each year)	*Average Age (Years)*	*Average sentence length (months)*[1]
1989	19·4	23·3
1990	18·8	22·9
1991	19·1	22·5
[2]1992	19·0	25·2
[2]1993	18·9	25·6

[1] Excludes those sentenced to life and those for whom a sentence length is not recorded.
[2] Provisional figures.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each year since 1989, the total number of young people serving youth custody sentences, who had been reclassified from young offender to adult before reaching 21 years of age and subsequently has the reclassification cancelled before the end of their sentence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Bill Etherington, dated 10 February 1994:

RECLASSIFICATION OF YOUNG OFFENDERS

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking if he will list for each year since 1989 the total number of young people serving youth custody sentences, who had been reclassified from young offender to adult before reaching 21 years of age and subsequently has the reclassification cancelled before the end of their sentence.

The information you have requested is not recorded.

Child Custody

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time a child spends in custody, broken down by offence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Pearson to Mrs. Llin Golding, dated 10 February 1994:

AVERAGE SENTENCE LENGTH OF 15-17 YEAR OLDS

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what is the average length of time a child spends in custody, broken down by offence.

The information you have requested is given in the attached table for persons aged 15 to 17 on sentence who were discharged from Prison Service establishments in 1991.

Average time served in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales under sentence[1] by prisoners aged 15 to 17 at sentence discharged from determinate sentences on completion of sentence by offence, 1991

Offence	*Average time served under sentence (months)*[2,3]
Violence against the person	6·6
Sexual offences	15·6
Burglary	4·3
Robbery	10·1
Theft and handling	3·0
Fraud and forgery	n/a[4]
Drugs offences	n/a[4]
Other offences	4·3
Offence not recorded	3·3
All offences	4·7

[1] Excludes any time served on remand awaiting trial or sentence, those detained for an indeterminate period at Her Majesty's pleasure, and those for whom a sentence length is not recorded.

[2] Provisional figures.

[3] Excludes discharges following recall after release on licence, non-criminals, persons committed to custody for non-payment of a fine, persons reclassified as adult prisoners, prisoners who died or were discharged for other reasons such as transfers to other establishments or successful appeals.

[4] Number of discharges less than 15 in 1991.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children are currently being held in youth custody, broken down by offence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Pearson to Mrs. Llin Golding, dated 10 February 1994:

15-17 year olds in custody

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking how many children are currently being held in youth custody, broken down by offence.

The information you have requested is given in the attached table for persons aged 15 to 17 in Prison Service establishments on 31 December 1993.

Population aged 15-17 under sentence[1] in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 31 December 1993.

Offence	*Number of persons*[2]
Violence against the person	89
Sexual offences	16
Burglary	287
Robbery	142
Theft and handling	158
Fraud and forgery	—
Other offences	104
Offence not recorded	51
All Offences	847

[1] Provisional figures.

[2] Excludes those committed for non payment of a fine.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Population Control, China

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet representatives of the Chinese Government to discuss the draft law on the use of mass abortion and sterilisation to prevent the birth of disabled babies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's Government believe that discussion with the Chinese authorities on the details of their draft "natal and health care law" can be conducted most effectively by United Nations bodies, including the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

Ecuador

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each project funded by the Overseas Development Administration in Ecuador over the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The list of projects and the value of the ODA contribution to them are as follows:

		£
1.	Cocoa Research	239,000
2.	Awa Forest Management	447,000
3.	Zamora Agro-Forestry	225,000
4.	Fisheries Management	1,550,000
5.	Fisheries Management (Institutional Link)	486,000
6.	Geological Survey	1,300,000
7.	Road Transport, Training and Research	485,000
8.	Computer-aided Engineering design and management	235,000
9.	English Language Curriculum Reform	438,000
10.	Advice to Ecuador Government on privatisation	45,000

Poorest 20 Countries

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which are the poorest 20 countries in the world; and what has happened to their bilateral aid allocations since 1979.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom's gross bilateral aid to the 20 countries with the lowest gross national product per capita in 1992, on the basis of figures just issued by the World bank, are given. This list excludes countries for which incomes data are not available. The United Kingdom's gross bilateral aid to each of these countries in 1979 and in 1992-93 includes financial and technical assistance, food aid and disaster relief, debt relief and loans and equity investment by the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

£000's

	1979	*1992-93*
Mozambique	6,369	34,141
Ethiopia	2,877	18,022
Tanzania	23,559	62,370
Uganda	2,212	34,521
Sierra Leone	1,829	6,382
Nepal	11,054	13,841
Bhutan	24	680
Cambodia	703	2,066
Guinea-Bissau	173	9
Burundi	17	205
Malawi	23,314	26,823
Bangladesh	33,687	65,717
Chad	45	291
Madagascar	100	936
Rwanda	2	312
Laos	29	94
Zambia	29,159	47,974
Burkina Faso	24	345
Mali	489	1,223
Niger	912	373

Thailand (Biwater Group)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the water projects funded by the Overseas Development Administration in Thailand for which the Biwater Group has won the contract.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration has not funded any water projects in Thailand for which the Biwater Group has won the contract.

Tied Aid

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list, by project, of the major contractors who have benefited from tied aid on Overseas Development Administration projects over £5 million in value.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Details of projects supported under the aid and trade provision since its inception in 1977 are available in the Library of the House. As regards projects funded by the bilateral country programmes, the information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Indonesia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projects and programmes constitute the police management training project funded by the Overseas Development Administration in Indonesia; and what steps are taken to ensure that such projects and programmes do not support the operation of the Indonesian police in East Timor.

Mr Lennox-Boyd: The Indonesian national police project is concerned with the provision of public service management advice and training within the INP and with the development of a more community-based approach to policing. The United Kingdom has not recognised the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, and we do not therefore fund Government-to-Government aid projects in East Timor. However, some Indonesian public officials trained under our aid programme may subsequently serve in East Timor. It is our hope that the assistance we provide will influence all those receiving it and help develop respect for human rights in Indonesia and East Timor.

Bilateral Aid

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of British bilateral aid is tied to the purchase of British goods; and how this percentage has changed in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1992, 66·7 per cent. of our commitments of bilateral overseas development assistance were tied. Comparable figures since 1979 were as follows:

	Per cent.
1979	84·5
1980	73·2
1981	79·5
1982	78·0
1983	74·4
1984	74·3
1985	73·5
1986	77·9
1987	76·4
1988	82·5
1989	76·0
1990	[1]n/a
1991	73·5

[1]The tying status of United Kingdom official development assistance was not reported to the Development Assistance Committee for 1990

Kenya

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level of food aid the ODA proposes to allocate to Kenya for 1994-95.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We allocated 5,000 tonnes of white maize from our 1993-94 national food aid programme as an immediate response to the findings of the Food and Agriculture Organisation—World Food Programme mission last October. We will consider a further allocation from our 1994-95 programme in the light of the forthcoming SEPHA appeal, and the plans of other donors including the EC.

Malaysia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what explicit commitments were given by the previous Prime Minister, which required him to give consent to the Pergau dam project in Malaysia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the former Prime Minister informed the Malaysian Prime Minister at a meeting on 15 March 1989 that Her Majesty's Government had taken the decision to make aid and trade provision support available for the offshore element of the Pergau project.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes there have been to the contract value of Biwater's Malaysian rural water supply scheme contracts; and what implications these changes have had for Overseas Development Administration support for the projects involved.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* The original 1986 contract between the Malaysia Public Works Department and Biwater was for £425 million. This included an offshore element of £194 million in respect of which the Overseas Development Administration provided an aid and trade provision grant of £59·4 million. In 1991 the Malaysian client and Biwater negotiated an extension to the contract. This did not affect the level of support already agreed by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the tendering process involved in the Malaysian water supply project undertaken by Biwater which has received Overseas Development Administration assistance.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* The Malaysian client negotiated a contract directly with Biwater.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation the Overseas Development Administration has received regarding links between Biwater Group and the Malaysian royal family.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* None.

Population Programmes

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which are the priority countries for bilateral population assistance within the United Kingdom overseas aid budget.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda are currently designated as priority countries for bilateral population assistance within the United Kingdom overseas aid budget.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are Her Majesty's Government's guiding principles in respect of population activities in developing countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As explained in the ODA booklet "Children By Choice, Not Chance", our guiding principles in respect of population activities in developing countries are:

> All men and women should be able to chose when to have children. Women in particular, should be in a position to exercise this choice of their own free will, without pressure or coercion.
>
> If women are enabled to exercise this choice, fertility levels and birth rates in most countries can be expected to fall. Countries whose Governments establish a climate within which couples can exercise reproductive choice should eventually attain population growth rates that are in balance with their economic and natural resources.
>
> All men and women need information, advice and services to enable them to choose when to have children.
>
> Aid for population activities will be provided in accordance with each developing country Government's national strategies.
>
> Donor agencies should work together and co-ordinate their aid for population activities. They should, where appropriate, reinforce the leading role of international agencies such as the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the World bank and the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

Land Mines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on each of the activities funded by his Department relating to the clearance of land mines in Mozambique; which of these activities are being carried out on *(a)* a bilateral or *(b)* a multilateral basis; and whether any further aid will be given for medical attention of casualties of land mines.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under our bilateral humanitarian assistance programme for Mozambique we are providing a grant of £710,000 to the Halo Trust to train, equip and supervise three local de-mining teams in Zambezia province. This programme is closely co-ordinated with British non-governmental organisations active in the province.

De-mining in Mozambique is co-ordinated by the United Nations. It has commissioned the Halo Trust to undertake a comprehensive mines survey. The United Nations and EC are both funding de-mining programmes to which we are contributing multilaterally.

Our assistance to de-mining is designed to reduce the number of casualties. We have not provided any direct medical assistance for land mine casualties. Other agencies are working with the victims of mines.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of the Overseas Development Administration on providing aid to clear land mines in Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Once a formal ceasefire has been established between the Government of Angola and UNITA and implementation of a permanent peace settlement started, we will consider assistance for demining. We expect this to be part of a United Nations co-ordinated effort.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) of 1 December, *Official Report*, column 572, if he will make a statement on each of the activities funded by his Department relating to the clearance of land mines in Cambodia; which of these activities are being carried out

on *(a)* a bilateral or (b) a multilateral basis; and whether any further aid will be given for medical attention of casualties of land mines.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since October 1991 our bilateral aid has included three grants to the Halo Trust, a British voluntary agency, for its mine clearance operations. These were for £60,000, £199,886 and £232,520. We have also provided £6,415 for a mine awareness radio programme. Two further project proposals from the Halo Trust at a proposed cost of £330,000 are under consideration.

Until the end of October 1993, our multilateral support consisted of the United Kingdom contribution to the costs of the United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia —UNTAC—which financed mine clearance operations undertaken by the Cambodian mine action centre—CMAC. Since the end of UNTAC's mandate, we have provided £133,000 through the United Nations Development Programme—UNDP—to support the continuance of CMAC's operations. A UNDP proposal for support to CMAC for two years is under consideration by donors. Our aid is aimed at reducing casualties caused by mines.

Additionally, we have provided £470,140 over the past three years to set up and run a limb-fitting unit at Calmette hospital in Phnom Penh. The project includes the training of Cambodian technicians in limb-fitting techniques. We have also begun funding a similar project in Kompong Som in southern Cambodia and have agreed funding of £249,741 for this over three financial years.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on each of the activities funded by his Department relating to the clearance of land mines in Somalia; which of these activities are being carried out on *(a)* a bilateral or *(b)* a multilateral basis; and whether any further aid will be given for medical attention of casualties of land mines.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: From November 1991 until May 1993 we co-funded, bilaterally, the training and supervision of over 220 members of the local "humanitarian mine clearance pioneer corps" in a major mine clearance programme in and around Hargeisa in the heavily mined north-west of the country. Over this period we contributed £673,540 to the work undertaken by the British company Rimfire International. Our aid has been aimed at reducing casualties caused by mines. The work is continuing as a programme of the United Nations operations in Somalia.

We have not received any proposals to provide medical assistance specifically for casualties of land mines, but remain willing to help in this area if requested.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on each of the activities funded by his Department relating to the clearance of land mines in Afghanistan; which of these activities are being carried out on *(a)* a bilateral or *(b)* a multilateral basis; and whether any further aid will be given for medical attention of casualties of land mines.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since April 1992 we have funded, bilaterally, the training and supervision of two teams of Afghan mine clearers. The programme operates in the Shomali valley with the aim of facilitating the safe return of refugees and displaced people to the area. We have so far contributed £479,531 for this work undertaken by the British non-governmental organisation the Halo Trust. Our aid has been aimed at reducing casualties caused by mines.

The mine clearance programme in Afghanistan is co-ordinated by the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan —UNOCHA. Britain is one of the main contributors to the programme. In 1992 we provided £500,000 to UNOCHA for this purpose, and a further £1 million in 1993.

The European Community also finances mine clearance by contributing to European and local non-governmental organisations including those operating under the UNOCHA programme in and around Herat. Part of the funding for this is attributable to the United Kingdom.

We are currently considering proposals which could provide medical assistance specifically for casualties of land mines, but the current insecurity in the country precludes an early start to any such operations.

Development Assistance

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the annual official development assistance through aid and trade provision for each calendar year from its inception to the latest year for which data are available.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The data requested are available only by financial year and are as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	29
1980-81	26
1981-82	53
1982-83	47
1983-84	28
1984-85	59
1985-86	36
1986-87	81
1987-88	49
1988-89	58
1989-90	62
1990-91	94
1991-92	101
1992-93	93

Somalia

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest developments in the war in Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* In recent months inter-clan tensions and outbreaks of fighting have increased in central and southern Somalia. Reports indicate that some clans are re-arming. The international community has continued to urge the Somalis to take forward the political reconciliation process and have been encouraged by recent local agreements.

TRANSPORT

Traffic Director, London

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who is the traffic director for London.

Mr. Norris: Mr. Derek Turner.

Overseas Travel

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Secretary of State since 27 May 1993.

Mr. MacGregor: *(a)* The travel budget is not broken down between individual Ministers.

(b) Since 27 May 1993 the actual expenditure by my department on

(1) My internal travel is £286.00

(2) My overseas travel is £5,612.62

These figures do not include the cost of my official car.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Secretary of State in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. MacGregor: *(a)* The travel budget is not broken down between individual Ministers.

(b) Actual expenditure by my Department on my travel was

(1) Internal—£1,317.00 in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and £584.00 so far in 1993-94

(2) Overseas—£13,294.72 in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and £6,078.62 so far in 1993-94

These figures do not include the cost of my official car.

London Buses

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many buses owned by London Buses Ltd have been *(a)* leased to and *(b)* sold to private companies operating services on behalf of London Transport since 1985; how many in each case were (i) less than four years old, (ii) between four and seven years old (iii) between eight and 11 years old, (iv) between 12 and 15 years old, and (v) more than 15 years old; and on which routes such leases or sales applied.

Mr. Norris: I understand that LBL has not sold any of its surplus buses to private companies operating LT bus routes. LBL has leased 46 Routemaster vehicles to London Transport's tendered bus division, which has in turn leased them to private operators to run routes 13 and 19. Both routes have been run under contract by private operators since 1993. The 46 Routemasters are more than 15 years old.

London Underground

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many London Underground customers have received compensation due to delays in their service since January 1993; and how much compensation in total has been paid to those customers.

Mr. Norris: Since 1 January 1993 compensation totalling £180,357 has been paid in response to 59,251 individual claims. There is currently a large number of outstanding claims relating to incidents in the past two months of 1993, particularly the power failure on the Central line.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what quality of service targets were published by London Underground in May 1992; and how it has performed in relation to them.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is shown in the table.

London Underground Limited: Quality of service targets and performance since May[1,2]

Customer satisfaction targets

	Cleanliness of trains	*Cleanliness of stations*	*Staff helpfulness and availability*	*Information on trains*	*Information on stations*
Targets set for 1992-93	76	85	83	78	76
4 weeks ending 23 May 1992	75	89	83	82	75
4 weeks ending 20 June 1992	75	88	83	83	75
4 weeks ending 18 July 1992	73	88	84	86	78
4 weeks ending 18 August 1992	73	88	85	86	80
4 weeks ending 12 September 1992	74	87	87	87	82
4 weeks ending 10 October 1992	76	88	88	86	82
4 weeks ending 7 November 1992	76	88	88	86	79
4 weeks ending 5 December 1992	76	88	86	85	79
4 weeks ending 2 January 1993	77	88	86	85	79
4 weeks ending 30 January 1993	80	89	87	87	83
4 weeks ending 27 February 1993	81	89	87	88	83
4 weeks ending 31 March 1993	81	89	86	88	83
Overall[3] for 1992-93	85	79	76	88	85

Service performance targets

	Trains in customer service	*Escalators in customer service*	*Lifts in customer service*	*[4]Train service headways*	*[5]Station closures*	*[6]Ticket purchasing*	*Other targets violent crime*
Targets set for 1992-93	97.5	87.0	85.0	91.0	50	99.90	To reduce
4 weeks ending 23 May 1992	97.3	90.2	91.1	95.4	44	99.97	1.12
4 weeks ending 20 June 1992	98.0	90.6	91.5	95.9	47	99.95	1.36

	Service performance targets						
	Trains in customer service	*Escalators in customer service*	*Lifts in customer service*	*[4]Train service headways*	*[3]Station closures*	*[3]Ticket purchasing*	*Other targets violent crime*
4 weeks ending 18 July 1992	98·4	90·0	92·2	95·9	45	99·94	1·12
4 weeks ending 18 August 1992	98·2	89·5	91·9	96·5	39	99·87	1·06
4 weeks ending 12 September 1992	98·4	88·3	92·4	95·9	32	99·95	1·02
4 weeks ending 10 October 1992	98·3	89·1	94·0	96·6	31	99·92	1·19
4 weeks ending 7 November 1992	97·7	89·6	92·1	95·0	46	99·92	1·53
4 weeks ending 5 December 1992	97·9	90·0	91·7	95·0	42	99·95	1·59
4 weeks ending 2 January 1993	97·8	88·5	89·5	94·4	38	99·93	1·41
4 weeks ending 30 January 1993	97·6	88·3	90·2	95·0	34	99·93	1·29
4 weeks ending 27 February 1993	97·0	87·3	91·6	93·5	26	99·89	1·38
4 weeks ending 31 March 1993	97·2	89·4	90·9	94·8	56	99·91	1·12
Overall[1] for 1992-93	98·0	89·0	91·0	95·2	40	99·93	1·29

	Customer satisfaction targets					
	Cleanliness of trains	*Cleanliness of stations*	*Staff helpfulness and availability*	*Information on trains*	*Information on stations*	*Ticket purchasing[1]*
Targets set for 1993-94[5]	81	89	86	86	81	92
4 weeks ending 24 April 1993	82	89	85	89	81	90
4 weeks ending 22 May 1993	83	89	85	90	83	89
4 weeks ending 19 June 1993	84	88	86	92	82	90
4 weeks ending 17 July 1993	84	89	87	93	83	91
4 weeks ending 14 August 1993	84	89	87	93	82	92
4 weeks ending 11 September 1993	86	90	88	94	83	93
4 weeks ending 9 October 1993	87	91	90	94	83	93
4 weeks ending 6 November 1993	87	91	90	95	84	93
4 weeks ending 4 December 1993	86	91	89	95	84	92
Overall to date 1993-94	85	89	87	93	83	91

	Service performance targets					*Other targets Violent crime*
	Trains in customer service	*Escalators in customer service*	*Lifts in customer service*	*[4]Train service headways*	*[3]Station closures*	
Targets[5] set for 1993-94	98·9	89·0	92·0	95·0	30	To reduce
4 weeks ending 24 April 1993	97·7	88·9	93·1	95·3	37	1·38
4 weeks ending 22 May 1993	97·8	90·9	95·3	95·5	24	1·47
4 weeks ending 19 June 1993	98·0	87·4	90·9	95·4	40	1·20
4 weeks ending 17 July 1993	98·1	88·1	89·6	95·7	43	1·29
4 weeks ending 14 August 1993	98·2	89·6	92·4	95·6	30	1·40
4 weeks ending 11 September 1993	98·1	90·5	94·0	96·4	32	1·56
4 weeks ending 9 October 1993	97·9	91·5	91·3	96·3	26	1·21
4 weeks ending 6 November 1993	97·9	91·5	93·2	94·5	23	1·06
4 weeks ending 4 December 1993	97·6	92·4	95·0	94·9	72	1·06
Overall to date 1993-94	97·8	90·2	92·3	95·5	36	1·30

Notes :

[1] *Source* : London Underground Limited.

[2] All figures are percentages apart from Station closures.

[3] Includes figures for 4 weeks to 25 May 1992 which are not included in the table.

[4] Timed interval between trains.

[5] Stations closures within LUL's control.
[6] Percentage of stations with at least one way of buying a ticket.
[7] New target for 1993-94.
[8] Targets set in May 1992 for 1993-94 were reviewed and amended where necessary.

Pollution

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives his Department is planning to increase the attractiveness of the use of non-polluting modes of transport.

Mr. MacGregor: The only non-polluting modes of transport are cycling and walking; all other modes give rise to pollution to some extent.

My Department carries out research and issues advice on ways to improve conditions on the roads for cyclists and pedestrians; the transport policy and programme circular encourages local authorities to develop strategies that make better provision for these groups; and the draft Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 on transport provides guidance on how land use planning and complementary transport measures can make walking and cycling more attractive.

Heathrow Express

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the annual track fee to be paid to Railtrack for the Heathrow Express service to and from Paddington station has been agreed.

Mr. Norris: Yes. The terms of payment for access to the western main line and Paddington station were agreed with British Rail last year and the agreement will be inherited by Railtrack. Details of the agreement are commercially confidential.

Land Contamination

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recomendations his Department has made to Barnet council for dealing with contamination of land at Coppetts wood, Finchley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: My Department has sent to the council a report of the testing of Coppett's wood site. The report includes recommendations for the treatment of the land and the Department at present awaits the council's response.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what future meetings he plans to hold with representatives of Barnet council in connection with contamination of land at Coppett's wood, Finchley.

Mr. Norris: None is presently planned. The Department awaits the council's response to the report of the soil test.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of all correspondence since January 1988 between his Department and the London borough of Barnet relating to *(a)* issuing of exchange land certificates in connection with the widening of the North Circular Road, east of Falloden way and *(b)* condition and possible contamination of land at Coppetts wood in Finchley; what was the date of each piece of correspondence; who was the sender and recipient in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The following is a list of correspondence between the Department of Transport and the London borough of Barnet since 1988 on *(a)* issues relating to the issuing of exchange land certificates for the east of Falloden way scheme.

Date	*Sender*	*Recipient*	*Topic*
12 October 1988	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport	Conditional agreement to use Friern Barnet site as exchange land
14 October 1988	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport	Council approval of Friern Barnet site
19 October 1988	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport	Purchase method of part of Friern Barnet site
10 January 1989	Department of Transport	London Borough of Barnet	Request for information regarding open space reply to 10 January 1989
28 February 1989	Department of Transport	London Borough of Barnet	Reduction in area of Friern Barnet site required
5 April 1989	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport	Plan of Friern Barnet exchange land
14 April 1989	Department of Transport	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport plan of exchange land
24 April 1989	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport	Friern Barnet proposals to go to Council Committee
12 May 1989	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport	Council approve part of Friern Barnet site for exchange land
20 May 1989	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport	Committee report
19 July 1989	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport	Sale of whole of Friern Barnet site
21 August 1989	Department of Transport	London Borough of Barnet	Reply to 19 July
14 November 1990			Certificates issued

(b) List of correspondence between the Department of Transport and the London borough of Barnet in connection with discovery of contaminated soil on exchange land (Coppetts wood) for East of Falloden way scheme.

Date	*Sender*	*Recipient*	*Topic*
13 October 1992	Department of Transport Consultants	London Borough of Barnet	Comment on letter from Dr. Natelson
21 October 1992	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport Consultants	Confirms preliminary soil tests carried out; awaiting results
11 January 1993	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport	Preliminary tests and evidence of contamination
27 January 1993	Department of Transport	London Borough of Barnet	Agree to more extensive soil tests
26 February 1993	Department of Transport Consultants	London Borough of Barnet	Confirmation immediate remedial measures in hand
14 April 1993	Department of Transport	London Borough of Barnet	Confirmation remedial measures nearing completion
26 April 1993	Department of Transport	London Borough of Barnet	Details of soil investigations to be undertaken by Frank Graham and Partners and Foundation and Exploration Services Ltd. in June 1993
8 November 1993	London Borough of Barnet	Department of Transport	Enquiry of progress on draft August soil report
23 November 1993	Department of Transport	London Borough of Barnet	Copies of report forwarded for comment on recommended remedial treatment

The position regarding the treatment of contamination remains as stated in the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in January, except that, regrettably, the date of discovery of contamination supplied by my Department and quoted by him should have been October 1992 and not June 1993. Research into the correspondence has produced a reference to a report dated 1988, a copy of which was sent to my Department's consultants after the contamination was reported in 1992.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received on the route of the CTRL since 22 March 1993 from *(a)* the parliamentary constituency of Mid-Kent, *(b)* the borough of Maidstone, *(c)* the city of Rochester upon Medway and *(d)* Kent; and how many he has received specifically on the proposal to route the railway through the Boxley valley.

Mr. Freeman: The information is not readily available in the form requested, but in response to an invitation for formal comments on the refined route proposals the following responses have been received by my Department since 22 March 1993: 67 representations from local authorities, action groups and other organisations in Kent; 96 letters from individuals at Kent addresses, and 12 from Kent Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament; 138 public comment forms were also completed and returned to Union Railways. The representations included 194 from the Maidstone area, four from the Rochester area; 160 were in favour of the Mid-Kent long tunnel option under the Boxley valley.

Sea Traffic (Radar)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend radar coverage for traffic at sea to all parts of the United Kingdom sea areas including the Shetlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: While there are no plans to extend radar surveillance of maritime traffic, this is an issue being considered by the inquiry announced by the Secretary of State to the House on 11 January 1993 under the chairmanship of Lord Donaldson of Lymington.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what parts of the English Channel are covered by radar coverage for traffic at sea.

Mr. Norris: Radar coverage of shipping in the channel is covered by the channel navigation information service, operated by Her Majesty's Coastguard within an area bounded by the Greenwich meridian in the west to 002° to 20.0° east. However, it does not include all that area. The extent of radar surveillance is shown on Admiralty Chart 5500. I will send a photocopy of the relevant part of that chart to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North.

Coastguard

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to enhance enforcement measures for Her Majesty's Coastguard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Lord Donaldson is likely to be considering such measures as part of his inquiry. Careful consideration will be given to any recommendations which arise from the subsequent report.

British Rail

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail employees were based in York on 1 January of each year from 1979 to 1994.

Mr. Freeman: I refer to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 14 January 1994, c. *291*. Information for the previous years is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the proposed channel tunnel fastlink will be connected to the east coast main line; whether the costs of this connection are included in the fastlink scheme; what estimates he can give of handling east coast main line trains through the St. Pancras reversing movement to the fastlink; and whether the east coast main line will be upgraded to VIC B+ loading gauge for freight traffic.

Mr. Freeman: A direct connection from St. Pancras to the east coast main line will be provided by means of a new link across the King's Cross railway lands, the cost of which is included in the estimates for the rail link. Use of St. Pancras will have no adverse effect on journey times. All trains will have to stop to allow officials undertaking on-train border controls to join or depart and for train crews to be changed. Trains leaving the station in the same direction as they arrive will not affect the length of the pause. BR does not propose upgrades to the loading gauges of existing railways, although private investors are free to do so.

Lancashire (Pollution)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *663-4*, what further information he has now received on the Lancashire pollution incident from the Laboratory of the Government Chemist.

Mr. Norris: I refer to my answer to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) of 26 January, col. *245*.

Noise Insulation

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring the west London line for rail freight within the scope of the draft noise insulation regulations.

Mr. Freeman: Ministers will consider all responses to the current consultation exercise before deciding whether the draft regulations should be amended prior to their submission to Parliament. Meanwhile, British Rail remains willing to discuss with the local authorities concerned the possibility of jointly funded noise mitigation schemes for appropriate locations on the west London line.

Taxis, London

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in response to his consultation on the future of taxi services in London.

Mr. Norris: I have received over 150 representations in response to the consultation paper on the future of taxi and private hire services in England and Wales issued by my Department. Many of these have referred to London. The consultation period ends on 1 March 1994.

Public Service Obligation Grant

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the cash ceiling for public service obligation grant to British Rail for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The original cash ceiling of £850 million has been increased to £930 million in the light of revised forecasts. British Rail's external financing limit for 1993-94 is not affected.

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Norris: I regret that this question could be answered only at disproprotionate cost.

Waste Dumping

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will raise the maximum fine for illegal dumping of waste from shipping on to beaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* The maximum fine on conviction by indictment for causing pollution of United Kingdom waters by the illegal discharge of wastes from ships is unlimited.

Oil Discharges

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he will introduce into partnership with other North sea Ministers to designate the North sea as a special area under the marine pollution convention in relation to oil discharges.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* An intermediate meeting of North sea conference Ministers in December 1993 considered actions taken within the International Maritime Organisation on annexes I and II of MARPOL. They agreed upon steps for further evaluation of reception facilities and the enforceability and impact of current regulations as a basis for considering at the 1995 North sea conference any need for designation of the North sea as a special area under these annexes. Officials are now taking the evaluation process forward for the United Kingdom in conjunction with representative ports and shipping organisations.

A copy of the Minister's statement of conclusions has been placed in the Library.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the volume of oil which is intentionally discharged by shipping vessels into the North sea each year.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* It is estimated that legal operational discharges of oil from shipping traversing the North sea is between 1,000 and 2,000 tonnes per annum.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there is any requirement for ships entering British ports to use reception facilities for the dispersing of oily wastes and garbage; and where such facilities are available.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer Tuesday 8 February]:* Harbour authorities and terminal operators are required to provide reception facilities for ships carrying oily wastes and garbage. There is no legal requirement for ships to use such facilities. Information on oil reception facilities in United Kingdom ports collected by the Department of Transport is contained in the International Maritime Organisation circular MEPC/Circ.234 copies of which have been placed in the Library. Indications are that all ports have arrangements for the reception of garbage.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many incidents of oil discharged into the North sea were reported in 1993-94; how many incidents were investigated; and how many resulted in prosecutions under the marine pollution convention for each of the last five years.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* From January 1993 to January 1994, the Department's marine pollution control unit received reports of 397 pollution incidents in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea. Of these, 95 were related to ships, the rest were related to offshore installations. All of these incidents were investigated and as a result, 21 vessels were inspected at their next port of call, resulting in four cases being passed on for further investigation and possible prosecution—three to a foreign flag state and one to the Treasury Solicitor. All cases are still under investigation.

In the past five years, 25 shipping cases have been sent for further investigation by the relevant competent flag state authorities, including seven to our own Treasury Solicitor. Out of these 25 investigations, successful prosecutions have been obtained on seven occasions—see table—and 10 cases are still under investigation:

	Number
1989	2
1990	2
1991	2
1992	1
1993	[1]—

[1] (Three referred to Flag States)

Manchester Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what estimate his Department has made of the economic benefits that accrue to Amsterdam and other European hubs from failure to allow direct services from Manchester airport and the diversion of passengers to airports on the continent; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the evidence given on behalf of Manchester Airport plc to the Select Committee on Transport in regard to the cost to regional airports of failing to liberalise access to them; what action he will take; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what estimate his Department has made of the loss to Manchester Airport plc of preventing the airport from meeting airline demand for additional services to and from Manchester; and if he will make a statement on the airport's call for the liberalising of access to regional airports.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 9 February]:* There is no reliable information available on the effects of the United Kingdom's aviation policy on airports in other countries. We have not yet been able to examine in detail the evidence given by Manchester airport to the Select Committee, but we have asked the CAA to examine in detail the economic impact of air services on regional airports, in consultation with United Kingdom airports, including Manchester, airlines and other Government Departments.

It has long been the Government's policy to seek the maximum degree of liberalisation of our air services agreements in order to maximise the benefits to consumers, the airline industry and the United Kingdom economy generally. At the same time the Government have aimed to increase opportunities to regional airports. Individual proposals are considered on their merits and the Government have in the past given expanded opportunities to regional airports. For instance, as a result of the deal negotiated in 1990 three extra services to Manchester from the United States and a service from Birmingham to the United States have commenced. In addition the United Kingdom gave special permission outside the terms of the United States/United Kingdom Air Services Agreement last April for a service from New York to Belfast. As a continuation of our policy to liberalise services to regional airports the United Kingdom has put a proposal to the United States Government which offers immediate open access to United Kingdom regional airports from all United States cities.

Road Pricing

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in which year the Government first began to examine the issue of road pricing; and what are his current proposals.

Mr. Key: In May last year we published a Green Paper "Paying for Better Motorways" (Cm 2200) on the principle of direct charging for the use of inter-urban roads. The intention to publish this consultation document had been announced in the autumn statement in November 1992. On 2 December 1993, column *650*, my right hon. Friend announced the Government's intention to introduce electronic charging on motorways when the technology was ready and subject to Parliament's approval of the necessary legislation.

The Government's research programme on the possible role of congestion charging in London was announced in 1991, and the Government have subsequently been co-operating with local authorities outside London which wish to examine the possibility of city congestion charging for their area. The Government are not committed to the introduction of city congestion charging, whether in London or elsewhere.

Road Safety

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which posts are currently designated, within the Department of Transport, to have responsibility for road safety; and if he will list the grade level and title of each post.

Mr. Key: The improvement of road safety is one of our key objectives. In addition to members of the Department's road and vehicle safety directorate, this involves staff working on the planning, construction and maintenance of roads, and the testing and licensing of vehicles and drivers. Many other areas of the Department's work also contribute

to improving road safety. It is therefore not possible to provide the information requested, except at disproportionate cost.

Transport Supplementary Grant

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what amount of transport supplementary grant was awarded for 1994-95 to each highways authority; and in each case what amount and percentage was allocated for road safety.

Mr. Key: The amount of transport supplementary grant awarded for 1994-95 to each highway authority was given in the *Official Report* for 15 December 1993, column 699. Resources for local safety schemes were given as supplementary credit approvals. Allocations under this category, and the proportion they represent of the total resources allocated under the transport supplementary grant system are as follows:

Authority	*Allocations for Local Safety Schemes—1994-95 £000*	*Per cent.*
City of London	0	0·0
Barking	315	27·8
Barnet	430	16·5
Bexley	330	4·1
Brent	425	15·5
Bromley	160	8·4
Camden	440	10·8
Croydon	513	10·2
Ealing	320	9·8
Enfield	302	5·5
Greenwich	220	8·4
Hackney	287	8·6
Hammersmith	550	10·0
Haringey	327	10·4
Harrow	140	1·6
Havering	240	27·6
Hillingdon	750	14·6
Hounslow	270	4·8
Islington	480	15·4
Kensington	220	19·1
Kingston	235	6·7
Lambeth	104	6·0
Lewisham	425	4·3
Merton	280	16·2
Newham	385	3·4
Redbridge	213	12·6
Richmond	250	12·9
Southwark	400	10·4
Sutton	322	13·9
Tower Hamlets	400	7·4
Waltham Forest	429	17·1
Wandsworth	801	12·5
Westminster	420	11·3
Bolton	188	5·1
Bury	220	9·7
Manchester	720	2·9
Oldham	400	7·8
Rochdale	235	9·7
Salford	595	20·2
Stockport	190	3·9
Tameside	270	14·0
Trafford	210	1·8
Wigan	145	10·3
Knowsley	280	1·4
Liverpool	368	6·1
St. Helens	70	9·7
Sefton	266	23·7
Wirral	485	15·7
Barnsley	340	5·1
Doncaster	357	5·7
Rotherham	207	4·3
Sheffield	340	1·7
Gateshead	250	18·5
Newcastle	250	2·7
North Tyneside	206	12·2
South Tyneside	360	27·3
Sunderland	399	10·7
Birmingham	1,017	2·8
Coventry	307	2·1
Dudley	313	3·2
Sandwell	296	5·8
Solihull	203	6·3
Walsall	265	1·6
Wolverhampton	249	1·3
Bradford	650	9·0
Calderdale	325	9·5
Kirklees	570	8·1
Leeds	670	3·6
Wakefield	400	11·7
Avon	542	2·9
Bedfordshire	485	9·6
Berkshire	650	6·4
Buckinghamshire	538	16·5
Cambridgeshire	1,275	19·0
Cheshire	545	2·5
Cleveland	393	3·1
Cornwall	369	3·3
Cumbria	390	7·9
Derbyshire	602	11·6
Devon	763	7·7
Dorset	588	9·9
Durham	250	2·2
East Sussex	540	6·5
Essex	1,517	7·9
Gloucestershire	438	5·3
Hampshire	1,200	4·2
Hereford and Worcestershire	563	15·4
Hertfordshire	1,070	8·9
Humberside	690	4·0
Isle of Wight	230	7·7
Kent	1,050	1·1
Lancashire	1,195	4·5
Leicestershire	609	8·0
Lincolnshire	440	5·9
Norfolk	811	5·7
Northamptonshire	756	12·3
Northumberland	425	5·5
North Yorkshire	700	4·5
Nottinghamshire	823	7·7
Oxfordshire	545	10·5
Shropshire	322	7·2
Somerset	284	2·7
Staffordshire	520	3·6
Suffolk	755	8·1
Surrey	1,184	4·5
Warwickshire	896	19·9
West Sussex	565	8·1
Wiltshire	483	12·1

Road Repairs

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assessment he has made of the state of disrepair of principal roads;

(2) what procedure he uses for assessing the state of repair of principal roads.

Mr. Key: The condition of roads in England and Wales is monitored by means of the national road maintenance condition survey. Each year a random sample of some 11,000 100m sites is inspected for the presence of certain pre-defined defects visible at the surface. Results for each

road class are expressed as index numbers which allow trends in condition to be monitored. They are published in an annual report, copies of which are available in the Library.

Motor Cycles

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what factors were taken into account in deciding to accept the stage II noise limits of motor cycles; and what representations he received on the issue.

Mr. Key: The stage I and stage II noise limits for motorcycles were initially proposed in a draft directive (9148/84) in 1984 and were the subject of a report of the House of Lords "Select Committee on the European Communities"—Session 1984-85, 9th Report, "Motorcycle Noise". Evidence was provided to the Committee by the National Society for Clean Air, the Motorcycle Association of Great Britain Ltd., the Noise Abatement Society, the British Motorcyclists Federation, the Greater London Council, the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, now the Transport Research Laboratory, as well as the Department of Transport. The Committee welcomed the initiative taken by the Commission in proposing a new directive which was subsequently adopted, with minor amendments, as Council directive 87/56/EEC of 18 December 1987.

The directive is currently the subject of a revised proposal as part of the introduction of motorcycle whole vehicle type approval. The stage II limits contained within Council directive 87/56/EEC are retained, but the implementation date is deferred until 1 January 1997.

Brookethorpe and Whaddon Service Area

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when a decision will be announced about the proposed motorway service area at Brookethorpe and Whaddon; and what representations he has received about it.

Mr. Key: Since August 1992 it has been for the private sector rather than my Department to identify sites for new motorway service areas, seek planning permission and acquire the land. I understand that a planning application has been submitted for a motorway service area at Ongers farm, near Brookthorpe, and that this is to be the subject of a public inquiry in May. It will then be for the inspector appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to decide whether planning permission should be granted.

My Department has received one letter expressing opposition to the proposal.

Visual Display Units

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by office and by year since the introduction of the Local Office Business system the number of replacement visual display units, as distinct from new visual display units, supplied to the local office network.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* No details are kept by DVLA on the replacement of VDUs. Responsibility for this was subject to contract between IBM and the Driver, Vehicle Operators Information Technology Agency. The latter was acquired by Electronic Data Services when DVOIT was privatised in December 1993 and details could now be made available only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year and by office the number of visual display units that have been introduced into the DVLA local office network under the local office business system.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Office	*Total*	*1993-94*	*1992-93*	*1991-92*	*Prior 1991*
Aberdeen	6	3	1	1	1
Bangor	8	—	4	2	2
Birmingham	42	16	16	3	7
Bournemouth	13	2	1	2	8
Brighton	24	—	9	—	15
Bristol	14	—	3	2	9
Cardiff	21	4	6	2	9
Carlisle	6	3	1	—	2
Chelmsford	26	9	5	1	11
Chester	8	—	4	—	4
Coventry	15	4	3	—	8
Croydon	6	—	3	1	2
Dundee	9	3	3	2	1
Edinburgh	15	2	8	1	4
Exeter	12	—	4	1	7
Glasgow	35	8	13	1	13
Gloucester	16	—	5	3	8
Guildford	22	3	10	—	9
Haverfordwest	6	—	1	—	5
Huddersfield	9	2	2	—	5
Hull	6	—	2	—	4
Ilford	10	—	2	—	8
Inverness	6	2	1	—	3
Ipswich	15	5	3	1	6
Leeds	15	2	4	—	9
Leicester	13	3	2	—	8
Lincoln	9	1	1	1	6
Liverpool	12	—	1	—	11
London Central	6	—	2	—	4

Office	Total	1993-94	1992-93	1991-92	Prior 1991
Luton	27	11	1	1	14
Maidstone	22	—	8	—	14
Manchester	33	—	19	1	13
Middlesbrough	8	6	1	—	1
Newcastle	15	3	2	1	9
Northampton	15	2	5	2	6
Norwich	15	5	2	1	7
Nottingham	16	6	4	2	4
Oxford	10	—	2	1	7
Peterborough	11	1	2	1	7
Portsmouth	15	1	2	2	10
Preston	13	—	5	2	6
Reading	22	—	10	1	11
Sheffield	19	—	11	—	8
Shrewsbury	6	3	2	—	1
Stanmore	8	—	2	—	6
Stoke	9	—	3	—	6
Swansea	10	—	3	—	7
Swindon	14	—	6	—	8
Taunton	12	3	4	—	5
Truro	7	—	1	—	6
Worcester	11	—	1	—	10
Leo	97	2	—	—	95
GMS	22	—	—	—	22
	842	115	216	39	472

Fines

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year and office how much additional revenue has been generated by the prosecution of regulation 12 cases; and if he will estimate the revenue which will be gained over the next three years.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* The information requested for 1991-92 and 1992-93 is as follows:

Office	Revenue 1992-93	Revenue 1991-92
Birmingham	116,272	17,954
Dudley	45,989	22,671
Lincoln	16,815	n/a
Northampton	47,283	29,379
Nottingham	56,525	n/a
Peterborough	22,939	40,971
Leicester	11,106	n/a
Bournemouth	755	120
Guildford	8,299	n/a
Maidstone	10,583	n/a
Portsmouth	1,457	n/a
Huddersfield	6,751	1,305
Manchester	6,625	n/a
Preston	3,158	2,419
Sheffield	6,007	n/a
Hull	4,326	n/a
Leeds	3,269	n/a
Bristol	33,750	16,749
Gloucester	10,960	2,010
Taunton	2,558	n/a
Truro	310	n/a
Worcester	4,288	525
Middlesborough	1,240	n/a
Newcastle	2,331	n/a
Oxford	13,676	n/a
Ipswich	10,228	3,660
Luton	21,697	3,691
London Enforcement office	117,221	n/a
Total	646,454	141,454

The revenue targets for regulation 12 prosecutions for the years 1994-95 to 1996-97 have not yet been agreed betwen the agency and the Department of Transport.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the average fine, costs and back duty awarded by the courts for a successful prosecution of section 8 cases and section 12 cases.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* The information requested for the period April-December 1993 is:

	Section 8 £	Regulation 12 £
Average Fine	85·96	59·47
Average Costs	21·52	7·23
Average Section 9	47·48	—

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year and office how much additional revenue has been generated by DVLA staff undertaking their own prosecutions.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* It is not possible to list how much additional revenue was recovered by each local office.

The amount of revenue recovered in respect of cases prosecuted by DVLA only for 1992-93 is £25·6 million. This is a 15 per cent. increase over the £22·4 million recovered through both DVLA and the Crown Prosecution Service during 1991-92.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of successful cases prosecuted by DVLA staff since they undertook their own prosecution work.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* The information requested since April 1992 is:

	Cases
April 1992-93	178,731
April 1993-December 1993	158,175

DEFENCE

Senior Officers

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will produce a table showing the number of generals, admirals and air marshals in active service; and what are the salary levels for each of those ranks.

Mr. Hanley: Information on the number of officers at each rank level of the armed forces is contained in table 1 of the Defence Analytical Services quarterly publication TSP9, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Table 2.23 of the "UK Defence Statistics" publication provides illustrative data on military salaries. On this basis, the 1993-94 rates for senior officers are as follows:

	£
Field Marshal (and equivalents)	112,084
General (and equivalents)	90,148
Lieutenant General (and equivalents)	64,842
Major General (and equivalents)	56,710

Ships

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ships are on active service.

Mr. Hanley: On 8 February there were 124 commissioned surface vessels and submarines in service with the Royal Navy, including those in refit. There are, however, also 21 vessels in service with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, whose supporting role is essential to the provision of the Royal Navy's overall capability.

Executive Agencies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the subjects on which his Department formerly answered parliamentary questions but which are now refered by him to an executive agency.

Mr. Aitken: Next steps agency chief executives are usually asked to reply to parliamentary questions about the day-to-day operational matters of their agency and on subjects for which they have delegated responsibility, as set out in the agency's framework document.

Polaris

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to maintain the existing maximum warhead ceiling for each Polaris submarine for the remainder of their operational deployment;

(2) what is his policy regarding the maximum warhead ceiling on the United Kingdom's ballistic missile-carrying submarines during the transitional phase from Polaris to Trident.

Mr. Hanley: We have no plans to alter the number of warheads deployed on our Polaris submarines while they remain in service. Each Trident submarine will deploy with no more than 96 warheads, and may carry significantly fewer.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the explosive power of the planned strategic warhead for the Trident missile will be similar to that of the existing Polaris warhead.

Mr. Hanley: It is not our practice to discuss the details of nuclear weapon design.

Joint Analysis Centre, Molesworth

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence from what sources military information is processed and analysed at the joint analysis centre at Molesworth; and if he will give details of the modification work undertaken at the joint analysis centre at Molesworth.

Mr. Hanley: The role of the joint analysis centre is to process and analyse military information from a variety of sources. Modification of work undertaken for the JAC has involved the refurbishment of existing buildings at RAF Molesworth mostly to provide improved office accommodation for JAC support staff.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who operates the joint analysis centre at Molesworth; what is the strategic relationship between the joint analysis centre at Molesworth and Menwith Hill station in Yorkshire; how much the expansion of the joint analysis centre at Molesworth has cost: who has met the cost of the joint analysis centre at Molesworth; and how the costs have been attributed.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 11 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *171*. The joint analysis centre at RAF Molesworth is operated by the United States European Command. The cost of the JAC has been borne by the United States Government.

Sea King Helicopter, Mauchline Cross

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason a Royal Navy Sea King helicopter landed in Mauchline Cross on the evening of 1 February; if he will carry out an investigation into the incident with particular reference to the safety of local people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: During the evening of Tuesday 1 February 1994, a Royal Navy Sea King helicopter from Royal Naval Air Station Prestwick carried out a forced landing on the village green at Mauchline, due to severe weather conditions. An internal investigation has confirmed that the crew took the correct action, by seeking to land as soon as possible. A safe landing was conducted on the village green, clear of the surrounding buildings. Once on the ground, the crew took action to prevent members of the public from approaching the helicopter. The emergency services arrived shortly afterwards. The aircraft waited until the severe weather conditions had passed and then departed for Royal Naval Air Station Prestwick.

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) on 31 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *551*.

Service Personnel (Ethnic Origins)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to publish a breakdown of the ethnic origins of serving personnel by regiment or unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We intend to publish in "Defence Statistics" a breakdown of the ethnic origins of members of the armed forces by service and rank. The publication of statistics by regiment or unit will be subject to further consideration.

United Nations Standby Forces

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has provided to the United Nations standby forces planning team; and what requests have been made by the planning team.

Mr. Hanley: The United Nations standby forces planning team has asked United Nations member states to consider proposals for identifying forces capable of deployment at short notice that would potentially be available to take part in the initial stages of United Nations peacekeeping operations. A formal response will be made shortly.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts regarding the work of the United Nations standby forces planning team.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has had no such discussions.

Operation Grapple

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the 2 Battalion, Royal Anglian Regiment will begin its formal Operation Grapple training.

Mr. Hanley: As a matter of sensible contingency arrangements, the 2nd Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment will, on present plans, commence extra training on 27 February to ensure it is fully prepared for a deployment to Bosnia to relieve 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards in April-May, if such a decision is taken.

Defence Estate (Repairs)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total maintenance backlog of *(a)* unavoidable and essential repairs and *(b)* urgent repairs on the defence estate at 1 April in each year from 1980 to 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: This information is not collected centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

United Nations Forces

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to identify those combat engineering units and military lawyers that could be made available to the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We conduct a regular dialogue with the United Nations secretariat to ensure that it has a clear picture of all the capabilities the United Kingdom has to offer. We are willing to consider requests from the United Nations for any of these, case by case, in the light of other commitments and priorities.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *344*, what are the names, ranks, and functions of the five military personnel attached to the United Nations secretariat; and if the two officers that were in principle made available to the United Nations are currently attached to the United Nations.

Mr. Hanley: The personnel currently attached to the United Nations secretariat, and their functions, are:

Lieutenant Commander Highett—Logistics
Major Clifford—Situation Centre
Major Goddard—Field Finance
Major Hunter—Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Staff Sergeant Butcher—Situation Centre

The two additional officers made available in principle have not yet taken up posts at the United Nations.

Ceremonial Uniforms

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any non-Ministry of Defence sources have been used to finance the purchase of items of ceremonial uniforms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Some non-Ministry of Defence sources such as regimental funds and band funds have been used to purchase special items of ceremonial uniforms.

Desert Storm Syndrome

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek information from his French counterparts concerning Desert Storm syndrome.

Mr. Hanley: My officials continue the exchange of information with the French authorities on the alleged Desert Storm syndrome which began last summer.

Peace Support Operations

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department received a copy of the United States Army document entitled "FM 100-23 Peace Operations"; and what assessment he has made of it.

Mr. Hanley: We are aware that the United States Army has in preparation a manual concerning the conduct of peace support operations. This document remains in draft form and it would in any case be inappropriate to comment.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to produce and publish a doctrine manual on peace support operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The British Army produced in 1988 a document on doctrine entitled "Peacekeeping Operations". A new, complementary manual, taking account of recent developments in peacekeeping, is at an advanced stage of preparation.

Bosnia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has drawn up to implement the proposed safe areas in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The plan to implement the concept of safe areas is a matter for the UN and the UN Secretary General's report S/25939 of 14 June 1993 detailed how this might be done. The Secretary General's report was endorsed and authorised in the UN Security Council by the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 844 of 19 June 1993.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his French and Spanish counterparts about the implementation of the proposed safe areas in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is in regular contact with his French and Spanish counterparts about all aspects of our military deployments in former Yugoslavia.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates the three batches of information collated from interviews with refugees from Bosnia were sent to the United Nations War Crimes Commission.

Mr. Hanley: The three batches of information were dispatched to the United Nations War Crimes Commission by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 30 September 1993; 19 October 1993; and 21 January 1994.

Married Quarters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *343*, what arrangements will be made to ensure that the proposed housing trust will have an adequate level of finance for capital expenditure on the married quarters estate.

Mr. Hanley: An independent survey of the married quarters estate has been carried out and the proposed housing trust will draw up its business plan taking into account the findings of the survey. This will form a key element in the trust's funding requirement when it approaches the market.

Royal Regiment of Fusiliers

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the attendance of the band of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers at a Conservative party function at Ayton, Berwickshire in January; and what was the cost to public funds of the band performance.

Mr. Hanley: Members of the Fusiliers' Band (Volunteers) carried out an engagement at Ayton castle on 28 January 1994. The additional costs were met by the organisers of the function.

Military Hospitals

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will show for each military hospital disposed of since 1988 *(a)* the purchaser, *(b)* the new use of the site, *(c)* the estimated value of the site before sale and *(d)* the sale price.

Mr. Hanley: One military hospital—the former Princess of Wales RAF hospital at Ely—has been disposed of since 1988.

About half the former hospital comprising 7·26 acres of the total 63 ace site has been sold to the Cambridge health authority, now Lifespan Health Care Trust, and is currently in use as a community hospital. Approximately 23 acres have been transferred to the United States Air Force and the balance of the site, some 32 acres, is currently for sale on the open market.

Details of the site value prior to sale and the sale price are commercial in confidence.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has for selling military hospitals to other health care providers.

Mr. Hanley: My Department is required to obtain the best possible price for all sales of surplus MOD property; in the case of military hospitals, this may be achieved by sale to another healthcare provider. Discussions are well under way on the terms of sale of Queen Elizabeth Military hospital in Woolwich to the Greenwich healthcare trust.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Intestate Estate

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what arrangements are made to trace surviving relatives of those dying intestate in the Duchy.

Mr. Waldegrave: The procedures followed by the Duchy solicitor in tracing surviving relatives of those dying intestate in the county Palatine are the same as those followed by the Treasury solicitor.

Extensive inquiries are made of the local authority, of neighbours and of any other likely source. If these fail to identify kin, advertisements are placed in the press.

When there is reason to believe that the deceased might have surviving relatives in a foreign country, inquiries are made through that country's accredited representative in the United Kingdom and, if recommended, advertisements placed in the newspapers of that country.

Following inaccurate accounts of this procedure in the media, the Duchy solicitor wrote to the secretaries of all law societies within the county Palatine. He set out the procedure in detail, and reminded them of the policy of the Duchy authorities sympathetically to consider applications for ex-gratia payments on stated grounds to those who did not qualify for benefit under the law.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many estates under the intestacy provisions in the County Palatine passed to the Duchy in each of the last five years; and how many devolved, after investigation, to surviving blood relatives.

Mr. Waldegrave: The number of estates administered during the last five years by the Duchy solicitor under the

Administration of Estates Act 1925 and whose assets devolved to the Duchy—no qualifying kin having been traced—are as follows:

	Number
1988-89	437
1989-90	455
1990-91	488
1991-92	380
1992-93	357

During the same period, the number of estates which were reported to the solicitor but for whom qualifying kin were identified and to whom the assets devolved were as follows:

	Number
1988-89	24
1989-90	31
1990-91	22
1991-92	34
1992-93	34

It should be noted that in many cases of intestacy, qualifying relatives were identified prior to the matter being reported to the Duchy solicitor and are dealt with accordingly. The tables therefore do not reflect the proportion of estates within the county Palatine which devolve to the Duchy on the one hand or to qualifying kin on the other.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for each of the past five years, how much was spent on legal fees in attempts to trace surviving relatives of those who had died intestate in the Duchy.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no breakdown of costs available for the execution of the Duchy solicitor's duties under the Administration of Estates Act 1925 and the Companies Act 1985. However, the costs of placing advertisements for kin in newspapers over the last five years totalled £114,576-8.

Citizens Charter Reports

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the date of publication of the citizens charter first annual report; what will be the date of publication of the citizens charter second annual report; and what periods of time he plans to cover in future annual reports.

Mr. Waldegrave: The first report on progress in implementing the citizens charter was published on 25 November 1992; the second will be published during March 1994. No decision has been taken on the date of future reports. There is no commitment to report annually.

Complaints

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to set up a task force to advise on setting up and improving complaints systems in the public services.

Mr. Waldegrave: I set up the citizens charter complaints task force in June 1993, for a two-year period. Its role is to review public services' complaints systems; and to advise on their effectiveness, and on any further measures necessary to improve the ways in which public services respond to complaints. The task force is chaired by Lady Wilcox, chairman of the National Consumer Council, with six other members drawn from the public and private sectors.

In October 1993, the task force published its booklet, "Effective Complaints Systems: Principles and Checklist", which offers all public service organisations an opportunity to test the effectiveness of their own complaints systems. The booklet is available from the House of Commons Library.

The task force will shortly publish an interim report to Ministers, which will also be distributed widely to public services and other interested organisations.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column 697, how many Christmas cards he and his Ministers sent out in 1993; and at what cost.

Mr. Waldegrave: Approximately 400 Christmas cards were sent by myself and the Parliamentary Secretary on behalf of the Department. The cost of purchase and postage was approximately £240.

Charterline

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answers of 2 February, *Official Report*, column 789, what is the value of the contract to run the Charterline pilot scheme; if the service contract to operate the Charterline pilot scheme was awarded to the lowest bidder; how many calls have been dealt with by Charterline pilot scheme in its first nine months of operation; how much has been spent, in total, on the operation and promotion of the Charterline pilot scheme; if the provision of uniforms worn by staff answering telephones at the Charterline offices at Havant was a condition of the contract; and what is the cost per telephone call dealt with by Charterline.

Mr. David Davis: The service contract to operate Charterline pilot scheme is of no fixed value. The cost is dependent on the number of Charterline calls made. The service was awarded to the bidder that was judged to offer a high quality value for money service.

Over 5,300 calls have been received to date. Total set-up costs amount to £1,251,000. These include initial research, project planning and management, system design, contractual advice and data collection, which are all one-off costs. On-going costs to date amount to £1,033,136. These include paid advertising, research during the pilot study, set up and use of ACORN data—to provide public service organisations with information about callers' backgrounds—operational costs, and set up and operation of the Charterline language service, which is available in Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu.

The provision of uniforms worn by staff answering Charterline telephone calls was not a condition of the contract.

The cost per call to date is £70, if calculated on the basis of operational costs. The set-up and operational costs of a pilot study are always relatively high. If call volumes were higher, significant economies of scale could be achieved.

In the event that the project is extended to a national or other basis, the cost per call figures would be greatly reduced.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Civil Service Appeal Board.

Mr. Waldegrave: At 25 January 1994 the members of the Civil Service Appeal Board were:

Mr. P. Adams OBE; Mr. A. Bennett; Mr. M. S. Buckley; Mrs. C. Coltman; Mr. K. Crowley; Miss P. Downs (Chairman); Mr. W. J. Edmunds BEM; Miss B. Findlay; Mr. M. T. Foulkes; Mr. W. M. Francis BEM; Mr. J. H. Gracey CB; Mr. T. W. Hall; Mr. G. Harpin; Mr. R. M. Hastie-Smith CB; Mr. P. D. Jones (Deputy Chairman); Miss J. Kelley CB; Mr. R. W. King BEM; Mr. N. F. Ledsome CB; Mrs. S. P. Maunsell; Mr. N. E. A. Moore; Mr. R. W. Morgan; Mrs. M. Morrison OBE; Mr. J. Nicholson; Mr. P. Palmer; Mr. J. Pennington; Ms E. A. Rees; Mr. J. Renton; Mr. M. Ridout; Mr. J. Roberts CB; Mrs. M. B. Sloman; Mr. A. Smith; Mr. A. Stem; Mr. J. W. Stevens CB (Deputy Chairman); Mr. N. Tout BEM.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments.

Mr. Waldegrave: The members of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments are:

The right hon. the Lord Carlisle of Bucklow QC—Chairman
The right hon. Sir Patrick Nairne GCB MC—Deputy Chairman
The Lord Bridges GCMG
Sir Trevor Holdsworth
Sir Charles Huxtable KCB CBE
Sir Robin Ibbs KBE
The right hon. the Lord Merlyn-Rees
The right hon. the Lord Thomson of Monifieth KT

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 11 February 1994

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Non-governmental Organisations

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the annual official development assistance by calendar year, through the joint funding scheme for NGOs, from its inception to the latest year for which data are available.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Annual official development assistance through the joint funding scheme is collated by financial year. The following table illustrates funding provided to NGOs, from the first full year of its operation:

Financial year	*Totals (£)*
1976-77	291,407
1977-78	622,234
1978-79	1,331,566
1979-80	1,556,267
1980-81	1,411,936
1981-82	2,543,199
1982-83	2,359,744
1983-84	2,381,731
1984-85	3,794,882
1985-86	4,882,584
1986-87	5,812,641
1987-88	7,954,000
1988-89	11,686,000
1989-90	16,631,000
1990-91	20,061,000
1991-92	23,159,000
1992-93	28,000,000
[1]1993-94	29,000,000

[1] (Estimated).

Colombia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretray of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will take to ensure that the aid programme to Colombia meets the declared objectives of British aid and, in particular, to ensure that the aid programme addresses the specific needs of the poorest people in Colombia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The aid programme for Colombia comprises entirely technical co-operation. We will continue to support activities aimed at aid programme priorities, including good government, renewable natural resource mangement and human resource development. The Columbia programme will therefore include projects with an indirect impact on poverty, as well as those with a more direct role, particularly those undertaken through non-governmental organisations within the joint funding scheme.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent restrictions have been placed on the supply of humanitarian aid to and movement of humanitarian aid by international aid agencies within the Sudan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In recent months, both the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army have restricted access by aid agencies to some areas of need. International non-governmental organisations and the UN have difficulty securing permission to travel which prevents needs assessments and monitoring missions from taking place. In addition, the Government of Sudan have failed to meet their pledged food aid contribution for 1993. We continue to press all parties to lift restrictions on the international aid effort.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Colombia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise the question of the people called disposables in Colombia with the Government of Colombia at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: When I met the Colombia Foreign Trade Minister on 3 February, I made clear the concerns felt in Britain over this question and urged the Colombian Government to take effective measures to tackle the problem.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library copies of communications submitted to the United Nations Security Council sanctions committee 724 on United Kingdom compliance with the United Nations embargo on arms and military equipment sales to the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom has not been required to submit details of compliance to the United Nations sanctions committee established pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 724.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from the United Nations regarding the countries of design and manufacture of shells, mortars and bullets used against citizens of cities in Bosnia designated as having special protected status by the United Nations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made by Her Majesty's Government since the establishment of the European Community's embargo on arms and military equipment exports to the former Yugoslavia, of 5 July 1991, of the effectiveness of the embargo in regard to United Kingdom exports.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No assessment has been made.

We believe the embargo is being applied effectively in regard to exports from the United Kingdom. The

Department of Trade and Industry applies a rigorous export licence policy. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, which are responsible for the control of exports, make a careful check on all exports destined for the former Republic of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 724 of 15 December 1991 on the establishment of a sanctions committee to monitor the export embargo on military sales to the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following the passage of United Nations Security Council resolution 724 on 15 December 1991 a sanctions committee was established to advise on all aspects of the arms embargo against the former Republic of Yugoslavia. This committee has been empowered by subsequent resolutions to act as point of reference for all matters relating to sanctions against the former Republic of Yugoslavia. The committee meets on a weekly basis.

EU Committee of the Regions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he proposes to ensure close contact and liaison with the European Union Committee of the Regions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I met United Kingdom members and alternate members of the Committee on 8 December last year. We discussed the role of the EC Committee of the Regions and contacts between United Kingdom members and the Government. Our permanent representation in Brussels has already been in contact with United Kingdom members and will provide a regular contact point for them, as well as following the work of the Committee as a whole. The Cabinet Office will co-ordinate contacts between Committee members and home Departments and supervise any briefing requirements.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present United Kingdom nuclear explosive capability in its nuclear weapons inventory; and what it was in 1970.

Mr. Aitken: I have been asked to reply.

1970 was a period of transition for the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons inventory, with one generation of weapons being withdrawn and a new generation introduced. We are now in another period of transition, as around half our nuclear free-fall bombs have been withdrawn from the operational inventory and the first Trident submarine will soon enter operational service. It has been the long-standing practice of successive Governments not to give details of operational warheads or yields, but in broad terms, the total explosive power of the United Kingdom's operational nuclear inventory is currently about half of what it was in 1970.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the political honours scrutiny committee.

Mr. Waldegrave: The present members of the political honours scrutiny committee are:

The Lord Pym MC DL (Chairman)
The Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos CH
The Lord Thomson of Monifieth KT DL

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Council on Science and Technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: Last year's White Paper on science, engineering and technology announced that a new Council for Science and Technology would replace the Advisory Council on Science and Technology. The members of the Council for Science and Technology are:

Professor William Stewart FRS FRSE
Professor Sushantha Bhattacharyya FEng
Professor Sir Aaron Klug FRS
Sir Robin Nicholson FRS FEng
Dr. Bridget Ogilvie FBiol
Sir Ralph Robins FEng FRAes
Dr. Alan Rudge FRS FEng
Professor Stewart Sutherland FBA
Sir Richard Sykes
Mr. John Towers
Dr. Peter Williams CBE

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how often a review is undertaken of the names on the public appointments unit central list; and how many of these names have been on the list for *(a)* more than five years, *(b)* two to five years and *(c)* under two years.

Mr. David Davies: The public appointments unit has completed a first review of the names on the central list, and in future aims to ensure that the information held about individuals is reviewed and updated every two years. Information about the length of time that names have been held on the list is not recorded.

Daresbury and Rutherford Appleton Laboratories

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how the Daresbury and Rutherford Appleton laboratories will be affected as a result of the planned changes to the research councils.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am currently examining the future structure and organisation of the Rutherford Appleton and Daresbury laboratories, which are at present part of the Science and Engineering Research Council. From 1 April 1994, as an interim step consequent on the splitting of SERC into the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council, the two laboratories will be run as a combined operation under the auspices of the new EPSRC. In the longer term I am looking to put the two laboratories on a more indepedent footing to enable them better to serve their customers and users from the research councils, universities and industry. Given the high regard in which the Rutherford Appleton and Daresbury laboratories are

held, both nationally and internationally, it is important that we consider carefully what changes should be made to their status as a result of the reorganisation of the research council system.

The Government have developed a standard set of tests on how Government-funded work can best be organised, known as "prior options". In the 1993 next steps review —Cm 2430—we announced new procedures to encourage those in outside organisations with innovative ideas about how such functions can best be discharged to put them forward. These procedures for "prior options" review and outside involvement apply, where appropriate, to executive non-departmental public bodies, such as the Daresbury and Rutherford Appleton laboratories.

The "prior options" tests consider whether the functions provided by the organisation continue to be needed, in whole or in part; whether responsibility for the activity needs to remain in the public sector; and whether some or all of the functions provided should be contracted out or market tested. The consultants KPMG have conducted a preliminary study of these issues. In common with the recent National Audit Office report, they found much to admire at the laboratories. They have advised that there is a need for the services which the laboratories provide, and that privatisation would not represent a sensible option. In considering this advice, I wish to take account of the widest possible range of views. I am therefore inviting organisations and individuals who may have ideas or proposals as to how the Daresbury and Rutherford Appleton laboratories should be organised in future to submit them to the Director General of the Research Councils in my Department.

The results of this review will be taken into account in the wider scrutiny of public sector research establishments which I announced to the House on 2 February, *Official Report*, columns 896-97.

EMPLOYMENT

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to each of the industrial tribunals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A list of the lay members of the industrial tribunals was placed in the Library in January.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Appeal Tribunal consists of both judicial and lay members. The president is the Honourable Mr. Justice Mummery, a High Court judge. A judge of the Court of Session—the Honourable Lord Coulsfield—sits at the EAT in Scotland and there are also visiting judges in England and Wales. The judges are nominated in England and Wales by the Lord Chancellor from among the judges of the High Court and the Court of Appeal and in Scotland by the Lord President of the Court of Session from among the judges of that court. The lay members are appointed by Her Majesty the Queen on the joint recommendation of the Secretary of State for Employment and the Lord Chancellor. A list of the lay members has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no such board.

Statutory Minimum Wage

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *548*, what is the sectoral breakdown of his estimate of jobs lost as a result of a statutory minimum wage.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no sectoral breakdown of that estimate. In order to calculate such a figure, reliable information is needed about the relationship between pay and employment. Information on this relationship is available for the whole economy, but not for individual industries.

Special Employment Measures

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list each of the main United Kingdom special employment measures since 1970; if he will give the date when the scheme came into operation and its date of closure if it is still not running, and the annual and cumulative amount of public expenditure spent on each scheme; and if he will detail the annual and total number of claimants helped under each scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not kept centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment Benefit

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the cost of administering unemployment benefit in the London travel-to-work area in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 11 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question concerning the cost of administering unemployment benefit in the London travel to work area in each of the past five years.

It may be helpful if I explain that the Employment Service (ES) has responsibility for delivering a number of benefits in addition to unemployment benefit, as well as a range of other services to people seeking employment and training opportunities. Therefore, the figures I have provided relate to the costs of delivering the full range of our services in London.

It has not been possible to provide the information you seek for the full five year period. For audit purposes, the ES retains financial records of running costs for the proceeding three financial years. Additionally, the organisation of the ES Region responsible for London, the London and South East Region, has undergone considerable re-organisation during this period. I am therefore only able to provide comparable figures for the financial years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 (projected figures). These figures relate to the ten ES areas which cover London. There are currently 15 ES areas within the London and South East Region; nine of which serve London and the remainder the Shires

surrounding it. These figures *exclude* fixed premises costs, ie the costs of leasing and purchasing premises and the associated running costs, as the method of collecting this information has changed considerably over the last three years.

Given these provisions, the relevant costs, which include staff salary and other running costs such as fuel and telecommunications, are as follows:

	£
1991-92	89,467,057
1992-93	105,609,559
1993-94	[1]128,646,766

[1]Projected.

I must emphasise that these figures are not strictly comparable. As you may be aware, since 1990 the ES has been pursuing a policy of bringing together Unemployment Benefit Offices and Jobcentres with the aim of providing a more efficient and effective service to our clients. Individual ES staff are responsible for all aspects of ES work and it is not possible to provide accurate or meaningful breakdowns of the costs of specific activities.

I hope this is helpful.

Trade Unions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which trade unions have made representations to him in the last 10 years on whether campaigning on issues including pensions, health and safety, and job conditions has to be paid for out of a political fund.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am unaware of any such representations. A trade union does not need a political fund unless it wishes to spend money on electoral or other party political activities.

Deregulation

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers have been prosecuted, since April 1986, under each of the regulations identified as candidates for revocation in his press notice 154/93 of 20 July 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* The number of employers prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive's field operations division's inspectors, since April 1986, under each of the regulations identified as candidates for revocation in the Employment Department press notice of 20 July are set out in the following tables. The aim of any repeals or revocations will be to increase the effectiveness of the regulatory regime, which will include continuing to prosecute employers who fall below acceptable standards of health and safety.

Regulations	*Number of employers prosecuted*
The Flax and Tow Spinning and Weaving Regulations 1906	[1]None
The Hemp Spinning and Weaving Regulations 1907	[1]None
The Cotton Cloth Factories Regulations 1929	[1]None
The Cotton Cloth (Record of Humidity) Regulation 1964	None
The Homework Order 1911	None
The Homework Order 1912	None
The Homework Order 1913	None
The Homework (Lampshades) Order 1929	None
The Homework Orders Variation Order 1938	None
The Agriculture (Poisonous Substances) Act 1952	None
The Agriculture (Ladders) Regulations 1957	5
The Agriculture (Poisonous Substances) (Extension) Order 1965	None
The Agriculture (Poisonous Substance) (Extension) Order 1966	None
The Agriculture (Poisonous Substances) Act 1952 (Repeals and Modifications) Regulations 1975	None
The Breathing Apparatus etc. (Report on Examination) Order 1961	None
The Shipbuilding (Reports on Breathing Apparatus) Order 1961	None
The Dangerous Machines (Training of Young Persons) Order 1961	None
The Prescribed Dangerous Machines Order 1964	None
The Agriculture (Circular Saws) Regulations 1959	[2]2
The Abrasive Wheels Regulations 1970	[2]11
The Factories Act 1961:	
Section 21	[3]28
Section 30	[4]41
Section 68	1
Section 133	None
The Shipbuilding and Ship-repairing Regulations 1960:	
Regulations 48-52	[4]1
Regulations 60-65	None
The Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963: Section 19	[5]None
The Construction (General Provisions) Regulations 1961: regulation 21	[4]None
The Docks Regulations 1988: regulation 18	[4]None

Notes:

[1] These regulations were largely revoked by the Workplaces (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. The latter apply to new workplaces immediately and to existing workplaces from 1 January 1996.

[2] These regulations were largely revoked by the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992. The revocations are effective for new equipment immediately and for existing work equipment from 1 January 1997. It is not possible to identify how many prosecutions have been taken under the parts of the Regulations that are revoked by the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations.

[3] The remaining provisions relate the training of operators. Proposals for their consolidation into one set of training requirements under more modern legislation are currently being considered by the Health and Safety Commission.

[4] These provisions cover entry into confined spaces. Proposals for their consolidation into one set of requirements for confined spaces under more modern legislation are currently being considered by the Health and Safety Commission.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Top Salaries Review Body

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who are the members currently appointed to the Top Salaries Review Body.

Mr. Portillo: As announced in the *Official Report*, 26 July 1993, column *559*, the Top Salaries Review Body was renamed the Senior Salaries Review Body last year. Its current members are:

Sir David Nickson KBE DL (Chairman)
Professor George Bain
Mrs. Louise Botting CBE
Ms Ann Burdus
Sir Peter Cazalet
Sir Cecil Clothier KCB QC
Mr. Gordon Hourston
Mr. Hugh Pigott
Sir Anthony Wilson

Members are appointed by, and the review body reports to, the Prime Minister.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) who are the members currently appointed to each of the child support appeal tribunals;

(2) who are the members currently appointed to each of the medical appeal tribunals;

(3) who are the members currently appointed to each of the disability appeal tribunals;

(4) who are the members currently appointed to each of the social security appeal tribunals;

(5) who are the members currently appointed to each of the vaccine damage tribunals.

Mr. Burt: I have been asked to reply.

The appointment of members of all the appeal tribunals is the responsibility of the President of the Independent Tribunal Service, His Honour Judge Thorpe. The hon. Member may wish to write to him direct.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who are the members currently appointed to the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply. The members currently appointed to the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee are:

Chairman
Bob Taylor Esq. OBE
Director
Birmingham International Airport

Members
Mrs. Jill Allen-King MBE
National Federation of the Blind

Mrs. Jean Ashcroft MBE
Arthritis Care

Peter Barker Esq.
Royal National Institute for the Blind

Tony Briggs Esq.
Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers

Bill Buchanan Esq. LVO
British Rail Advisory Group

Lewis Carter-Jones Esq.

Cliff Dallinger Esq.
Passenger Transport Executive

Mrs. Claudia Flanders OBE JP

Stanley Flett Esq.
Royal National Institute for the Blind—Scotland

Richard Gregory Esq.
Margaret Blackwood
Housing Association Ltd.
Edinburgh

Sir John Hannam Esq. MP
All-party Disablement Group

Joe Hennessy Esq. OBE
Muscular Dystrophy Group of GB

Mr. T. Kennan Esq.
Northumbria Motor Services Ltd.

Miss Valerie Lang MBE
The Spastics Society

Sir Peter Large Esq. CBE
Joint Council on Mobility for Disabled People

Bert Massie OBE
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation

Brian McGinnis Esq.
MENCAP

Mrs. Dorothy Rhodes
Age Concern

Mrs. Jean Williams
Welsh Council on Disability

Mrs. Jane Wilmot
Royal National Institute for Deaf People

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the industrial diseases which are under review by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council or its research working group.

Mr. Scott: The council is currently investigating hand/arm vibration syndrome, process injuries, disorders of the knee, osteoarthritis of the hip and occupational rhinitis and keeps scientific evidence on all other industrial diseases under review on an ongoing basis.

Benefits Tourism

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's estimate of the current scale and volume of benefits tourism.

Mr. Burt: Information is not held centrally on the number of foreign nationals who are in receipt of benefits without having contributed either taxes or national insurance contributions.

War Pensions

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the hospitals where medical examinations are carried out for the purpose of assessing entitlement to war pension.

Mr. Hague: The majority of examinations are carried out by medical boards or medical specialists at local medical boarding centres or consulting rooms. In such instances hospital referral is not necessary.

Where examinations are to be carried out at hospitals all attempts are made to have this done at a hospital convenient for the claimant.

Child Support Agency

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many assessments have been made by the Child Support Agency up to 2 February.

Mr. Burt: Figures for the latest period available, to the end of December, are already in the Library and information relating to January will be placed in the Library in due course.

Personal Pensions

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what proportion of the money contributed to an average personal pension at the rebate-only level by a

man of 30 years would be absorbed in expenses, charges and commission during the lifetime of the contract if it were terminated after five years;

(2) what proportion of the money contributed to an average personal pension at the rebate-only level by a man aged 30 years would be absorbed in expenses, charges and commission during the lifetime of the contract up to maturity;

(3) what proportion of the money contributed to an average personal pension at the rebate-only level by a man aged 30 years would be absorbed in expenses, charges and commission in the first year of contract.

Mr. Hague: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) on 30 November 1993 at columns *432-33*.

Elderly Population

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what change is projected in the population of those aged *(a)* over 65 years, *(b)* over 75 years and *(c)* over 85 years in each of the next 10 years.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

Year	*Number of people aged 65 and over (000s)*	*Number of people aged 75 and over (000s)*	*Number of people aged 85 and over (000s)*
1993	8,961	3,917	963
1994	8,992	4,092	1,202
1995	9,030	4,028	1,038
1996	9,069	4,134	1,071
1997	9,095	4,215	1,101
1998	9,105	4,271	1,134
1999	9,115	4,320	1,168
2000	9,139	4,362	1,196
2001	9,172	4,407	1,211
2002	9,212	4,442	1,211
2003	9,263	4,471	1,194

Source: OPCS and Government Actuary's Department based on mid-1992 Great Britain population projections.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children there were in families in Wales receiving invalidity benefit or its equivalent in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: Information for 1979 is unavailable. The latest date for which information is available is 4 April 1992, but not in the form requested. Such information as is available is the following:

Number of child dependency increases in payment to invalidity benefit recipients in Wales—24,000

Source: 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain, rounded to the nearest thousand.

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements he intends to make for an equivalent premium after 28 weeks for those recipients on income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit who are incapable of work following the introduction of incapacity benefit in 1995 and the award of a higher rate of short-term benefit after 28 weeks.

Mr. Burt: The rules for the disability premium will be changing to be consistent with the incapacity benefit rules. In particular, the new long-term incapacity benefit will act as a passport to the premium and for those who have no other means of entitlement to the disability premium, the period of incapacity needed to qualify will increase from 28 to 52 weeks. The new definition of work and assessment of incapacity will apply. We have no plans to introduce an additional premium payable after 28 weeks incapacity.

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what additional resources he plans to provide to fund the Benefits Agency medical service, to take account of the operational costs of incapacity benefit;

(2) what additional resources he plans to provide to meet the costs of additional medical assessors and social security appeal tribunals following the introduction of incapacity benefit.

Mr. Scott: The estimated additional administrative costs and manpower consequences of the introduction of incapacity benefit appear in the financial memorandum accompanying the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill. Further refinement of these figures will depend upon decisions still to be taken by Parliament. We are still considering the additional resources that may be required for the appeals system for incapacity benefit.

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's budget for disability working allowance in 1993-94 and 1994-95 and the expected budget in 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Scott: Planned expenditure for disability working allowance was £16 million in 1993-94, and £50 million in 1994-95 and 1995-96, rounded to the nearest £50 million. Figures for 1996-97 will be available in the departmental report which is expected to be published in March.

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has so far been paid in disability working allowance in 1993-94.

Mr. Scott: Disability working allowance outturn figures for 1993-94 will not become available until the departmental report is published in March.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the arrangements for claimants currently in receipt of severe disablement allowance whose incapacity for work is due for review after April 1995.

Mr. Scott: From April 1995 people in receipt of severe disablement allowance will no longer have to undergo any kind of review of their capacity for work.

Income Support (Giro Payment)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many giro payments of income support are reported missing in each year; what percentage of total giro payment this is; and how many giros remain missing without being cashed.

Mr. Burt: The payment of income support by girocheque is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. John Fraser, dated 10 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about payments of Income Support made by girocheque.

Payments of Income Support are frequently combined with payments of other benefits therefore it is not possible to identify the number of payments made by girocheque that are for income support alone.

However, figures relating to the issue and losses of all girocheques issued by the Benefits Agency are available and are detailed below.

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Issues *millions*	30·844	34·484	34·470	36·190	27·863
Losses	84,901	89,176	83,849	86,004	135,546
Losses (Per cent.)	0·275	0·259	0·243	0·283	0·490
No missing/ not cashed or traced	6,100	3,855	9,290	12,078	36,641

The Employment Service acts as our agent in the provision of girocheques to those who are unemployed and claiming Income Support; the above figures relate only to girocheques issued by the Benefits Agency.

I hope that you find this reply helpful.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what rules he proposes to apply for the award of disability premium for people on income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit, following the introduction of incapacity benefit in 1995.

Mr. Burt: The disability premium provides extra help in income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit for long-term sick and disabled people.

For those claiming these benefits as long-term sick the rules for the disability premium will be changed from April 1995 to reflect the incapacity benefit changes announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 1 December 1993. The new long-term incapacity benefit will act as a passport to the disability premium. Severe disablement allowance will continue to bring entitlement to the disability premium. For those who have no other means of entitlement, the period of incapacity needed to qualify will increase from 28 to 52 weeks and the new definition of work and assessment of incapacity will apply.

Disability living allowance, attendance allowance and mobility supplement are other passporting benefits to the disability premium, which can be awarded on other grounds—for instance, if the person is registered blind. These routes to the disability premium will not be affected by the incapacity benefit changes.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

International Military Services Ltd.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Attorney-General what services he or his predecessors have performed under the Treasury Solicitor Act 1876 on behalf of International Military Services Ltd.

The Attorney-General: I know of none.

Treasury Solicitors' Department

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the size, grades and costs of the staff of the Treasury Solicitors' Department in each of the last three years ending on 31 March and the current figures for numbers and grades.

The Attorney-General: The following table sets out the size and grades of the staff of the Treasury Solicitor's Department in each of the first three years ending on 31 March and the current figures:

Grade	*1991 31 March*	*1992 31 March*	*1993 31 March*	*Present*
1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1
3	10	9	8	8
4	—	2	3	3
5	38	40	39	40
6	59	64	58	63
7[1]	78	86	91	101
SEO	13	13	17	19
HEO	33	32	32	36
EO	68	69	67	72
AO/AA	69	74	75	75
Support	69	74	78	77
TOTAL	439	465	470	496

The costs of staff of the Treasury Solicitor's Department in each of the last three years ending on 31 March were:

1990-91 £12·559 million[2]
1991-92 £14·088 million
1992-93 £15·073 million

[1]Includes legal officers and senior legal assistants

[2]1990-91 includes notional figure for superannuation of £1·642 million. Superannuation was only charged in cash terms from 1 April 1991.

WALES

Bryn Melyn Home

Mr. Marland: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what public funding is provided for the Bryn Melyn home in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am not aware of any public funding for this private children's home. No funding has been provided by the Department or other agencies for which the Welsh Office has direct responsibility.

School League Tables

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations on school league tables he has received from the Institute of Welsh Affairs; what reply he has sent; and if he will review current policies as a result.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None directly, but the report published by the institute in January, "Towards an educational policy for Wales", makes reference to the publication of school performance information.

Before decisions are taken on the extent of school/college performance information to be published in autumn 1994 there will be consultations with schools, FE colleges, and education interests.

Open-heart Surgery

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the present waiting list for open-heart surgery in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on waiting lists is collected centrally on the basis of specialties recognised by the royal colleges. Open heart surgery is not one of these recognised specialties and hence the information requested is not available. However, at 30 September 1993, the latest date for which information is available, there were 301 people waiting for in-patient treatment in Wales in the specialty of cardiac surgery.

Cardiff BUPA Hospital

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the provision of University Hospital of Wales staff at the Cardiff BUPA hospital to provide immediate post-operative care for NHS cardiac surgery patients operated on at the BUPA hospital at NHS expense; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultation he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the training of BUPA nursing staff in post-operative cardiac surgery recovery techniques at the University Hospital of Wales; and what remuneration he has arranged for the South Glamorgan health authority for such training activities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. It would be for the Health Authority and the University Hospital of Wales to negotiate an appropriate charge for any services provided to private hospitals.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the present numbers who were treated at the BUPA hospital, Pentwyn, Cardiff, for open-heart surgery at the expense of the South Glamorgan health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1992-93, almost 1,000 adult open-heart operations were performed on NHS patients in South Wales, 50 of them under contract with the BUPA hospital in Cardiff. Commissioning authorities are fully funded to secure that level of service.

Fifteen NHS open heart operations on patients from South Glamorgan were carried out at the BUPA hospital in Cardiff in 1992-93.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of chairpersons and board members of the training and enterprise councils in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are seven chairpersons and 85 board members of the training and enterprise councils in Wales.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the London regional passengers' committee.

Mr. McLoughlin: The members of the London regional passengers committee as at 21 January 1994 are:

Professor Eric C. Midwinter (Chairman)
Mr. David R. Bruck
Mrs. Delia M. Buckle
Mrs. Beverley J. Davies
Mr. Lekh C. Dindayal JP
Mr. Nicholas P. Ellis
Mrs. Stella A. Fowler
Sir Alan Greengross
Mr. Karl T. Gurney
Mr. Michael J. Harris
Mr. I. Haynes
Mr. Andrew J. Holt
Mr. Ernest C. King
Miss Faith C. Lawson
Mr. Stepehen J. A. J. Le Bras
Mr. Laurie Mack
Mrs. Suzanne C. May
Mr. Peter Nichols
Mr. Peter L. Noble
Mrs. Dawn Penso
Mr. John A. K. Phillips

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Small Businesses.

Mr. McLoughlin: Appointments to the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Small Businesses are the responsibility of the Director General of Telecommunications. However, I understand that the current members are:

Chairman:
Mr. Michael Ashton

Members:
Miss Joy Allan
Mrs. Judith Barden
Mr. Sefton Bennett
Mr. Robert Frenzel
Mr. Patrick Frymann
Mr. Richard Furey
Mr. Michael Jordan
Mr. Sean Mayo
Mrs. Pamela Parker
Mrs. Margaret Seymour
Mr. Michael Taylor

Overseas Visits

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the President of the Board of Trade in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Heseltine: The expenditure incurred by my Department from 11 April 1992 to 31 March 1993 on my domestic travel was £8,745, and on my overseas travel was £5,866. From 1 April 1993 to 8 February 1994 the equivalent figures were £8,727 on my domestic travel and £16,360 on my overseas travel. These figures do not include the cost to my Department of my car. My Department does not allocate budgets for travel by individual Ministers.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total cost paid out to witnesses attending the Scott inquiry under the provisions available under the order 62, r 12(1) of the rules of the Supreme Court, by the costs branch of the Treasury Solicitor's Department; and to whom such expenses have been paid.

Mr. Needham: To date, no expenses have been paid for legal costs to witnesses before the Scott inquiry.

Value Added Tax (Domestic fuel)

Mr. Clelland: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimates he has made of the reductions in consumption of domestic fuel resulting from the imposition of value added tax.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has published a range of energy demand projections in "Energy Paper 59", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Those projections showed domestic sector energy demand approximately 6 per cent. higher in 2000 than in 1990. The imposition of VAT on domestic fuels is expected, in the long run, to reduce domestic sector consumption of coal by about 2 per cent. and of electricity and gas by about 4 per cent. This takes no account of the effects of any offsetting measures.

Accounts Services Agency

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the outcome of the review of options for the future of the Accounts Services Agency.

Mr. Eggar: PA Consulting Group has completed its review of the options for the future of the Accounts Services Agency. In parallel, the Department has reviewed the scope for its financial accounting services to be met from the private sector, concluding that all but a small number of the services currently supplied by the agency could be contracted out, with appropriate safeguards.

I have accepted PA's recommendations that:

the proposal for a management-led employee buy-out should be declined, primarily because it was based on the assumption that competitive tendering was unnecessary. Competition is essential to ensure value for money;

the agency should be moved into the private sector by competitive tendering of the services contract; and

the contract should be offered with the expectation that the agency's existing staff and assets would be transferred to the successful bidder.

The agency needs the expertise, financial resources, and freedom of the private sector to be able to improve its efficiency and to take full advantage of market opportunities. Strategic contracting out has been chosen as the preferred route to achieve this because it focuses on the service contract to DTI, and it would enable more staff and assets to be transferred to the private sector. Substantially the same outcome would be achieved as if the alternative route of privatisation had been chosen, but at a lower cost and on a shorter time scale.

This course of action will allow the Department to obtain the best value for money in the provision of its financial accounting services. PA estimates that the saving could be 10 to 20 per cent. per annum. Up to 90 permanent staff could transfer to the contractor. This will ensure continuity in the supply of a core service to the Department. The agency will gain access to the expertise and financial resources of the private sector which will give the existing team the freedom to take advantage of market opportunities without the constraints of operating in the public sector. This will result in a better service to all its customers and greater opportunities for its staff than would have been possible if the agency were to have remained in public sector ownership.

Human Genes

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidelines he has produced for the research councils on the patenting of human genes; what discussions he has had on this subject with his European counterparts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 1 February, *Official Report*, columns *619-20*. This reply makes it clear that the Office of Science and Technology supports the policy of the Medical Research Council in not filing any further patent applications for human DNA sequences of unknown function.

I am very happy to inform the hon. Member that the United States National Institutes of Health and the Medical Research Council have today agreed to withdraw their patent applications for cDNA sequences of unknown utility. The MRC, with the support of the Government, has always argued that these applications should not be granted. I welcome the co-operation between the United Kingdom and the United States on this important issue.

Rover Group

Mr. Eastham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date British Aerospace advised the Minister of its intention to sell Rover to BMW; and on what date the Minister notified the Japanese ambassador of this intention.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 February 1994]*: British Aerospace advised the Department in confidence of its decision in principle to sell Rover shortly after the BAe board meeting on 27 January and also subsequently, again in confidence, of the final decision shortly after it was made on 29 January. The Government did not notify the Japanese ambassador of BAe's decision.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the block grants and rate support grant allocated to authorities in west Yorkshire for each year since 1983; and if he will list the services covered by the grants.

Mr. Baldry: The available information is set out in the table. The rate support grant was not a service-specific grant and nor is revenue support grant. Both were or are paid to support expenditure which local authorities incur in performing their functions and which but for these grants, and national non-domestic rates from 1 April 1990, would have to be met from local taxes.

Rate support grant £000s

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
West Yorkshire	100,312	102,681	115,699	—	—	—	—
Bradford	114,808	114,773	120,735	131,371	143,296	156,111	171,750
Calderdale	44,575	44,901	45,413	51,968	57,003	59,959	60,907
Kirklees	89,421	91,640	93,145	106,650	118,107	126,061	124,237
Leeds	123,940	125,009	114,626	135,324	144,776	145,847	138,844
Wakefield	57,464	58,598	55,413	62,971	67,391	67,608	65,314
West Yorkshire Police Authority	—	—	—	23,268	27,642	37,051	39,252
West Yorkshire Fire Authority	—	—	—	8,507	9,284	8,030	10,165
West Yorkshire Transport Authority	—	—	—	4,728	7,587	5,208	5,111

Block Grant £000s

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
West Yorkshire	100,312	102,681	115,699	—	—	—	—
Bradford	110,697	110,644	116,591	127,203	139,098	151,875	167,473
Calderdale	49,964	43,277	43,776	50,314	55,337	58,277	59,205
Kirklees	86,266	88,460	89,938	103,406	114,827	122,739	120,865
Leeds	116,342	117,367	106,947	127,602	137,007	138,013	130,946
Wakefield	54,518	55,631	52,424	59,951	64,340	64,517	62,178
West Yorkshire Police Authority	—	—	—	23,268	27,642	37,051	39,252
West Yorkshire Fire Authority	—	—	—	8,507	9,284	8,030	10,165
West Yorkshire Transport Authority	—	—	—	4,728	7,587	5,208	5,111

Revenue Support Grant £000s

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Bradford	157,783	172,080	236,612	237,755
Calderdale	39,873	38,432	66,937	65,840
Kirklees	82,492	82,049	138,135	132,425
Leeds	137,665	141,144	242,216	232,336
Wakefield	45,037	44,071	87,128	86,905
West Yorkshire Police Authority	—	—	—	50,369
West Yorkshire Fire Authority	—	—	—	24,101
West Yorkshire Transport Authority	—	—	—	—

Notes:

1. Following the introduction of the community charge system in 1990 the rate support grant was replaced by the revenue support grant.
2. Block grants form part of rate support grant. Block grants ceased to exist following the introduction of the community charge system.
3. West Yorkshire was one of the metropolitan county councils abolished in 1986. Its functions were then passed onto the metropolitan districts, the police, fire and civil defence, and transport authorities.
4. Under the community charge system, 1990-91 to 1992-93, RSG was paid into the collection funds administered by the metropolitan districts. For this reason there were no figures for RSG to the police, fire and transport authorities.
5. Under the council tax system, transport authorities do not receive RSG.

Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *799*, if Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will publish the monitoring results of the Eskmeals site to which he refers.

Mr. Atkins: The decision to publish the monitoring results of the Eskmeals site is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *794*, if he will set out the points on THORP raised with him on 16 December 1993 by the ambassador of the Irish Republic.

Mr. Atkins: No. Such communications between the United Kingdom and other Governments are treated in confidence.

Effluent Discharge Charging Scheme

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the revised effluent discharge charging scheme launched by the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Atkins: The NRA's original scheme of charging for discharges came into effect in July 1991. As promised at that time, we have now reviewed it in the light of experience and on the basis of full consultation. We concluded that, in general, dischargers were satisfied. However, some changes have been made which will result in lower bills for some dischargers, particularly smaller businesses. There will also be an allowance for seasonal discharges which will benefit camping and caravan sites in particular. The NRA's considerable efforts in improving efficiency mean there will be no increase in either the application charge or the annual charge factor for 1994-95. The new arrangements will be introduced on 1 April 1994 and run until 31 March 1999.

Tower Block Properties

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what study his Department has made of the extent to which estate agencies are refusing to deal with properties which are situated above the fifth floor in tower blocks bought under the right-to-buy legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: None. The Department has no evidence to suggest this is a widespread problem. Research

has been commissioned into the scale and range of problems leaseholders of council flats have with service charges and resale of their dwellings. Preliminary data are expected shortly.

Owner Occupation

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of homes in the United Kingdom were owner-occupied in each year since 1987.

Sir George Young: Estimates by type of tenure of the stock of dwellings in the United Kingdom appear in "Housing and Construction Statistics, Great Britain". Figures of owner-occupied dwellings expressed as a percentage of total dwelling stock are shown in table 9.3 of the 1982-92 annual edition for each year from 1987 to 1992.

A copy of this publication is in the Library.

Forestry

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the Government have taken to implement the recommendations made in the first report of the Select Committee on the Environment of Session 1992-93, on forestry and the environment—HC, 1992-93, No. 257.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have already implemented several of the Select Committee's recommendations, including the publication on 25 January of our response to the Rio forest principles, "Sustainable Forestry: The UK Programme". Other matters are under consideration. We will be providing the Select Committee with a follow-up report before the Whitsun recess.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, how much public money was paid to private landowners in the last financial year as an inducement not to plant conifers; what were the highest sums of money that were paid to landlords for not planting conifers; and to whom these sums were paid.

Mr. Atkins: Within the last financial year no new management agreements which compensate landowners for not planting conifers have been made in England by English Nature. I will write to the hon. Member with details of any such payments made under existing management agreements.

South Crofty Tin Mine

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the costs of any closure of the South Crofty tin mine in Cornwall on the environment, in particular the financial impact on the National Rivers Authority operation at Wheal Jane; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The NRA does not expect any additional cost to its operations at Wheal Jane but, as contingency planning, is investigating what might need to be done to avoid pollution were South Crofty to close.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated net aggregate expenditure of *(a)* county councils and *(b)* district councils in the current financial year.

Mr. Baldry: County councils' and shire districts' budgeted net revenue expenditure for 1993-94 is £18,025 million and £3,202 million respectively.

Gloucester Grove Estate

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will meet a deputation of tenants from Gloucester Grove estate in Southwark;

(2) if he will visit Gloucester Grove housing estate;

(3) if he will make a statement about the estates action programme improvement of the Gloucester Grove estate in Southwark;

(4) if he will make a statement about phase 7 improvements to Gloucester Grove housing estate in Southwark;

(5) how many of the blocks in the Gloucester Grove housing estate remain to be improved; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Estate action improvements have been in progress on the Gloucester Grove estate since 1986-87. The Government have already made available £8·6 million of resources and have earmarked a further £8·85 million for phases 5 and 6 which are currently on site. These phases will be completed in 1996-97 and will complete the improvement of 10 blocks in total.

The London borough of Southwark submitted a bid for a further eight blocks to be included in the 1994-95 estate action programme. Competition for resources was extremely tight, with 47 bids for support in London alone, and it was not possible to support that bid this year.

At the end of phase 6, 19 blocks will remain unimproved. Future proposals for these blocks will form part of Southwark's proposed strategy for five council estates in the Peckham area. I hope that the proposed partnership between the borough, the private sector and housing associations will produce some imaginative proposals for improvements and a mixture of tenures on Gloucester Grove and the other estates.

I have visited Southwark estates on a number of occasions in recent years and spoke to tenants from Gloucester Grove at Southwark's housing investment programme presentation in October 1992. Efforts are now best directed towards drawing up realistic proposals within Southwark's strategy for the area.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Rendell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recommendations were put forward with regard to Southport by the Local Government Commission prior to the beginning of the Lancashire review.

Mr. Baldry: It was the Local Government Boundary Commission, abolished in October 1992 and the Local Government Commission's predecessor, which conducted a review of the boundaries of Sefton metropolitan borough with West Lancashire and Wirral. In its final report, submitted in June 1992, report No. 664, it recommended only minor boundary changes. The Secretary of State accepted these recommendations and an order was made on 1 May 1993, with the boundary changes taking effect from 1 April 1994—SI 1206/93.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with representatives of Liverpool city council in respect of its standard spending assessment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning met a delegation from Liverpool city council, on 17 January, to discuss Liverpool's proposed standard spending assessment for 1994-95.

Shire Counties (Expenditure)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the standard spending assessment and the expenditure levels for each shire county for each of the last eight years, the current year and his proposals for 1994-95; and if he will set out the percentage change in each case *(a)* between each year and *(b)* over the full range of years for which figures are available.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* I have placed in the Library tables showing: standard spending assessments for the years 1990-91 to 1994-95; grant-related expenditure assessments for the years 1985-86 to 1989-90; and equivalent expenditure figures for the years 1985-86 to 1993-94 for each shire county. Since comparisons cannot be made between GREs and SSAs, nor between equivalent expenditures under the two regimes, the percentage changess are given between each year, between 1985-86 and 1989-90, and between 1990-91 and 1994-95.

Touche Ross

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department or any agencies for which he is responsible has engaged the services of the firm Touche Ross or any of its partners since 1 July 1993.

Mr. Baldry *holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The Department of the Environment has engaged the services of Touche Ross since 1 July 1993 to a total value of £178,000.

EDUCATION

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provision has been made for the public accountability of further education colleges incorporated under the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The framework for the public accountability of colleges in the further education sector is set by the financial memorandum between the Department and the Further Education Funding Council, and the financial memoranda between the council and colleges. The financial memorandum between the Department and the council makes it clear that it is part of the duty of the chief officer of the council, as accounting officer, to satisfy himself that further education colleges have appropriate arrangements for financial management and accounting.

Under the financial memoranda between the council and colleges, colleges are required to provide the council with audited accounts for each financial year. Each governing body must ensure that its college has a sound system of internal control and must appoint an audit committee and internal audit service for the college. The council may undertake examination of colleges' internal financial and management controls. Colleges' books and records are open to inspection by the council and by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Office for Standards in Education

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in London, Ofsted expects to inspect in the academic year 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: The arrangements for inspecting schools under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 are a matter for Ofsted.

I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

Environmental Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what further guidance will be given on schools' environmental management practices as indicated in the sustainable development strategy.

Mr. Robin Squire: The guidance promised in the United Kingdom strategy on sustainable development will be published later this year.

It will be in the form of a simple environmental audit scheme which the schools can carry out themselves to evaluate and improve the environmental impact of their school buildings.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has for schools to have a policy for environmental education guaranteeing provision and continuity between different subject areas of the curriculum;

(2) if he will make it his policy to encourage all schools to appoint a co-ordinator for environmental education;

(3) if he will publish guidance to advise schools of good practice in teaching about care for the environment;

(4) what plans he has for providing guidance to schools on delivering environmental education on biodiversity and sustainable development;

(5) what plans he has to provide grants to voluntary bodies to produce teaching resources and facilities that promote the concept of sustainability declared at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Robin Squire: Provided that the statutory requirements are met, it is for the individual school to determine the character of its curriculum, its organisation and the mode of its delivery, taking account of any relevant information or advice produced by the Office for Standards in Education. Where environmental education is addressed through the statutory subjects of the national curriculum, content and continuity will be specified within the statutory documents. My right hon. Friend is giving priority to the revision of these documents and has no plans to publish additional guidance for schools on these matters. He does not publish curriculum resources and has no plans to fund voluntary or other bodies to do so. He prefers to provide

specific grant to support expenditure by schools on books, materials and equipment or teacher training, as they see fit to develop national curriculum provision.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to ensure that within the school's inspection framework the responsibility of schools for raising awareness and understanding of the environment and conservation issues is subject to inspection and comment.

Mr. Robin Squire: Under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, registered inspectors conducting inspection of schools must report on the quality of education and standards achieved in schools in accordance with Ofsted's pubished framework for inspection.

I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

Funding Levels (Disputes)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what mechanisms exist to resolve any dispute or disagreements between the Further Education Funding Council and individual colleges, including disputes over levels of funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: In the first instance, my right hon. Friend would expect a college to pursue its concerns with the Further Education Funding Council; in the last resort it could complain to the Secretary of State.

If the Secretary of State is satisfied that the Further Education Funding Council has failed to discharge its duties under the Education Acts, he may issue a direction to the council under section 57 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. If he is satisfied that the council is exercising its functions unreasonably, he may issue a direction under section 68 of the Education Act 1944, as applied by paragraph 9 of schedule 8 to the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 also gives the Secretary of State power to issue general or special directions to the council. Special directions may, in particular, relate to the provision of financial support by the council in respect of activities carried on by a particular institution. The Secretary of State would expect to exercise this power only in very exceptional circumstances.

Further Education

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy on the publication of names and addresses of chairpersons and members of further eduction colleges incorporated under the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Under the charter for further education, colleges are expected to publish the names of governors and how to contact them, which would normally be through the college. There is no expectation that governors' private addresses should be published.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provisions exist for the independent monitoring of the financial situation of further education colleges incorporated under the provisions of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Independent monitoring of the financial position of colleges in the further education sector is secured through the requirement in the financial memoranda between the Further Education Funding Council and colleges for the appointment of an audit committee, and also through the requirement on colleges to appoint external auditors. In addition, under section 53 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, colleges' accounts are open to inspection by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many official engagements have been carried out in the last year by each Education Minister *(a)* in total, *(b)* at grant-maintained schools and *(c)* at local education authority schools.

Mr. Patten: The figures requested are as follows:

	[1]*Total number of official visits*	*Of which: Visits to schools*	
		GM Schools	*LEA Schools*
Secretary of State	76	3	21
Baroness Blatch	52	17	12
Mr. Forth	84	1	32
Mr. Squire	73	15	11
Mr. Boswell	136	2	9
TOTAL	421	38	85

[1] The figures cover all Ministers' official engagements, including school visits, conferences, receptions, and other speaking engagements, such as those at official lunches and dinners.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Foreign Visitors to London

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what advice he will seek from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury about encouraging foreign visitors to London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: None. It is not for the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to advise on such matters of policy.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Royal Armouries.

Mr. Sproat: The current members of the Royal Armouries board of trustees is as follows:

Lord Eden of Winton *(Chairman)*
Rufus Bond-Gunning
David Chandler
Lady Cooksey
Richard Fortin
John Hale
Robert Hardy
Geoffrey Lewis
The hon. Francis Plowden
Field Marshall Sir John Stanier
The Duke of Wellington

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the Broadcasting Standards Council.

Mr. Brooke: The current members of the Broadcasting Standards Council are:

Lady Howe *(Chairman)*
Dame Jocelyn Barrow OBE
Ms Sally O'Sullivan
Mrs. Rhiannon Bevan
Mr. Matthew Parris
Dr. Jean Curtis-Raleigh
The Reverend John Lang

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Horniman museum.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the Horniman museum are:

Dame Margaret Weston (Chairman)
His Honour Judge Brian Galpin
Dr. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill
Michael Horniman Esq.
Dr. Schuyler Jones
Donald Kirkham Esq.
Dame Unity Lister
Prof. Ghillean Prance
Ronald Watts Esq.
Michael Wheeler Esq.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts.

Mr. Sproat: The present members of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts are:

Dr. Gerald Aylmer DPhil FBA (Chairman)
David Vaisey FSA
Viscount of Arbuthnott CBE DSC FRSE
Lord Camoys
Lord Egremont DL
Dr. Joan Thirsk FBA
Sir Matthew Farrer KCVO
Sir John Sainty KCB
Miss Barbara Harvey FSA FBA
Prof. R. H. Campbell
Sir Keith Thomas FBA
The Very Reverend Henry Stapleton
The Rt. Hon. Lord Blake Dlitt FBA JP
John W. Ehrman FBA
Prof S. F. C. Milsom QC FBA
Patrick Cormack MP FSA

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the national maritime museum.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the national maritime museum are:

Lord Lewin KG CGB LVO DSC *(Chairman)*
Sir Nigel Broackes
Professor Alastair Couper FNI FRICS
J. G. Davis Esq. CBE FCIT FCIS
HRA Duke of Edinburgh KG KT OM GBE PC FRS
Sir David Hardy
Robin Knox-Johnson Esq. CBE RD
H. U. A. Lambert Esq. MA FIB
Dr. Paul Murdin OBE
Mrs. Coral Samuel
Sir Charles Henderson Tidbury
Arthur Burton Weller Esq.

National Lottery

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if companies and consortia which plan to devote their profits to charitable causes will be eligible for consideration when he decides where to award the contract, or contracts, to manage the national lottery.

Mr. Sproat: The responsibility for licensing a body corporate to operate the national lottery lies with the director general, who will consider all applications.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Trident D5 missile that the United Kingdom is purchasing from the United States of America has been flight-tested with more than eight re-entry vehicles.

Mr. Aitken: Yes.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) of 16 December, *Official Report*, column *903*, on test firing, and the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *505*, on a processing margin, what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of the maximum number of Trident missiles to be purchased from the United States; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We plan to purchase sufficient Trident missiles from the United States to maintain a minimum nuclear deterrent well into the next century. It is not our policy to comment on the total number of missiles to be purchased.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the technical maximum number of warheads that the United Kingdom's Trident submarines will be capable of deploying.

Mr. Aitken: Each United Kingdom Trident submarine will be technically capable of carrying a maximum of 192 warheads. However, we have announced that each Trident submarine will deploy with no more than 96 warheads and may carry a significantly lower number.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of a cut-off in military fissile material production for *(a)* the planned Trident deployment and *(b)* the production of other future United Kingdom nuclear weapons systems.

Mr. Aitken: We hope to be able to work towards a multilateral and verifiable cut-off in the production of fissile material for explosive purposes which has potential value for non-proliferation efforts. It would be premature to comment on the implications for the United Kingdom until the details of such a cut-off have been agreed.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United Kingdom has the capability to recycle military fissile material, currently deployed in its strategic nuclear weapons and arising from the dismantlement of some of its tactical nuclear weapons, for use in its Trident missiles.

Mr. Aitken: Yes. The United Kingdom has the facilities for, and extensive experience in, the dismantling of redundant nuclear wapons and in the recycling of the fissile material.

Defence Staff

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table showing the number, location, service and rank of defence and service attaché and defence adviser posts in foreign and Commonwealth countries as of *(a)* April 1990 and *(b)* at the latest date for which figures are available together with similar figures for dedicated support staff; if he will publish similar figures for the British defence staff in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Tables showing the number, location, service and rank of defence and service attaché, defence adviser posts and dedicated support staff in foreign and Commonwealth countries as of 1 April 1990, table 1, and 1 February 1994, table 2, and British defence staff in the United States of America as of April 1990 and January 1994, tables 3 and 4, are being placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the financial arrangements for funding defence and service attachés and defence advisers and their support staff in foreign and Commonwealth countries.

Mr. Hanley: Funding of accredited service attachés, defence advisers and dedicated support staff is undertaken by the Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Ministry of Defence funds pay and allowances as well as necessary equipment including official transport. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides accommodation, office facilities, communications and security for Ministry of Defence personnel in post.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's Office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Hanley: It is not the practice of Her Majesty's Government to answer parliamentary questions about discussions and consultations between Departments and offices of Government relating to public appointments.

Royal Small Arms Factory, Enfield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *825*, if he will set out the reason why the information requested on arms manufacture at the royal arms factory, Enfield is not available from official sources.

Mr. Aitken: When the royal ordnance factories were incorporated in 1985, all records were retained by Royal Ordnance plc, except those that were returned to the Ministry of Defence for preservation as public records. The returned files do not contain the information requested by the hon. Member for South Shields.

Surplus Equipment

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the normal procedure for the sale of surplus or obsolescent equipment.

Mr. Aitken: My Department arranges sales of surplus equipment through Government-to-Government and Government-to-industry contracts, competitive tenders, public auctions and private treaty sales. These take into account the type and condition of the equipment and the available market opportunities.

Jet Provost Trainers

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Jet Provost trainers are to be sold in the current financial year.

Mr. Aitken: A total of 62 Jet Provosts will be sold in the current financial year.

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to whom and under what procedure Jet Provost trainers have been sold; how many have been sold; and what financial gain resulted to Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Aitken: Since April 1990, 115 Jet Provost aircraft have been sold to over 20 different customers, by competitive tender, public auction and private treaty arrangements. Receipts have totalled some £600,000.

Arms Sales

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether contingent liabilities exist for the United Kingdom Government in sales of arms or arms-related sales by the Government, its agents, including DESO or IMS Ltd., or as part of Government-to-Government arms deals.

Mr. Aitken: Yes. The supplementary statement to the Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund Accounts 1992-93, Cm 52, contains information on contingent liabilities.

Arms Sales

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which countries have been the top 20 buyers of British arms since 1979.

Mr. Aitken: Details of purchasers of British defence equipment are given in table 1.11 of the United Kingdom Defence Statistics. A copy of the 1993 edition has been placed in the Library of the House.

Defence Arms Control Unit

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the role and function of the defence arms control unit.

Mr. Hanley: The main function of the defence arms control unit, now known as the proliferation and arms control secretariat, is to co-ordinate and provide advice on defence policy aspects of United Kingdom's involvement in non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament negotiations.

Exercise Arctic Express

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected cost of participation of British forces in exercise Arctic Express.

Mr. Hanley: The expected cost to the United Kingdom for exercise Arctic Express will be some £2,950,000.

NATO will, however, refund part of the cost of air transport movement, reducing the final cost to a figure of some £2,600,000.

Sarajevo

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is prepared to offer mortar-locating radar and other detection equipment to United Nations forces deployed in Sarajevo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is for the United Nations to determine the equipment needs of their forces in the former Yugoslavia. Any United Nations request for additional equipments would be given due consideration.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the use of air power to protect the civilians of Sarajevo in accordance with United Nations resolutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The North Atlantic Council's decision of 9 February authorised the use of air strikes in close co-ordination with the United Nations Secretary-General, if heavy weapons are not withdrawn from around Sarajevo or placed under UNPROFOR's control within 10 days. Air strikes can be launched with immediate effect, at the request of the United Nations, against heavy weapons responsible for any further attacks on civilian targets in the city.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the establishment of an effective United Nations safe area in and around Sarajevo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: United Nations Security Council resolution 836 established six safe areas in Bosnia, including Sarajevo. NATO has called on the parties to lift the siege of Sarajevo and made clear the alliance's readiness to carry out air strikes if heavy weapons are not withdrawn or placed under United Nations control within 10 days. The Government fully support the efforts of NATO and the United Nations.

Bosnia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United Nations counterparts about the deployment of additional forces in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, has had many discussions, including on former Yugoslavia issues, with his counterparts from various United Nations member nations. Additional Dutch, Malaysian and Pakistani forces are currently deploying to Bosnia following a request from the United Nations Secretary-General last year for troops to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 836, which established six safe areas.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the nature and extent of the discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts about the deployment of additional forces in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is in regular contact with his NATO counterparts about all aspects of our military deployments in former Yugoslavia. The deployment of additional personnel to UNPROFOR in Bosnia is, however, a matter for the United Nations.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a full breakdown of the total annual support costs for helicopter search and rescue operations including support manpower costs at RAF Brawdy in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Alcoholic Beverages

Mr. Sims: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will take steps in any EC Council discussions concerning the rules for listing ingredients and additives in alcoholic beverages to ensure consistent and simultaneous treatment for beer, wines and spirits.

Mr. Jack: Yes. During negotiations on the European Commission's proposal for ingredients listing of alcoholic drinks the United Kingdom will seek to ensure that any measures which are eventually adopted apply consistently and simultaneously to the different product sectors.

Milk Marque

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations she has received in favour of the deferral of the vesting date of Milk Marque from April to November 1994; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: On 9 February the Milk Marketing Board submitted amendments to its reorganisation scheme. These provide, inter alia, for a vesting day of 1 November 1994. We shall be conducting a formal consultation on the scheme as amended.

Animal Diseases (Monitoring)

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about the future of the computer monitoring programme for the spread of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, salmonella and other animal diseases at the Central Veterinary Laboratory.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Responsibility for this matter is delegated to the Central Veterinary Laboratory and I have asked the chief executive to reply to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Letter from T. W. A. Little to Mr. Paul Tyler, dated 11 February 1994:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about the computer monitoring programme operated at CVL for the spread of BSE, Salmonella and other animal diseases.

CVL has built excellent systems for the monitoring of a range of animal diseases including those you mention. The systems have produced accurate and up-to-date figures for some years and our expert team will continue to maintain and refine the systems for as long as they are required.

SCOTLAND

NHS Trusts

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if chairmen and directors of trusts are required to declare an interest when any relevant business is being considered and withdrawn from further consideration of such business.

Mr. Stewart: Yes.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ascertain whether all trust executive and non-executive directors have been provided with the training necessary for them to have an adequate appreciation of the control mechanisms and rebating arrangements for financial matters.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 28 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *461*.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has given to non-executive directors of trusts on their powers to act independently where they are in disagreement with chairmen and executive directors.

Mr. Stewart: Each trust board is required to have an audit committee, the composition of which includes non-executive directors but not the chairman or executive directors, and with a prescribed remit.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if all board members of NHS trusts have been required to declare any interest that may be relevant before he appoints them; and if such interests are made known to the other members of the board to which they were appointed.

Mr. Stewart: Such information is not currently sought from trust board members prior to their appointment but the position is under review. Any trust director who has an interest in a contract or other matter at a trust board meeting is required by regulations to disclose that interest and not to take part in consideration or discussion of it.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has given to NHS trusts on the exercise of financial control.

Mr. Stewart: In addition to the training provision for their directors referred to in my reply to the hon. Member on 28 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *461*, NHS trusts in Scotland are issued with a financial manual "NHS Trusts: Guidance for Financial Managers" which includes guidance on financial controls.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each non-executive member he has appointed to the board of an NHS trust *(a)* directorships, including non-executive directorships, held in private companies or plcs, *(b)* ownership or part ownership of private companies, businesses or consultancies likely or possibly seeking to do business with the NHS, *(c)* majority or controlling shareholdings in a charity or voluntary body in the field of health care, social services or housing and *(d)* any material connection with a voluntary or other body contracting for services with NHS organisations.

Mr. Stewart: Such information is not held centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has provided for chairmen of trusts on retaining the independence of their chief executives.

Mr. Stewart: No specific guidance has been issued but the roles and relationships of chairmen and chief executives are covered in the induction courses arranged centrally for new trust chairmen and in support provided locally by the management development group.

Pollution Control

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library copies of the minutes of the Scottish pollution control co-ordinating committee since 1990.

Sir Hector Monro: The Scottish pollution control co-ordinating committee is a sub-group of the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland, which officials of the Scottish Office normally attend. Its purpose is to promote the consistent application of district and islands' pollution control functions throughout Scotland and offer a forum for the exchange of information between local authority and Government officials.

I have arranged with REHIS for copies of the committee's minutes since its inception in June 1992 to be placed in the Library.

Glass Recycling

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has received from local authorities in Scotland regarding the current status of glass recycling.

Sir Hector Monro: Forty-eight Scottish local authorities have submitted draft recycling plans which give details of their current arrangements for collecting glass for recycling and of their plans for future glass collection. In addition, representations giving information about the impact of recent changes in prices paid for glass cullet have been made on behalf of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Argyle and Bute district council, Inverness district council and Cumnock and Doon Valley district council.

Forestry Commission

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many submissions have now been received by the review group considering the future of the Forestry Commission; and how many of those submissions addressing the question of privatisation of the commission were opposed.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* Over 3,500 individuals and organisations have sent representations both to the forestry review group and to Ministers, about the work currently being carried out by the group. A large majority of these submissions which addressed the question of privatisation were opposed to it, with many referring to concerns about the implications for access, environmental considerations and timber production. All representations are being taken into account by the group as it continues its work.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list where cattle infected with BSE have been located in Scotland, the species involved, the number involved in each incident and the date on which each case was discovered; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The information up to 31 December 1993 is given in the following table. This shows confirmed cases of BSE by year of report, broken down by breed. Cross breeds have been listed under the main breed.

1993

Breed	Borders	Central	Dumfries	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Orkney	Strathclyde	Tayside	Shetland	Western Isles
Unknown	9	—	16	3	11	1	1	1	20	8	—	—
Aberdeen Angus	21	—	57	3	14	3	4	5	33	8	—	—
Ankole	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ayrshire	—	—	39	4	3	2	1	2	42	1	—	—
Belgium Blue	—	—	3	1	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Blonde D'Aquitaine	—	—	3	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blue Grey	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	—
Charolais	1	1	3	2	11	2	—	2	2	7	—	—
Chianin x Simmental	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Friesian	23	40	323	37	120	29	29	13	264	24	—	—
Galloway	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Holstein	4	—	22	1	10	—	1	—	11	3	—	—
Hereford	55	10	80	29	93	32	25	9	45	56	—	—
Highland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Jersey	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Limousin	18	14	44	7	30	2	2	1	30	8	—	—
Luing	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Red Friesian	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	3	—	—	—
Rod Holstein	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Rogmanola	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Saler	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shorthorn	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	1	—	—
Simmental	15	4	37	11	65	17	5	—	16	19	—	—
TOTAL	146	69	633	98	365	92	68	33	473	136	—	—

1992

Breed	Borders	Central	Dumfries	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Orkney	Strathclyde	Tayside	Shetland	Western Isles
Unknown	2	1	8	—	1	—	—	—	9	3	—	—
Aberdeen Angus	26	2	40	3	13	4	3	1	38	7	—	—
Ayrshire	1	2	38	5	6	1	—	1	61	2	—	—
Belgian Blue	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	1	1	—	—
Blonde D'Aquitaine	—	1	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Blue Grey	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
British White	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Charolais	3	—	3	—	6	1	—	—	4	5	—	—
Devon	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Friesian	22	23	362	22	125	27	28	15	261	26	1	—
Galloway	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Gelbvieh	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Holstein	4	—	12	1	19	—	—	—	12	8	—	—
Hereford	35	7	59	19	70	17	6	1	42	48	—	—
Jersey	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	3	—	—	—
Limousin	10	2	23	4	26	1	5	—	27	11	—	—
Lincoln Red	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Luing	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Murray Grey	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Red Holstein	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rogmanola	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shorthorn	—	—	2	—	2	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
Simmental	7	2	22	8	33	13	3	6	14	25	—	—
South Devon	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	112	40	576	65	312	67	45	24	471	136	1	—

1991

Breed	Borders	Central	Dumfries	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Orkney	Strathclyde	Tayside	Shetland	Western Isles
Unknown	3	—	4	—	2	—	—	—	3	—	—	—
Aberdeen Angus	11	1	17	—	8	1	1	—	7	3	—	—
Ayrshire	1	1	19	—	7	—	1	—	32	1	—	—
Belgium Blue	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blonde D'Aquitaine	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
British White	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Charolais	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—
Friesian	17	10	173	20	54	7	9	—	125	8	2	—
Gelbvieh	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Breed	Borders	Central	Dumfries	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Orkney	Strathclyde	Tayside	Shetland	Western Isles
Holstein	—	1	4	1	11	—	2	—	8	1	—	—
Hereford	17	3	21	9	26	15	1	1	16	28	—	—
Jersey	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Limousin	5	2	5	1	6	4	—	—	13	1	—	—
Luing	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Murray Grey	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Red Friesian	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Red Holstein	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shorthorn	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Simmental	—	1	7	4	4	6	1	2	6	6	—	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
TOTAL	58	21	254	35	124	34	15	4	214	49	2	—

1990

Breed	Borders	Central	Dumfries	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Orkney	Strathclyde	Tayside	Shetland	Western Isles
Unknown	1	—	1	—	4	—	1	—	3	1	—	—
Aberdeen Angus	2	—	5	6	4	—	1	—	5	3	—	—
Ayrshire	—	1	5	—	2	—	—	1	41	2	—	—
Belgian Blue	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blonde D'Aquitaine	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Charolais	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Friesian	5	8	71	22	39	6	4	4	65	15	—	—
Galloway	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Holstein	—	1	4	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Hereford	11	1	3	4	34	17	3	—	15	14	—	—
Highland	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Jersey	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Limousin	1	—	2	—	4	—	—	—	2	4	—	—
Lincoln Red	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shorthorn	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Simmental	3	—	1	5	5	3	—	—	2	2	—	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	24	11	94	38	100	28	9	6	134	42	—	—

1989

Breed	Borders	Central	Dumfries	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Orkney	Strathclyde	Tayside	Shetland	Western Isles
Unknown	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Aberdeen Angus	1	—	3	—	—	1	—	—	2	—	—	—
Ayrshire	2	—	2	—	1	1	1	—	12	2	—	—
British White	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Friesian	4	5	21	8	21	4	6	1	40	4	1	—
Holstein	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	4	—	—	—
Hereford	1	2	5	3	10	4	—	1	3	7	—	—
Jersey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—
Limousin	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Red Friesian	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Shorthorn	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Simmental	—	—	—	—	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	9	7	33	11	42	12	7	2	66	17	1	1

June to December 1988

Breed	Borders	Central	Dumfries	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Orkney	Strathclyde	Tayside	Shetland	Western Isles
Unknown	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Aberdeen Angus	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ayrshire	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	3	1	—	—
Friesian	1	2	7	—	9	2	1	1	6	—	—	—
Holstein	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Hereford	—	1	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Jersey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Limousin	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Simmental	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	—
TOTAL	1	3	12	0	12	3	2	2	11	3	—	—

Before June 1988

Breed	*Borders*	*Central*	*Dumfries*	*Fife*	*Grampian*	*Highland*	*Lothian*	*Orkney*	*Strathclyde*	*Tayside*	*Shetland*	*Western Isles*
Unknown	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Aberdeen Angus	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ayrshire	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Friesian	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Holstein	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hereford	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	—
TOTAL	1	—	5	—	—	2	1	—	—	2	1	—

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which of the public appointments for which he is responsible require advance notice to and consultation with the Chief Whip's Office; and which appointments made since 1979 have been so notified and consulted upon.

Mr. Lang: It is not the practice of Her Majesty's Government to answer parliamentary questions about discussions and consultations between Departments and offices of Government relating to public appointments.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Remand Centres

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown by race, on the most convenient date, of the inmates held in the remand centres at Featherstone, Cardiff, Dorchester, Exeter, Feltham, Glen Parva, Gloucester, Wigan, Lancaster, Durham, Doncaster, Northallerton, Norwich, Reading, Rochester, Market Drayton, Swansea and Milton Keynes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Diane Abbott, dated 11 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking if he will give a breakdown by race, on the most convenient date, of the inmates held in the remand centres at Featherstone, Cardiff, Dorchester, Exeter, Feltham, Glen Parva, Gloucester, Wigan, Lancaster, Durham, Doncaster, Northallerton, Norwich, Reading, Rochester, Market Drayton, Swansea and Milton Keynes.

The readily available information is for 30 June 1992 and is given in the attached table. Some of the Prison Service establishments listed in the Question were not operating as remand centres on that date. The breakdown given is in terms of the ethnic classification used at the time. A new ethnic coding was introduced in prisons from 1 October 1992.

Population in remand centres on 30 June 1992: by establishment and ethnic origin

England and Wales *Number*

Establishment	*Ethnic origin* *White*	*West Indian, Guyanese, African*	*Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi*	*Chinese, Arab, mixed origin*	*Other, not recorded (including refusal)*	*All persons in establishment*
Hindley	370	4	3	16	2	395
Low Newton[1]	272	2	3	2	—	279
Moorland[1]	430	11	17	5	—	463
Feltham[1]	194	69	13	16	6	298
Haslar[1]	11	45	24	20	10	110
Norwich[1]	56	1	—	2	—	59
Rochester[1]	92	34	1	3	2	132
Brinsford[1]	285	21	17	11	1	335
Cardiff[1]	93	2	—	5	3	103
Dorchester[1]	33	1	2	1	1	38
Exeter[1]	64	2	1	—	1	68
Glen Parva[1]	259	11	15	11	2	298
Stoke Heath[1]	32	5	—	3	9	43
Swansea[1]	60	1	—	—	—	61
All remand centres	2,251	209	96	95	31	2,682

[1]Establishments serving more than one purpose, the numbers above refer only to those held in the remand component.

Brixton Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the reason for the recent trawl at Her Majesty's prison Brixton for staff; and how many prison staff had been subjected to compulsory transfers from Brixton in 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 11 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question concerning the reason for the recent trawl at Brixton prison for staff, and how many prison staff had been subjected to compulsory transfers from Brixton in 1993.

Following an increased demand for staff in the north of England, a number of staff took the opportunity to transfer there from Brixton. Subsequently, a national trawl was held to replace some of the staff at Brixton.

Prison officers are mobile grades and all permanent transfers are "compulsory". Where practicable the wishes of staff are taken into account. If this is not possible staff are issued with a compulsory transfer notice against which they can appeal.

In 1993, 26 officers were issued with compulsory notices in Brixton. 19 of these appealed and the compulsory notices were subsequently withdrawn. Seven did not appeal and were subsequently transferred to Belmarsh.

Police on the Beat

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from *(a)* hon. Members, *(b)* chief constables and *(c)* chairmen or members of police authorities, asserting that police beat cover has been reduced in their areas since 1992; and if he will make a statement on the measures he is taking to ensure that any increase in the number of police officers is reflected by more police actually on the beat.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Views about policing levels and beat cover feature regularly in the numerous representations and correspondence which we receive on the general subject of policing. Information in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Current initiatives designed to put more officers on the beat include reducing paperwork, civilianisation and reorganising management structures. One of the key objectives set for the service is to provide high visibility policing so as to reassure the public.

Wymott Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Wymott have been charged for the riot and destruction of the prison; and what has been the range of punishments provided.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 11 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about how many prisoners at Her Majesty's Prison Wymott have been charged for the riot and destruction of the prison; and what has been the range of punishments provided.

Lancashire Constabulary are still continuing their investigation into the disturbance. They have not yet charged any individual person, but he result of their inquiries should be known soon, together with any decision to lay charges.

As a result of the internal Prison Service investigation into the disturbance, fourteen prisoners were charged with an overall total of 24 offences under Prison Rules. Three of these prisoners were found guilty of an overall total of four offences and the individual level of punishments awarded in these cases ranged from 7 to 28 days added to their sentences. One prisoner was found not guilty of the charges against him. Charges against the remaining ten prisoners have at this stage been adjourned pending the outcome of the police investigation or other internal Prison Service inquiries.

Buggery

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions over the past decade any male under the age of 21 years has been *(a)* prosecuted or *(b)* prosecuted and convicted for the offence of buggery.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1982 to 1992 is given in the table.

Number of males aged under 21 prosecuted at the magistrates courts and convicted[1] at all courts of buggery offences—1982 to 1986
England and Wales

	1982		1983		1984		1985		1986	
	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions
With a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	18	17	32	23	30	23	25	23	31	31
By a man with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent	5	5	2	1	4	4	5	2	4	4
By a man of the age of 21 or over with another male person under the age of 21 with consent	2	1	1	3	1	—	4	2	4	3
By a man with another male person other than above	5	3	11	5	2	1	10	6	3	1
Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home committing buggery or an act of gross indecency on a male patient	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Man committing buggery or an act of gross indecency with mentally disordered male patient who is subject to his care	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	—	—	—	—	1	3	1	1	2	7
Attempt by a man to commit buggery with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	1
Attempt by a man of the age of 21 or over to commit buggery with another male person under the age of 21 with his consent	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Attempt by a man to commit buggery with another male person other than above	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—

	1982		1983		1984		1985		1986	
	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions
Assault with intent to commit buggery	1	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	1	—

[1] Includes persons proceeded against in earlier years or for other offences.
Note: Generally, attempting, conspiring, inciting, aiding, abetting, causing or permitting a crime is classified under the heading of the crime itself.

Number of males aged under 21 prosecuted at the magistrates courts and convicted[1] at all courts of buggery offences—1987 to 1992
England and Wales

	1987		1988		1989		1990		1991		1992	
	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions	Prosecutions	Convictions
With a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	32	27	50	40	42	30	46	31	53	19	37	30
By a man with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent	6	3	4	1	3	2	4	6	5	2	2	—
By a man of the age of 21 or over with another male person under the age of 21 with consent	2	—	4	4	2	—	1	—	2	1	2	1
By a man with another male person other than above	3	1	3	5	1	1	3	2	4	—	5	2
Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home committing buggery or an act of gross indecency on a male patient	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Man committing buggery or an act of gross indecency with mentally disordered male patient who is subject to his care	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	6	6	10	6	6	5	5	2	4	5	5	3
Attempt by a man to commit buggery with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—
Attempt by a man of the age of 21 or over to commit buggery with another male person under the age of 21 with his consent	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Attempt by a man to commit buggery with another male person other than above	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
Assault with intent to commit buggery	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	1	1	2	—	—

[1] Includes persons proceeded against in earlier years or for other offences.
Note: Generally, attempting, conspiring, inciting, aiding, abetting, causing or permitting a crime is classified under the heading of the crime itself.

Youth Custody

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each year since 1989, *(a)* the average age and *(b)* the average length of sentence of the total number of young people serving youth custody sentences, who have been reclassified from young offender to adult status prior to reaching 21 years of age.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. William Etherington, dated 11 February 1994:

RECLASSIFICATION OF YOUNG OFFENDERS

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking if he will list for each year since 1989 the total number of young people serving youth custody sentences who have been reclassified from young offender to adult status before reaching 21 years of age.

The information requested is not available. The only information is for the number of people in the prison population at a particular date who had previously been reclassified. Provisional information for 30 June 1993 shows that about 90 young offenders were recorded centrally as being reclassified as adults in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales before reaching 21 years of age.

Paedophiles

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for legislation to make it possible to prosecute British nationals who commit paedophilic acts overseas when they return to Britain.

Mr. Maclean: The Government deplore sexual offences against children wherever they occur. Our own law against such abuse is rightly severe. However, our courts' jurisdiction is territorially based rather than nationally based and we have no plans to extend their jurisdiction over paedophile offences committed by British citizens abroad. We believe that such jurisdiction would be largely unenforceable in practice and that where such offences have been committed abroad it is right for the country concerned to enforce its own law.

Unlike some countries which do claim a wide extra-territorial criminal jurisdiction over their nationals, the United Kingdom is willing to extradite its own nationals to stand trial for these offences abroad, subject to the usual safeguards. We are also willing to give legal assistance to other countries under the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the police arbitration tribunal.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The police arbitration tribunal comprises a chairman and two members. Sir John Wood CBE is the chairman and Mr. G. L. Dennis and Mr. M. J. M. Clarke are the two members.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the police negotiating board.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Professor L. C. Hunter is the appointed independent chairman to the police negotiating board. The deputy chairmen are Mr. T. Carlile and Mr. J. F. L. Pease-Watkin.

The constitution of the police negotiating board stipulates that the board shall consist of an official side and a staff side. It is for those authorities and bodies to decide who should represent them on the board. The current membership is as follows:

POLICE NEGOTIATING BOARD

MEMBERS:

Home Office
Mr. I. M. Burns
Mr. T. Morris
Mr. C. L. Scoble
Mrs. P. G. W. Catto
Mr. I. F. Smith

Scottish Home and Health Department
Mr. B. J. O'Connor

Northern Ireland Office
Mrs. C. Collins

Police Authority for Nothern Ireland
Mr. A. Armstrong

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Mr. G. Stanfield
Mr. J. Jennings
Mr. H. Brown
Mr. E. B. Fallon

The Association of County Councils
Mr. C. F. Robinson
Mr. J. H. Collins
Mr. J. T. Meir
Mr. S. Bayes
Mr. B. Fippard
Mr. B. H. Drake
Mr. C. P. Hay
Mr. R. G. Owen
Mr. G. T. Theobald
Mr. D. Briggs
Mr. R. E. Meurie-Rees
Mr. T. G. Yarker
Mr. D. Sweasey

Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Mr. E. Bramfitt
Mr. G. Bundred
Mr. C. Swindell
Mr. S. Murphy
Mr. J. P. Mellor
Mr. J. W. Cranswick
Mr. C. Dale

The Metropolitan Police
Mr. D. Meynell

The Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Mr. J. Burrow
Mr. W. Lawrence

The Police Superintendents Association of England and Wales
Mr. D. Clark
Mr. D. Parkinson
Mr. V. Jones

The Police Federation for England and Wales
Mr. L. Williams
Mr. R. Coyles
Mr. R. Penn
Mr. A. Mason
Mr. J. Moseley
Mr. R. Oakley
Mr. G. Hyde
Mr. S. Cadmore
Mr. F. Broughton
Mr. D. Forsyth

The Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland)
Mr. P. Mitchell

The Association of Scottish Police Superintendents
Mr. J. Johnston

The Scottish Police Federation
Mr. J. MacDonald
Mr. J. Marshall
Mr. I. Black
Mr. D. Keil
Mr. J. Fraser
Mr. S. Falconer

The Superintendents Association of Northern Ireland
Mr. W. Davidson
Miss A. Donald

The Police Federation for Northern Ireland
Mr. D. McClurg
Mr S. Beattie

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Fire Services Research and Training Trust.

Mr. Charle Wardle: The trustees are as follows:

Mr. R. F. D. Shuffrey, CB, CVO, Chairman, formerly a Home Office Deputy Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. W. Baird, a former Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Scottish Office.

Sir Kenneth Holland, CBE, QFSM, formerly Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services.

Mr. P. Quaile, recently retired as Deputy Chief General Manager of Sun Alliance and as Chairman of the Fire Protection Association.

Mr. I. Roy, a former Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Council on Race Relations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The members of the Home Secretary's Advisory Council on Race Relations are as follows:

Representative Members:
Mr. R. Gilbert (Confederation of British Industries)
Dr. S. Deshmukh (Trades Union Congress)
Mr. S. Gillings (National Association of Racial Equality Councils)
Mr. R. Govindia (London Boroughs Association)
Councillor T. Harris (Association of Metropolitan Authorities)
Mr. H. Ouseley (Commission for Racial Equality)
Councillor R. Place (Association of District Councils)
Vacancy (Association of County Councils)
Individual Members
Mrs. S. Ahmed

Ms B. Bernard
Mr. D. Bryan
Mr. T. Chan
Mrs. R. Howells
Mr. C. Kavallares
Mr. R. Mooneram
Mr. D. Neil
Mr. J. O'Loughlin
Councillor M. Rizvi
Mr. I. Sacranie
Ms A. Weekes

Prisons (Drug Abuse)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research the Home Office has undertaken to determine the degree to which alcohol and illicit drug abuse is taking place in prisons; what change the figures represent on previous records; and what steps he has taken recently, or intends to take, in order to combat such abuse.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Frank Field, dated 11 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the research which has been undertaken to determine the degree to which alcohol and illicit drug abuse is taking place in prisons; what change the figures represent on previous records; and what steps he has taken recently or intends to take in order to combat such abuse.

It is extremely difficult to establish with any satisfactory degree of certainty the degree to which alcohol and illicit drug abuse is taking place in prisons. This is because prisoners are understandably reluctant to admit to contravening prison rules. Most research has therefore focused on the use of alcohol and drugs by prisoners before they were imprisoned. A survey of 1,751 men serving a prison sentence (Maden, Swinton and Gunn, British Journal of Addiction 1992) showed that in 1988-89 43 per cent. of male sentenced prisoners had used drugs in the six months before their arrest. In the report "Mentally Disorderded Offenders" which was produced for the Prison Service by the same authors found alcohol and drug dependency (diagnosed on the basis of daily use during the six month period prior to their offence) as in the table below. The figures do not include cannabis users.

	Adult males	*Young offenders*	*Females*
Sample size	1,365	404	273
Alcohol (per cent.)	8·6	8·7	4·4
Drugs (per cent.)	10·1	6·2	24·2

Research is currently being conducted for the Prison Service by the Drugs Addiction Unit at the Institute of Psychiatry to establish risk behaviour for HIV in prisons. This includes questions about current drug use which, if a satisfactory response rate is achieved, should provide better information on illicit drug use.

The availability and use of drugs in our prisons is a matter of concern. The Government will be bringing forward a clause for inclusion in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to allow the Prison Service to test prisoners for drug misuse. In addition to this the Prison Service is reviewing existing policy relating to drugs and is developing a Drug Strategy which will address ways of reducing the supply of drugs, of reducing demand (by means of improved indentification and treatment for drug misusers) and improved support for prisoners who have become drug free in prison on their return to the community.

Race Relations

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration has been given to the taking of legal action under the Race Relations Acts against the Hizb ut Tahrir organisation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* There is no legal action under the Race Relations Act 1976 which requires the involvement of the Attorney-General. Offences of incitement to racial hatred are covered by part III of the Public Order Act 1986 for which the Attorney-General's consent is required before a case can proceed.

TRANSPORT

Operator Licensing

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the local authorities that responded to his consultation document on deregulation of operator licensing and those that opposed the proposals.

Mr. Key: The 46 local authorities which responded to our consultation document are listed in the table. We made a number of proposals. The reaction to them was varied.

1. Three Rivers District Council, Herts
2. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
3. Blaenau Borough Council, Gwent
4. Dacorum Borough Council, Herts
5. Mole Valley District Council, Dorking
6. Milton Keynes Borough Council
7. Gedling Borough Council
8. West Devon Borough Council
9. Hastings Borough Council
10. Runnymede Borough Council
11. South Lakeland District Council
12. Wiltshire County Council
13. Newbury District Council
14. Runnymede Borough Council
15. Weymouth and Portland Borough Council
16. Birmingham City Council
17. Rother District Council
18. Worcester City Council
19. Cherwell District Council
20. Derbyshire County Council
21. Mid-Beds District Council
22. North Kesteven District Council
23. Devon County Council
24. Avon County Council
25. Newark and Sherwood District Council
26. Kent County Council
27. Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority
28. Nottingham City Council
29. Norfolk Planning County Council
30. Babergh District Council
31. Bedfordshire County Council
32. New Forest District Council
33. Bawtry Town Council
34. Swansea City Council
35. South Norfolk District Council
36. Lincoln City Council
37. Copeland Borough Council
38. Lewes District Council
39. Southampton City Council
40. Bedfordshire County Council
41. Great Yarmouth Borough Council
42. Winchester City Council
43. London Borough of Wandsworth
44. Shropshire County Council
45. Suffolk County Council
46. Burnley Borough Council

HEALTH

Health Authority Managers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many managers were in post in each health authority and health trust in England in 1990-91 and 1992-93; and what was the total cost in each year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available will be placed in the Library. The figures need to be treated with considerable caution. The number of managers has been deliberately increased since the mid-1980s—not just since the reforms—because the service was previously undermanaged. Much of the increase shown in the table, however, arises from the reclassification of existing staff, including many senior nurses, as managers.

Children (Birth Defects)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children in the northern region have been born with a defective hand in each year since 1989 and if she will also list the name of the village or town of each child.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

The numbers of children born with a defective hand [1] (ICDs 755.0, 755.1, 755.2, 755.4, 755.5, 755.8, 755.9) notified to OPCS in each year 1989 to 1992 for the Northern Regional Health Authority and individual district health authorities

	1989	1990	1991	1992
NORTHERN RHA	45	33	47	34
Hartlepool	1	2	1	3
North Tees	1	0	2	1
South Tees	4	4	3	4
East Cumbria	2	0	1	2
South Cumbria	3	0	2	5
West Cumbria	0	3	1	2
Darlington	1	0	4	0
Durham	4	4	1	0
North West Durham	2	3	0	1
South West Durham	6	2	4	3
Northumberland	3	3	9	2
Gateshead	1	3	2	5
Newcastle	8	3	6	2
North Tyneside	3	2	2	1
South Tyneside	1	1	4	1
Sunderland	5	3	5	2

[1] ICD ninth revision international classification of disease code.
The data are presented according to districts in order to protect the confidentiality of individuals.

We have great sympathy for the parents of children who are born with limb defects. It is unfortunate that in the present state of scientific knowledge the causes of most defects of this kind are not known. We are aware of the need for a prompt and thorough investigation into the reports of unexpectedly high occurrences of birth defects.

The investigation of recently suspected or reported clusters of limb reduction defects has been initiated by district health authorities, through directors of public health, who are taking expert advice, in concert with the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. For the last 30 years OPCS has maintained a national monitoring system for collecting data about malformations among newborn babies.

OPCS is currently conducting a national analysis of limb reduction defects to scrutinise the geographical pattern. This should be completed within a few weeks. The Department, with OPCS, is in discussion with the environmental epidemiology unit, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, which also incorporates the small area statistics unit, to identify and make provision for the additional expertise that may be required.

The results of these investigations will be considered carefully and decisions about any further action that might be necessary will be made as quickly as possible.

Hospital Staff (Redundancies)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of redundancies among national health service hospital staff *(a)* by grade and *(b)* by reason for each year since 1988-89.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available centrally.

Psychiatric Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* voluntary and *(b)* compulsory admissions to psychiatric hospital took place in each year since 1979.

Mr. Bowis: The information requested is shown in the table.

	Informal admissions	Formal admissions
1979	171,440	17,849
1980	184,076	18,514
1981	192,340	18,571
1982	194,584	17,959
1983	207,132	16,918
1984	216,183	16,361
1985	226,331	17,287
1986	226,459	16,696
1987-88	226,952	16,777
1988-89	213,228	17,240
1989-90	222,924	17,312

Notes:

Figures shown for 1979-86 were collected by the mental health enquiry from all mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units and include figures from special hospitals and private mental nursing homes. These were based on calendar years. From 1987-88, the figures refer to financial year and were collected on forms KH15—from all NHS facilities—and KO37—from private nursing homes—and also directly from the Special Hospitals Service Authority.

Mental Health Budget

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total mental health budget in each year since 1979.

Mr. Bowis: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The table shows the estimated total hospital and community health services expenditure in cash and constant price terms in England on mentally ill people for each year from 1978-79 to 1991-92, the latest year for which this information is available.

Expenditure on mentally ill people in hospital and community health services (England)[1]

(£) million

Year	Cash	1991-92 Prices[2]
1978-79	490	1,311
1979-80	593	1,359
1980-81	775	1,501

Year	Cash	1991-92 Prices[2]
1981-82	860	1,519
1982-83	916	1,511
1983-84	965	1,521
1984-85	1,029	1,544
1985-86	1,077	1,531
1986-87	1,149	1,587
1987-88	1,302	1,707
1988-89	1,557	1,913[3]
1989-90	1,662	1,910[3]
1990-91	1,785	1,898[3]
1991-92	2,085	2,085[4]

[1] Figures include direct patient treatment costs and indirect costs such as hospital administration.
[2] After allowing for general inflation.
[3] Figures from 1988-89 include expenditure on mental illness in and out-patients, day patients and community mental illness nursing. Prior to 1988-89, expenditure on community mental illness nursing was not separately identified, and was included with district nursing services.
[4] Figures are not comparable with earlier years due to significant changes to accounting policies, following the introduction of the internal market.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the extent of over or under-spending on general practitioner fundholder budgets for 1992-93 in each family health services authority and national health service region; and what sums were retained or returned by general practitioner fundholders in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional level information will not be available until all fundholder accounts have been audited and local arrangements for the voluntary return of savings have been completed. Local information, at family health services authority level, is not collected centrally.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fundholding practices there are in the Lewisham, Lambeth and Southwark FHSA; and if she will list them with the amount of financial surplus for each practice for 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) on 3 February at column *856*.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average reimbursement to general practitioners for salaries for all staff in each year since 1990-91 excluding the general practitioner fundholding management allowance.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 21 January at column *888*.

Prescription Pricing Authority

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many whole-time equivalent staff were employed by the Prescription Pricing Authority in each year since 1990; and what were the locations of their employment;

(2) whether any part of the activities of the Prescription Pricing Authority is to be subjected to market testing in 1994-95;

(3) what plans she has to change the structure, organisation or functions of the Prescription Pricing Authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers of whole-time equivalent staff employed by the Prescription Pricing Authority at each location are:

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Newcastle upon Tyne	738·7	742·0	747·8	[1]1071·1
Durham	177·1	170·1	165·5	161·8
Wakefield	163·4	160·4	168·6	165·1
Preston	90·9	89·3	90·8	88·0
Liverpool	119·1	123·7	126·8	127·9
Sheffield	126·0	126·0	128·2	128·5
Manchester	122·2	125·3	130·5	128·2
West Bromwich	123·3	160·5	130·5	132·9
Bolton	164·6	164·7	188·7	195·2
TOTAL	1,825·3	1,862·0	1,877·4	[1]2,198·7

[1] Includes 314·5 seconded Department of Social Security whole-time equivalent staff formerly employed in the health benefits unit—which became part of the Prescription Pricing Authority on 1 April 1993.

There are no plans to change the functions of the Prescription Pricing Authority. Any changes to the structure or organisation of the authority will depend upon the results of its market-testing programme.

Initially five areas of activity have been identified for market testing: prescription processing; management and maintenance of the authority's estate; mainframe computer support; security, portering, catering and central administrative services; and information division processing support. A rolling programme of market testing is well under way, with contracts for prescription processing due to be let by April 1995. Contracts for other services will follow, with the current programme completed by March 1996. Testing of remaining areas of the authority's work will then be considered.

Dental Health (Children)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each health authority in the country in order of the dental health of their children, with such information as is available in relation to the flourine level of the water in each area; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Statistics on dental health for health authorities are not available centrally. The most recent dental caries prevalence surveys of children by health authorities was carried out during 1991-92. Details of the average number of decayed, missed or filled teeth of five-year-olds and the percentage of the population receiving fluoridated water supplies in each district surveyed is contained in briefing produced by the British Flouridation Society. The information is based on surveys collated by the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Cancer Research

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals or medical research institutions, including universities, are currently conducting research under what contracts placed by her Department into cancer causation by use of modified viruses; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department holds no contracts to fund any research into cancer studies by use of modified viruses.

Ethnic Minority Staff

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the percentage of ethnic minority staff at the management executive and her Department in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: The percentage[1] of ethnic minority staff in the Department, which includes the National Health Service Management Executive, on 1 April each year since 1990-91 is:

	Per cent.
1990-91	9·8
1991-92	12·9
1992-93	14·9
1993-94	15·6

[1] Based on the response to the Department's ethnic origin survey.

Comparative data are not available for the NHS Management Executive, but at 7 February 1994 the percentage was 5.9.

Ambulance Service, Northumbria

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the responses to emergency calls of Northumbria ambulance trust were met within the *(a)* rural and *(b)* urban standards; and what percentage of such calls within the metropolitan county of Tyne and Wear area were met within the urban standard.

Mr. Sackville: The performance of the Northumbria ambulance service national service trust is measured centrally against the 19-minute national patients charter emergency response time standard for rural ambulance services. In 1992-93 Northumbria ambulance service achieved the standard in 99 per cent. of cases. Information covering the metropolitan county of Tyne and Wear is not collected centrally.

The Northumbria ambulance service NHS trust has, however, been contracted locally to meet the more stringent, 14-minute, urban response time. This standard has also been achieved consistently, despite a 15 per cent. increase in emergency calls last year.

Sunderland General Hospital (Parking)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many paid for car parking spaces there are at the Sunderland general hospital; what is the revenue from car parking spaces; what further car parking spaces are to be created; what contingency plans are available when all the car parking spaces are full; and whether the staff use the car parking spaces.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the district health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. George Bedell, chairman of the Sunderland district health authority, for details.

Health Care, Sheffield

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the land and buildings that are at present in the ownership, of the regional health authority in the Sheffield area.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been spent within the Sheffield health authority area on work undertaken for or on behalf of Community Health Sheffield shadow trust on capital developments, including minor works in the 1993-94 financial year and the estimated expenditure in the 1994-95 financial year, within Community Health Sheffield arising from or consequent on such work for managerial, administrative and clerical facilities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for Trent regional health authority. The hon. Members may wish to contact Sir Michael Carlisle, the chairman, for details.

Waiting Times

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by specialty for each trust in the Thames regions the average waiting time for a first appointment with a specialist and the average waiting time from the first appointment to subsequent treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on waiting times to first out-patient appointment is not yet collected. The last year for which figures are available by specialty on average waiting time from first out-patient appointment to subsequent treatment is 1991-92 and they were collected by district health authority and not by trust.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times prescription charges have been raised since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Fifteen.

Dr. Helen Zeitlin

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what correspondence she has received relating to the case of Dr. Helen Zeitlin; what action she will take to ensure that a prompt and fair settlement is reached between Dr. Zeitlin, the Alexandra hospital and the health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Two letters have been received in recent months. In November 1992 Dr. Zeitlin won her appeal against dismissal and was subsequently reinstated. Any current issues relating to her employment are a matter between Dr. Zeitlin and her employer.

Midwives

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the percentage of front line ambulances by region which have a paramedic able to support a midwife in an emergency.

Mr. Sackville: The Government have set a target for every front-line ambulance to have a paramedic by the end of 1995. It is not known how many paramedics are able to support a midwife in an emergency at present, but training in this area is being developed.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region how many midwives have worked in the national health service for each of the last five years; how many midwives by region have direct access to beds in maternity units; and how many women delivered in a maternity unit are admitted under the management of the midwife.

Mr. Sackville: The information regarding the number of midwives working in the national health service for each of the last five years is shown in the table.

Information regarding the number of midwives who have access to beds in maternity units and the number of women delivered in maternity units who are admitted under the management of the midwife is not collected in the form requested.

Hospital and community midwives by region in England 1988-92
At September (excluding agency)

Whole-time equivalent

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Hospital midwives					
Northern	1,060	1,030	1,040	1,070	1,160
Yorkshire	1,270	1,280	1,300	1,280	1,260
Trent	1,330	1,360	1,400	1,390	1,410
East Anglian	610	600	600	580	550
North West Thames	940	950	960	910	890
North East Thames	1,300	1,270	1,340	1,350	1,420
South East Thames	810	610	1,070	1,030	1,090
South West Thames	830	840	790	860	1,120
Wessex	910	910	900	900	890
Oxford	780	800	830	850	790
South Western	780	970	950	860	900
West Midlands	1,730	1,770	1,850	1,800	1,890
Mersey	780	850	890	890	900
North Western	1,720	1,650	1,680	1,710	1,760
Special Health Authorities	150	140	60	70	70
England	14,990	15,040	15,660	15,540	16,090
Community midwives					
Northern	260	260	240	240	240
Yorkshire	340	350	350	340	340
Trent	490	490	480	490	490
East Anglian	220	210	210	210	190
North West Thames	240	250	250	220	200
North East Thames	280	300	270	240	240
South East Thames	230	170	330	280	290
South West Thames	200	210	190	180	230
Wessex	250	240	240	240	250
Oxford	180	180	180	180	180
South Western	240	240	280	330	340
West Midlands	480	480	460	420	480
Mersey	240	230	230	220	220
North Western	460	460	470	490	440
Special Health Authorities	10	10	20	20	20
England	4,110	4,070	4,200	4,100	4,160
Community and Hospital Total	19,090	19,110	19,860	19,640	20,250

Source: HAP(STATS)B non-medical work force census.
Notes:
1. Figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.
2. England totals may not equal the sum of components due to rounding.

FHSAs (Dental Services)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family health services authorities have been unable to provide emergency dental services in each month since July 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available as soon as possible.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have contacted each FHSA asking for help in finding a dentist in each month since July 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many FHSAs have referred patients who have been unable to obtain treatment from a general dental practitioner to *(a)* the community dental service, *(b)* the hospital dental service and *(c)* a salaried dentist, in each month since July 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table.

Total number of Family Health Services Authorities referring patients to either Community Dental Service, Hospital Dental Service or a salaried dentist since July 1992[1] England

Week ending	*FHSAs*
3 July 1992	20
10 July 1992	23
17 July 1992	19
24 July 1992	18
31 July 1992	22
7 August 1992	26
14 August 1992	21
21 August 1992	24
28 August 1992	25
4 September 1992	23
11 September 1992	26
18 September 1992	23
25 September 1992	24
2 October 1992	22
9 October 1992	24
16 October 1992	23
23 October 1992	24
30 October 1992	26
6 November 1992	28
13 November 1992	28
20 November 1992	27
27 November 1992	25
4 December 1992	26
11 December 1992	27
18 December 1992	27
25 December 1992	—
1 January 1993	—
8 January 1993	25
15 January 1993	28
22 January 1993	31
29 January 1993	30
5 February 1993	25
12 February 1993	26
19 February 1993	30
26 February 1993	28
5 March 1993	27
12 March 1993	28
19 March 1993	27
26 March 1993	25
2 April 1993	25
9 April 1993	25
16 April 1993	25
23 April 1993	23
30 April 1993	28
7 May 1993	26
14 May 1993	27
21 May 1993	24
28 May 1993	26
4 June 1993	24
11 June 1993	27
18 June 1993	25
25 June 1993	27
2 July 1993	23
9 July 1993	25
16 July 1993	26
23 July 1993	26
30 July 1993	25
6 August 1993	25
13 August 1993	23
20 August 1993	26
27 August 1993	22

Week ending	FHSAs
3 September 1993	24
10 September 1993	25
17 September 1993	26
24 September 1993	24
1 October 1993	25
8 October 1993	27
15 October 1993	27
22 October 1993	26
29 October 1993	22
5 November 1993	25
12 November 1993	26
19 November 1993	24
26 November 1993	26
3 December 1993	27
10 December 1993	28
17 December 1993	29
24 December 1993	—
31 December 1993	—
7 January 1994	25
14 January 1994	29
21 January 1994	29
28 January 1994	30
4 February 1994	31

[1] Data were not collected over the Christmas and new year period.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many FHSAs have appointed salaried dentists; and how many dentists have been appointed.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are currently 92 salaried dentists employed by 22 family health services authorities.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists have given written notice to each FHSA to remove their name from the dental list since July 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table. The total number of dentists who have given written notice to family health services authorities to remove their names from the dental list since July 1992 is 297. A total of 347 dentists were added to the lists in the period 30 June 1992 to 30 September 1993.

Number of dentists who have given written notice to remove their name from the dental list since July 1992, by Family Health Services Authority
England

Family Health Services Authority	Number of dentists
England	297
Cleveland	—
Cumbria	—
Durham	—
Northumberland	—
Gateshead	—
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	—
North Tyneside	—
South Tyneside	—
Sunderland	—
Humberside	3
North Yorkshire	—
Bradford	—
Calderdale	16
Kirklees	—
Leeds	—
Wakefield	3
Derbyshire	—
Leicestershire	—
Lincolnshire	—
Nottinghamshire	—
Barnsley	—
Doncaster	—
Rotherham	—
Sheffield	—
Cambridgeshire	—
Norfolk	3
Suffolk	—
Bedfordshire	—
Hertfordshire	—
Barnet	—
Brent and Harrow	—
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	1
Hillingdon	—
Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea	1
Essex	3
Barking and Havering	29
Camden and Islington	—
City and East London	42
Enfield and Haringey	30
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	—
East Sussex	13
Kent	35
Greenwich and Bexley	21
Bromley	13
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	13
Surrey	1
West Sussex	—
Croydon	5
Kingston and Richmond	—
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	16
Dorset	—
Hampshire	2
Wiltshire	—
Isle of Wight	—
Berkshire	—
Buckinghamshire	—
Northamptonshire	—
Oxfordshire	1
Avon	—
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	1
Devon	1
Gloucestershire	—
Somerset	3
Hereford and Worcester	—
Shropshire	—
Staffordshire	—
Warwickshire	—
Birmingham	—
Coventry	—
Dudley	1
Sandwell	—
Solihull	—
Walsall	—
Wolverhampton	1
Cheshire	—
Liverpool	—
St. Helens and Knowsley	—
Sefton	4
Wirral	1
Lancashire	—
Bolton	16
Bury	—
Manchester	1
Oldham	—
Rochdale	—
Salford	2
Stockport	3
Tameside	1
Trafford	11
Wigan	—

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists who have not given notice to leave the dental list have given written notice to the FHSA to deregister some or all of their continuing care arrangements for adult patients in each month since July 1992; how many dentists have deregistered patients; and how many patients have been deregistered.

Dr. Mawhinney: Tables will be placed in the Library which show for each month the number of dentists in contract with each family health services authority who have deregistered adult patients and the total number of adult patients deregistered since July 1992. Where dentists hold contracts with more than one FHSA, the numbers of dentists quoted could include duplications. The information provided weekly by FHSAs since July 1992 shows that in the period up to 4 February 1994, 2,513 dentists gave written notification to deregister 629,318 adult patients.

Despite these notified deregistrations, the total number of adult patients registered with a dentist in England increased by over 1 million—4·96 per cent.—from 20·580 million to 21·601 million over the period 1 July 1992 to 30 November 1993.

Dental Treatment (Costs)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average cost per adult patient for each course of dental treatment in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: The average cost per course of dental treatment for an adult patient in 1992-93 was £34·77.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* nursing mothers and *(b)* pregnant women received dental treatment in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what was the average cost per patient in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the number of nursing mothers and pregnant women who received dental treatment in these years is not available. Figures for the number of courses of treatment received by women in these two categories are shown in the table. Data are not available for 1990-91.

The table shows the average cost per course of treatment for nursing mothers and pregnant women in each year. This is defined as the gross fee received by the dentist for the course of treatment. Pregnant women and nursing mothers are exempt from dental charges.

General dental services: number of courses of treatment and average cost for expectant and nursing mothers[1]
1990-91—1992-93
England

Year	Number of courses of treatment		Average cost per course of treatment[2]	
	Expectant mothers	Nursing mothers	Expectant mothers (£)	Nursing mothers (£)
1991-92	452,555	665,310	33·31	45·24
1992-93	443,922	672,609	31·84	42·69

[1] Mothers aged 18 and over.
[2] The cost is the gross fee received by the dentist for the course of treatment.
[3] Dental fees were reduced by 7 per cent. in July 1992.

Self-governing Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy that staff and their representatives are involved in the agreement and determination of performance-related pay schemes in self-governing trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for national health service trusts to decide locally.

Racal Healthlink Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what data is transferred between health regions and districts through the Racal Healthlink service.

Mr. Sackville: The Racal Healthlink service was set up primarily to link the primary health care services and associated national bodies: family health services authorities; the national health service central register; the Prescriptions Pricing Authority; and the Dental Practices Board. In general, these bodies exchange information to assist their administrative operations for example, patient registration details and claims for items of service.

For regional and district health authorities, although central records are kept about the number of connections and who is connected to Healthlink, records are not kept about the type of data sent between these organisations.

NHS Communications

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what data is expected to be transferred through a new NHS national communications network service.

Mr. Sackville: The new national health service-wide communications network will cover the whole range of NHS communications activities: telephone calls, computer networking, radio mobile communications and the electronic transmission of images. Data could be of any of the types currently exchanged on paper.

Patient Records (Confidentiality)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 January, *Official Report*, column *197-98*, what plans she has to assure the confidentiality of any patient records which are held on the new network.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service-wide networking programme has established a security project to develop the security policy and associated security mechanisms needed to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of all information passing across the new network. This work is being undertaken in full consultation with representatives of the medical profession.

Regional Data Networks

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 January, *Official Report*, column *198*, what was the cost of formulating the business case for implementing a national spine to connect regional data networks.

Mr. Sackville: The estimated cost of developing the business case for a national spine facility was £290,000.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 January, *Official Report*, column *198*, who is carrying out the work to connect the region-wide data networks; and what is the cost.

Mr. Sackville: The competitive procurement of nationwide area networking services was initiated recently. It is intended that there will be one provider of the spine connecting region-wide networks and two or three providers of region-wide networks to maintain competitive pressures. The cost will be known when tenders are evaluated.

Breast Cancer

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what features of the structure of the health service between England and Wales underlie the different availability of information regarding the percentage of women screened for breast cancer in the last three years between the two countries.

Mr. Sackville: Statistical information relating to the performance of the breast screening programme in England is collected annually by the Department of Health from each of 87 local screening programmes. This information is submitted as a standard statistical return.

In Wales, the screening programme is provided from only three screening centres, due to the much smaller population. Each of these screening centres is part of a single organisation, Breast Test Wales. This enables the Welsh Office to acquire information more easily on all aspects of the programme. Breast Test Wales also provides annual statistical returns identical to those used in England.

Alden Hey Hospital, Liverpool

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many orthopaedic patients are on the waiting list at Alden Hey hospital in Liverpool.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 19 January at column *617*.

NHS Appointments (Cornwall)

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the current non-executive directors and members of the Cornwall district health authority, Cornwall community healthcare trust and the Royal Cornwall hospitals trust, together with the dates when they were appointed and the period of their respective appointments.

Dr. Mawhinney *[pursuant to his reply, 20 January, c. 793-94]:* I regret the information supplied was incorrect. The correct information is as follows:

In respect of the Royal Cornwall hospitals NHS trust.

Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust

The Chairman of the Royal Cornwall hospitals NHS trust is Mr. John Williams. He was appointed on 1 December 1993 and his term of office expires on 30 November 1995.

The non-executive directors of the trust and their terms of appointment are as follows:

Non-Executive Director	*First Appointed*	*Current Term of Office Expires*
Mr. Gilbert McCabe	1 November 1991	30 November 1997
Mr. Edward Latham	1 November 1991	30 November 1997
Mr. Anthony Hill	19 January 1994	30 November 1995
Mrs. Doreen Henderson	1 October 1992	30 May 1994

There is currently a vacancy among the non-executive directors following Mr. Williams's appointment as chairman.

South Western RHA

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the current membership of South Western regional health authority together with the dates when they were appointed and the period of their respective appointments.

Dr. Mawhinney *[pursuant to his reply, 20 January 1994, c. 794]:* I regret the information supplied in respect of the non-executive members of South Western regional health authority was incorrect. The correct information is as follows:

The non-executive members of South Western regional health authority and their terms of appointment are as follows:

Non-Executive Members	*First Appointed*	*Current Term of Office Expires*
Sir John Kingman	26 July 1990	31 October 1996
Dame Margaret Fry	26 July 1990	31 October 1996
Mr. Upert Woodburn	1 January 1993	31 October 1996

There are currently two vacancies on the board.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 14 February 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Legal Aid Advisory Committee and legal services conference.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The members of the Legal Aid Advisory Committee are Elizabeth Filkin (chairman), Dr. Bill Bishop, Rosemary Day, district judge Greenslade, Jan Luba, Mavis Maclean, Graham McGrath, June O'Dell OBE, Christine Thornton, Anna Turnbull-Walker and Nick Warren. From time to time the committee holds conferences, for which there is no formal membership.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to each of the advisory committees on the Juvenile Court Lay Panel for Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* There is only one advisory committee on the Juvenile Court Lay Panel for Northern Ireland and it is not the Lord Chancellor's policy to disclose its membership due to the possible security implications for the individuals concerned.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to each of the advisory committees on justices of the peace for Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* It is not the Lord Chancellor's policy to disclose membership of advisory committees on justices of the peace in Northern Ireland due to the possible security implications for the individuals concerned.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Legal Aid Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The current members of the Legal Aid Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland are:

His Honour Judge Petrie QC (Chairman)
V. Chambers
Mrs. L. A. Gilbert
Miss L. Lundy
J. I. Meehan
J. C. Morton
L. McBrinn
J. P. McGrath
Master J. C. Napier
Mrs. A. P. O'Donoghue
W. R. Wilson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Council on Tribunals.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The members currently appointed to the Council on Tribunals are as follows:

The Lord Archer of Sandwell, PC, QC. Chairman
T. Norman Biggart, Esq, CBE, WS, Chairman of Scottish Committee
Mrs. Annie Anderson
G. A. Anderson, Esq, CA, FCMA
M. B. Dempsey, Esq
Professor D. L. Foulkes, JP
Mrs. S. Friend, JP
T. R. H. Godden, Esq, CB
Christopher Heaps, Esq
B. Hill, Esq, CBE, DL
Professor M. J. Hill
W. N. Hyde, Esq
R. H. Jones, Esq, CVO
Dr. Carole Kaplan
L. F. Read, Esq, QC
W. K. Reid, Esq, CB

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Serbia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to initiate investigations into allegations that United Kingdom-registered companies have *(a)* built armanent manufacturing factories in the former Yugoslavia and *(b)* provided arms and military equipment to Serbia contrary to internationally agreed embargoes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no information concerning allegations that United Kingdom companies have been involved in the construction of armaments factories in the former Yugoslavia.

Investigation of alleged breaches of internationally agreed embargoes on the supply of arms and military equipment to Serbia and Montenegro is a matter for the commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. They will decide what, if any, action would be appropriate in the light of available information.

Indonesia

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the British Government are taking to prevent British arms being sold to the Indonesian Government for use against the population of East Timor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: All applications for export licences in respect of Indonesia, as elsewhere, are subject to strict controls and scrutinised on a case-by-case basis. Any application for equipment likely to be used for repressive purposes against a civilian population would be rejected.

China

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government will take to urge the Government of the People's Republic of China to repeal recent religious laws increasing state controls on Chinese and foreign religious adherents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We are aware of the recent publication of two new regulations on religious activity. Any action which further restricts freedom of choice, or which results in further harassment or ill treatment of religious believers

is of serious concern. We regularly raise questions of human rights, including the persecution of religious believers, with the Chinese authorities, urging them to conform to internationally approved standards. We will continue to do so.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government will take to urge the Government of the People's Republic of China to release from imprisonment Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo, Bishop Johannes Han Dingxiang, Auxillary Bishop Shi Hong-Zhen, and other Christians recently imprisoned for their faith.

Mr. Goodlad: We and our European Union partners have often urged the Chinese authorities to conform to internationally approved standards of behaviour in the human rights arena, including cases of detention without trial. We have also raised with them lists of specific cases, including some cases of individuals detained in connection with their religious beliefs. We will continue to to so.

Mercenaries

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *468*, what conclusions his officials have come to about the allegations published in *The Independent* on 24 January regarding British mercenary involvement in Nagorno-Karabakh; and what action he is taking.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We take seriously the allegation that British citizens and companies are attempting to procure arms and mercenaries for Azerbaijan, and investigations continue. Investigations to date suggest that there may be truth in the allegation that these attemps have been made, but as yet we have no evidence that they have succeeded. If evidence of illegality is found the matter will be put in the hands of the custom or police, as appropriate. We remain committed to supporting the CSCE's voluntary arms embargo.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures the Government are taking to bring about a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 31 January 1994 at column *481*.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by his Office *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Both the diplomatic and ODA wings of the FCO use newspaper advertising for recruitment. During the financial year 1993-94 recruitment campaigns with a budget in excess of £10,000 will have been held for grades DS9, executive assistant, administrative assistant and research analysts. Similar recruitment advertising will be undertaken in the financial year 1994-95. The ODA recruit specialists via advertisements throughout the year: cumulatively this costs more than £10,000. Effectiveness is measured in levels of response.

Other promotional campaigns costing more than £10,000 are as follows:

- FCO TV advertising offering advice to British travellers overseas including what consular services are available. This comprises short consular "filler" films screened free of charge at off-peak hours, and teletext inserts. There are no plans yet for further films in this series in 1994-95. Feedback on screening and estimated viewing figures is provided by the handling agency.
- An FCO leaflet offering advice to overseas travellers which is distributed with British visitors passports by the Post Office and travel agents.
- A booklet called "The European Community: Facts and Fairytales" designed to explain popular misconceptions about European regulations has been distributed during the financial year 1993-94. Effectiveness was measured through demand.

The FCO has not advertised on radio during 1993-94 and has no plans yet to do so in the next financial year.

Antarctic Conference on Tourism

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account he has taken of the representations by the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators in preparing his proposals for putting forward in Japan at the Antarctic conference on tourism.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have received no representations from the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators. We look forward to a full discussion on tourism at the Antarctic treaty consultative meeting in Japan. We believe that Antarctic tourism can be regulated through the environmental protocol to the Antarctic treaty. Tourism is explicitly referred to in the protocol.

UN Peacekeeping Operations

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the United Kingdom paid for United Nations peacekeeping operations in 1993 *(a)* in Namibia, *(b)* in the Western Sahara, *(c)* in Iraq-Kuwait, *(d)* in Cambodia and *(e)* in Cyprus.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There were no United Nations assessed contributions for UNTAG—Namibia—and MINURSO—Western Sahara—in 1993. UNTAG closed down in March 1990. 1993 costs for MINURSO were met from existing United Nations resources. 1993 United Kingdom assessed contributions to UNIKOM—Iraq-Kuwait—totalled $3,003,584, UNTAC—Cambodia—$39,817,868, and UNFICYP—Cyprus—$538,081. UNFICYP was only brought onto United Nations assessed contribution funding in June 1993.

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the United Kingdom paid for United Nations peacekeeping operations in 1993.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom paid a total of $165,225,559 in United Nations assessed contributions to peacekeeping operations in 1993.

Cook Islands

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to regulate banking deposits by United Kingdom citizens in bank accounts registered in the Cook islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. The regulation of banking services in the Cook islands is a matter for the Cook islands authorities.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with his opposite number in the European Union in relation to the regulation of the trade in financial services between the United Kingdom and the Cook islands.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. The marketing of financial services in the United Kingdom is regulated under United Kingdom and European Community law.

Western Sahara

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the United nations and the Government of Morocco concerning the proposed referendum on the future of the Western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We maintain regular contact with the United Nations through our permanent representative in New York and with the Government of Morocco through the British embassy in Rabat.

Morocco

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Morocco concerning the continued imprisonment of Abdelhaq Rouissi; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British embassy in Rabat has raised the case of Abdelhaq Rouissi with the Moroccan authorities and recently drew it to the attention of the newly appointed Moroccan Minister for Human Rights.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Comonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Morocco concerning their record on human rights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We regularly take up human rights issues bilaterally and with our European Union partners. We welcome the Moroccan Government's agreement to recent visits by Amnesty International and the decision to establish a Ministry for Human Rights.

European Constituencies

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that new boundaries for Euro-constituencies shall be drawn only after a decision that any new building for the European Parliament shall not be in Brussels.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. A Council decision of 1 February 1993 calls for member states to complete the necessary procedures to bring into effect the agreement reached at the Edinburgh European Council increasing the number of MEPs in time for the elections in June this year. The legislative procedures required to fulfil this obligation in the United Kingdom are expected to be completed shortly.

Turkey

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had during his recent visit to Turkey with representatives of the Kurdish community.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs had wide ranging discussions in Ankara with senior politicians, business men and journalists but he did not meet representatives from Kurdish political parties.

EC Foreign and Security Policy

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* Commission personnel and *(b)* direct European Council staff are involved with the European Community foreign and security policy; if he will set out their relative responsibilities and duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The section in the Commission which deals with the common foreign and security policy of the European Union is staffed by 125 Commission officials of all grades. The new CFSP unit in the Council secretariat is being developed from the former EPC secretariat. It is headed by a seconded ambassador and staffed by 11 seconded diplomats from member states—a 12th is expected to join the unit at a later date. It is envisaged that 12 permanent Council secretariat staff will join the unit in the future. The Commission personnel are responsible for advising Mr. van den Broek, the Commissioner for External Political Relations. The CFSP Unit in the Council secretariat works to the presidency.

Malaysia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *124*, if he will give details of that section of the protocol between the Secretary of State for Defence and the Government of Malaysia relating the value of aid to amounts of arms purchased.

Mr. Goodlad: No. It is established practice that details of Government-to-Government exchanges are confidential.

We will co-operate fully in the inquiry announced by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Remand Prisoners (Police Cells)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the daily average number of remand prisoners and convicted prisoners held in police cells in each year since 1980 and in the current year to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking what was the daily average number of remand prisoners and convicted prisoners held in police cells in each of the years 1980 to 1993 inclusive, and in the current year to the latest available date.

The information you have requested is available for annual averages, calculated from the population figures for the last day of each month, which are given in the attached table. In 1981-1987 all prisoners held in police cells are assumed to be remand prisoners. For other years estimates have been made of the numbers held on remand and under sentence. Statistics on the number of prisoners held in police cells are published in table 1.5 of "Prison statistics, England and Wales".

Average population in police cells by type of custody 1980-1994[1]

Year	Remand	Sentenced	Total
1980	645	195	845
1981	125	—	125
1982	47	—	47
1983	310	—	310
1984	54	—	54
1985	45	—	45
1986	119	—	119
1987	537	—	537
1988	982	95	1,077
1989	103	7	110
1990	465	196	661
1991	682	406	1,088
1992	715	383	1,098
1993	13	1	14
[2]1994	9	0	9

[1] In 1981 to 1987 all prisoners held in police cells are assumed to be remand prisoners. For other years estimates have been made of the numbers held on remand and under sentence. Averages are calculated using the population figures for the last day of each month.

[2] 31 January.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current average cost by police force of keeping a prisoner in police cells, per night.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question requesting information about the current average cost by police force of keeping a prisoner in police cells, per night.

As prisoners have only been held by the Greater Manchester police during November and December, and more recently by two additional forces, Humberside and South Yorkshire in February, not accounts have been received. I am therefore unable to provide this information at present.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost incurred by his Department for keeping prisoners, both sentenced and remand, in police cells for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question requesting information about the total cost incurred by the Prison Service for keeping prisoners, both sentenced and remand, in police cells for the financial year 1992-93.

The total expenditure on keeping prisoners, both sentenced and remand, in polce cells for the financial year 1992-93 was £9,974,035. Further accounts relating to 1992-93, totalling £1,217,763 are under consideration.

Cook Islands (Bank Accounts)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with his opposite numbers in the European Union concerning the security implications of access by United Kingdom citizens to bank accounts registered in the Cook Islands; and what provisions exist under the protocols of the Trevi Group to restrict access to such bank accounts for the proceeds of crime.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. The regulations of banking services in the Cook Islands is a matter for the Cook Islands' authorities.

Police Codes of Conduct

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether anything exists in police codes of conduct to forbid officers passing on confidential information to third parties, including the media, whether for payment or not, during investigations into suspicious deaths; how often these codes have been breached in this respect in the last five years; how many officers have been disciplined or suspended; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the codes in this regard.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The police discipline code is contained in schedule 1 of the Police (Discipline) Regulations 1985—S.I.1985/518. Paragraph 6 of the code creates a disciplinary offence of improper disclosure of information which occurs, inter alia, when a member of a police force without proper authority communicates to any person, any information which he has in his possession as a member of a police force. Punishments for breaching the code include dismissal from the force. I have no reason to think that the provisions of the code are inadequate in this regard. Where money or other consideration has been accepted, the possibility would also arise that the common law offence of bribery had been committed.

Figures are not collected centrally about the categories of offences leading to disciplinary proceedings.

Police Body Armour

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make special separate funds available to inner city police forces for adequate provision of covert body armour for police constables working in hazardous duties on foot patrol, and for officers engaged on mobile duties, especially when operating road blocks.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. Police protective equipment is purchased out of normal polce funds. It is for chief officers of police to decide how to equip their officers.

Prisoners (Searches)

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has in relation to the powers of civilian staff in prisons to search prisoners.

Mr. Howard: Civilian staff in prisons conducting activities involving prisoners—for example, workshop instructors or catering staff—should be able to conduct non-intimate "rub-down" searches for unauthorised items such as concealed knives or sharp tools. This would make it unnecessary to bring in uniformed staff solely for that purpose and gives prison governors greater flexibility in their use of staff. In order to put the legal position beyond doubt, a clause is being tabled today for inclusion in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which will enable civilian staff authorised by the governor to conduct these searches. Only suitably trained or experienced staff regularly involved in the custody or supervision of prisoners would be authorised to use the power. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will bring forward similar measures for Scotland.

Lenient Sentences

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the Attorney General's right to appeal against lenient sentences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the oral reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 10 February at columns 441-42.

Prisoners

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish for the latest convenient year the number of *(a)* male, *(b)* female and *(c)* all prisoners sentenced to imprisonment by courts within Wales; and how many of these spent part or all of their sentences in prisons outside Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, dated 14 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking if he will publish for the latest convenient year the number of *(a)* male, *(b)* female and *(c)* all prisoners sentenced to imprisonment by courts within Wales; and how many of these spent part or all of their sentences in prisons outside Wales.

According to the records held centrally, some 2,876 prisoners, excluding fine defaulters, were first received into Prison Service establishments under sentence from courts in Wales during 1993. Of these 2,755 were male and 121 were female. Information on the numbers who spent part or all of their sentence in Prison Service establishments outside Wales could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The available information is for the establishment of first reception; of those sentenced by courts in Wales in 1993, 690 males and 121 females were first received under sentence into Prison Service establishments outside Wales. There are no female Prison Service establishments in Wales.

Hoax Fire Calls

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the county fire authorities in order of number of hoax calls received in the last year for which figures are available; and if he will also show in each authority the number of hoax calls as a percentage of the population.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on malicious false alarm incidents attended by local authority fire brigades in order of the number in 1992 is shown in the following table, which also shows the number expressed per 100 population.

Table showing, for 1992, the number of malicious false alarms for each fire authority and the number of malicious false alarms per 100 population

Fire authority	*Malicious false alarms*[1]	*Malicious false alarms per 100 population*[2]
Greater London	22,384	0·33
Strathclyde	16,349	0·71
Greater Manchester	11,972	0·47
West Midlands	10,747	0·41
West Yorkshire	7,999	0·39
Tyne and Wear	6,949	0·62
Merseyside	6,451	0·45
Lancashire	4,745	0·34
South Yorkshire	4,630	0·36
Cleveland	4,346	0·78
Northern Ireland	3,397	0·21
Humberside	3,104	0·35
Essex	2,957	0·19
Kent	2,678	0·17
Durham	2,574	0·43
Staffordshire	2,164	0·21
Mid Glamorgan	2,160	0·40
Gwent	2,109	0·47
Lothian and Borders	2,107	0·25
Derbyshire	1,920	0·20
Avon	1,837	0·19
Devon	1,724	0·17
South Glamorgan	1,638	0·40
Leicestershire	1,615	0·18
West Glamorgan	1,543	0·42
Cheshire	1,457	0·15
Nottinghamshire	1,446	0·14
Berkshire	1,350	0·18
Surrey	1,320	0·13
Cambridgeshire	1,232	0·18
Tayside	1,136	0·29
Fife	1,108	0·32
Hereford and Worcestershire	1,067	0·16
Buckinghamshire	1,036	0·16
Clwyd	1,024	0·25
Cumbria	1,013	0·21
Hertfordshire	989	0·10
Oxfordshire	986	0·17
Norfolk	984	0·13
Gloucestershire	867	0·16
Lincolnshire	862	0·15
Dyfed	806	0·23
East Sussex	793	0·11
Hampshire	779	0·05
Wiltshire	737	0·13
Bedfordshire	724	0·14
Shropshire	701	0·17
Dorset	693	0·10

Fire authority	*Malicious false alarms*[1]	*Malicious false alarms per 100 population*[2]
Northumberland	688	0·22
West Sussex	687	0·10
Warwickshire	681	0·14
Suffolk	632	0·10
Grampian	616	0·12
Northamptonshire	616	0·10
Central	567	0·21
North Yorkshire	555	0·08
Somerset	555	0·12
Cornwall and Scilly	360	0·08
Highlands and Islands	346	0·13
Gwynedd	309	0·13
Dumfries and Galloway	255	0·17
Powys	120	0·10
Isle of Wight	100	0·08

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] Based on 1991 mid-year estimates.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Chairman of the Commission is the Speaker of the House of Commons. The deputy chairman is the hon. Sir John Knox. The members are Miss Sheila Cameron QC and Mr. David Macklin CBE.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has appointed me as the chairman of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council. He has appointed the following as members for the period until 31 July 1994:

Mr. S. G. Bennett (Association of Metropolitan Authorities)
Mr. A. E. Best (Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers' Association)
Mrs. E. S. Brett (Association of County Councils)
Mr. K Cameron (Fire Brigades Union)
Mr. B. T. A. Collins (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services)
Mr. M. I. Davies (National Association of Fire Officers)
Mr. D. T. Davis (Institution of Fire Engineers)
Mr. M. R. Fordham (Fire Brigades Union)
Mr. T. L. Glossop (Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers' Association)
Mr. C. Grenyer (Association of County Councils)
Mr. W. J. A. Innes (Home Office)
Mr. D. Matthews (Fire Brigades Union)
Mr. G. Newton (National Association of Fire Officers)
Mr. D. Punshon (Association of County Councils)
Mr. A Ritchie (Association of Metropolitan Authorities)
Mr. B. G. Robinson (Chief Fire Officer, London Fire Brigade)
Mr. R. Scott (Fire Brigades Union)
Mr. G. Setterfield (National Association of Fire Officers)
Mr. J. Tiplady (Association of Metropolitan Authorities)
Mr. F. Walker (Association of Metropolitan Authorities)
Mr. M. Warner (Association of County Councils)
Mr. R. G. Williams (National Association of Fire Officers)
Dr. W. D. Woolley (Director, Fire Research Station)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The current membership is as follows:

Sir Leonard Peach (Chairman)
Mr. Peter Moorhouse (Deputy Chairman)
Mr. John Cartwright (Deputy Chairman)
Mr. Karamjit Singh
Mr. Gordon Marsh
Mr. Edward Wignall
Brigadier Anthony Vivian CBE
Miss Beryl Wallis
Mrs. Linda Cawsey
Mr. Mark Chapman CVO
Mr. William McCall
Miss Linda Haye
Lt. Col. Anthony Williams
Mr. Linbert Spencer

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the *(a)* approved establishment and *(b)* actual numbers of uniformed police constables for each of the Metropolitan police divisions for each month from January to December 1993 and the projected numbers for each month from January to April 1994.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that information relating to divisions is not held centrally. A table of figures showing uniform police constable strength and establishment at area level for each month of 1993 is shown. Projected figures for 1994 are not available.

Divisional uniform police constable establishment and strength

	Establishment	*Strength*
1 January 1993 to 1 February 1993		
1 Area	1,884·00	1,827·90
2 Area	1,824·00	1,779·50
3 Area	1,919·00	1,931·24
4 Area	1,520·00	1,569·40
5 Area	1,411·00	1,356·40
6 Area	1,918·00	1,876·21
7 Area	1,689·00	1,643·41
8 Area	1,288·00	1,309·31
TOTAL	13,453·00	13,293·37
PC variation	—	−159·63
Sergeant variation	—	+155·40
2 February 1993 to 1 March 1993		
1 Area	1,875·00	1,804·90
2 Area	1,819·00	1,802·50
3 Area	1,914·00	1,918·80
4 Area	1,532·00	1,553·90
5 Area	1,407·00	1,349·70
6 Area	1,913·00	1,862·61
7 Area	1,682·00	1,633·41
8 Area	1,375·00	1,297·31
TOTAL	13,517·00	13,223·13
PC variation	—	−293·87
Sergeant variation	—	+178·03
2 March 1993 to 31 March 1993		
1 Area	1,890·00	1,811·90
2 Area	1,836·00	1,809·10
3 Area	1,960·00	1,915·80
4 Area	1,655·00	1,545·90
5 Area	1,331·00	1,362·70

	Establishment	Strength
6 Area	1,910·00	1,865·01
7 Area	1,656·00	1,643·41
8 Area	1,306·00	1,306·31
TOTAL	13,544,00	13,260·13
PC variation	—	−283·87
Sergeant variation	—	+162·03
1 April 1993 to 4 May 1993		
1 Area	1,890·00	1,811·90
2 Area	1,836·00	1,809·58
3 Area	1,960·00	1,914·80
4 Area	1,655·00	1,544·90
5 Area	1,331·00	1,363·70
6 Area	1,910·00	1,864·01
7 Area	1,656·00	1,642·41
8 Area	1,306·00	1,306·31
TOTAL	13,544·00	13,257·61
PC variation	—	−286·39
Sergeant variation	—	+161·03
5 May 1993 to 2 June 1993		
1 Area	1,890·00	1,845·90
2 Area	1,836·00	1,831·68
3 Area	1,960·00	1,909·93
4 Area	1,655·00	1,530·90
5 Area	1,331·00	1,432·85
6 Area	1,910·00	1,902·11
7 Area	1,656·00	1,672·10
8 Area	1,290·00	1,306·50
TOTAL	13,528·00	13,431·97
PC variation	—	−96·03
Sergeant variation	—	+150·13
3 June 1993 to 5 July 1993		
1 Area	1,891·00	1,846·90
2 Area	1,836·00	1,830·43
3 Area	1,961·00	1,915·93
4 Area	1,656·00	1,517·50
5 Area	1,332·00	1,445·85
6 Area	1,911·00	1,918·21
7 Area	1,656·00	1,660·10
8 Area	1,291·00	1,299·90
TOTAL	13,534·00	13,442·82
PC variation	—	−91·18
Sergeant variation	—	+154·13
6 July 1993 to 2 August 1993		
1 Area	1,890·00	1,860·90
2 Area	1,836·00	1,846·43
3 Area	1,961·00	1,913·38
4 Area	1,656·00	1,520·49
5 Area	1,332·00	1,468·95
6 Area	1,911·00	1,932·20
7 Area	1,656·00	1,674·90
8 Area	1,291·00	1,301·90
TOTAL	13,534·00	13,519·15
PC variation	—	−14·85
Sergeant variation	—	+153·33
3 August 1993 to 6 September 1993		
1 Area	1,899·00	1,871·70
2 Area	1,857·00	1,840·43
3 Area	1,970·00	1,908·88
4 Area	1,663·00	1,523·29
5 Area	1,338·00	1,472·95
6 Area	1,918·00	1,935·20
7 Area	1,664·00	1,663·90
8 Area	1,295·00	1,323·90
TOTAL	13,604·00	13,540·25
PC variation	—	−63·75
Sergeant variation	—	+129·56
7 September 1993 to 4 October 1993		
1 Area	1,904·00	1,873·70
2 Area	1,861·00	1,834·56
3 Area	1,974·00	1,920·48
4 Area	1,667·00	1,534·69
5 Area	1,341·00	1,464·95
6 Area	1,921·00	1,927·63
7 Area	1,660·00	1,657·90
8 Area	1,297·00	1,326·50
TOTAL	13,633·00	13,540·41
PC variation	—	−92·59
Sergeant variation	—	+116·80
5 October 1993 to 1 November 1993		
1 Area	1,907·00	1,867·70
2 Area	1,864·00	1,824·56
3 Area	1,977·00	1,926·93
4 Area	1,670·00	1,530·69
5 Area	1,343·00	1,457·95
6 Area	1,924·00	1,922·63
7 Area	1,670·00	1,654·90
8 Area	1,299·00	1,323·20
TOTAL	13,654·00	13,510·56
PC variation	—	−143·44
Sergeant variation	—	+102·90
2 November 1993 to 6 December 1993		
1 Area	1,907·00	1,868·76
2 Area	1,864·00	1,816·36
3 Area	1,977·00	1,929·93
4 Area	1,670·00	1,553·69
5 Area	1,343·00	1,453·65
6 Area	1,924·00	1,918·36
7 Area	1,670·00	1,648·20
8 Area	1,299·00	1,328·20
TOTAL	13,654·00	13,517·15
PC variation	—	−136·85
Sergeant variation	—	+90·93
7 December 1993 to 31 December 1993		
1 Area	1,913·00	1,891·76
2 Area	1,870·00	1,823·36
3 Area	1,984·00	1,948·93
4 Area	1,675·00	1,568·69
5 Area	1,340·00	1,456·65
6 Area	1,929·00	1,921·36
7 Area	1,676·00	1,640·60
8 Area	1,302·00	1,326·20
TOTAL	13,697·00	13,577·55
PC variation	—	−119·45
Sergeant variation	—	+79·93

ENVIRONMENT

Housing

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish information giving details of the capital provided in the Budget for *(a)* Teesside and *(b)* Tyne and Wear for the provision of housing for each year since 1987.

Sir George Young: Capital for the provision and maintenance of housing is provided to English local authorities through housing investment programme—HIP—allocations, which are issued annually by the Department.

Information on HIP allocations made to each local authority in England for each year from 1979-80 to 1993-94 is available in the Library.

Information on HIP allocations for 1994-95 will be placed in the Library shortly. Information on 1994-95 allocations for those local authorities within the county of Cleveland, and within the former county of Tyne and Wear, are given in the table:

1994-95 HIP allocations

Local authority	*(£ thousand)*
Hartlepool	3,522
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	4,305
Middlesbrough	3,542
Stockton-on-Tees	3,926
Gateshead	5,921
Newcastle	8,779
North Tyneside	8,811
South Tyneside	3,896
Sunderland	8,746

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those that were consulted on the formation of the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: To date about 8,500 copies of the draft bidding guidance on the single regeneration budget have been distributed to a wide range of organisations and individuals, including local authorities, business organisations, training and enterprise councils and voluntary and community groups.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those who will be responsible for making the decisions in the regional offices of the single regeneration budget on how the budget is spent.

Mr. Baldry: The integrated regional offices and the single regeneration budget do not come into operation until April 1994. The bidding arrangements for the single regeneration budget for 1995-96 are currently the subject of consultation. Decisions on the bids will be made towards the end of this year. It is therefore too early to determine what detailed arrangements will be made within integrated regional offices for dealing with decisions on the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total budgets for which each regional director of the single regeneration budget is responsible and the amount of funding each is able to provide for regeneration in their respective areas.

Mr. Baldry: In its first year, the single regeneration budget will largely operate through the arrangements in place for the 20 contributing programmes and will honour existing commitments. Planned provision in 1994-95 is £1·442 billion and the expected regional distribution is:

	£ million
South East	15
Eastern	15
South West	42
East Midlands	68
West Midlands	175
Merseyside	103
North West	159
Yorkshire and Humberside	156
North East	159
London	369
	1,261
English Partnerships	181
Total	1,442

Notes:

1. These figures are provisional and are net of expected receipts. Where firm data is not yet available expenditure has been apportioned on the basis of the pattern of spend in 1992-93 and 1993-94.
2. For Department of Trade and Industry and Employment Department programmes transferring, Merseyside figures are included in those for the north west.

Council Tax

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to make in relation to council tax for the mentally impaired living alone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Where all the residents of a dwelling are severely mentally impaired a 50 per cent. council tax discount applies. In many cases the residents will be able to have all or part of the remaining liability met by council tax benefit.

We have received a number of representations to the effect that such dwellings should be exempt from the council tax. We are presently considering those representations: I shall let the hon. Member know when we have reached a conclusion.

European Funding Schemes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the European funding schemes for which local authorities can apply, the total budget of each scheme, the percentage that each local authority can apply, the total amount of each budget that is designated to England, and the total amount claimed by local authorities in each year from 1980.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Rhinoceroses

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had with other parties to the convention on international trade in endangered species on how to clamp down on the illegal trade in rhinoceros.

Mr. Atkins: At the most recent meeting of the Standing Committee of the convention, held in Brussels in September, it was decided to put further pressure on consumer countries, especially China and Taiwan, to end all internal trade in rhino products and to bring stocks under Government control. The United Kingdom has observer status on the committee and played an active part in the discussions leading to the decisions. In addition the United Kingdom, together with our European partners, fully supported the discussion of the CITES Standing Committee to send technical and high-level delegations to rhino-horn consuming countries to assess the effectiveness of their efforts to combat illegal trade in rhino horn and to offer advice and assistance. We have contributed £5,000 towards the costs of the high-level delegation which has recently visited China and Taiwan. The Government will be represented at the Standing Committee meeting next month which will consider what further action should be taken in the light of the delegations reports.

The United Kingdom Government have taken a leading role in encouraging greater efforts to conserve rhinos. On 3 February my Department announced a grant of £60,000 towards a project co-funded by the European Commission and the Worldwide Fund for Nature to appoint a scientific officer to co-ordinate rhino conservation activities throughout Africa.

Waveney District Council

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to relax spending restrictions to permit Waveney district council to match, pound for pound, the money recently awarded to parts of Waveney under structural funds, objective 5b; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: No. For an explanation of the Government's policy on matching funding for European regional development fund grants, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) on 11 January 1994, *Official Report*, columns 3-4.

Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his decision on the Nidderdale area of outstanding natural beauty designation order submitted to him by the Countryside Commission.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today confirmed the order which will designate Nidderdale as an area of outstanding natural beauty. The designation covers an area of 603 sq km in north Yorkshire. Nidderdale is important for its natural beauty and unspoilt rural character which the designation will help to secure.

Housing Action Trust, Brent

Mr. Merchant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further progress has been made with the proposal for a housing action trust in Brent.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce, after further consultation with the tenants, that a postal ballot will be held from 14 to 27 March 1994. This will enable the tenants of the Stonebridge estate to vote on whether they are in favour of the establishment of a housing action trust for their estate.

The housing action trust proposal represents a major opportunity to improve the estate and the quality of life within it, but the final decision must rest with the tenants. I very much hope that they will use their vote to decide the future of the estate.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Biwater Group

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the Overseas Development Administration's water and sewerage sector budget has supported contracts won by the Biwater Group in each year since 1985.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration does not have a separate water and sewerage sector budget. Since 1985 Biwater Group has been awarded contracts under our bilateral aid programme spending as follows. Two contracts supported under the aid and trade provision, that is, a rural water supply scheme in Malaysia which commenced in 1986 with ATP support of £59·46 million and a hill country water project in Sri Lanka which commenced in 1988 with ATP support of £2·129 million.

Under our regular country programme—excluding ATP which is centrally managed—we maintain central records on contracts undertaken direct by ODA with United Kingdom firms as part of technical co-operation. These show that a contract, valued at £1·5 million as part of the Cairo waste water project, was placed with the Biwater Group and began in 1992.

For aid other than technical cooperation, contracts are placed with United Kingdom firms by overseas Governments or their institutions and not by ODA; our financial aid is made to the recipient country Government as a contribution to the cost of these contracts. Information on which United Kingdom firms received these contracts is not maintained centrally in ODA. Such information could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

Brazil

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by value each British aid project in Brazil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration—ODA—is currently funding 15 projects in Brazil. These are:

1. Anglo-Brazilian Climate Observation Study (£2·9 million)
2. Rainforest Silviculture Research Project (£2·4 million)
3. Caxiuana Research Station (£1·9 million)
4. Forest Biomass and Nutrient Research Project (£1·7 million)
5. Lake Mamiraua Ecological Research Station (£1·6 million)
6. Rain Forest Pilot Programme Trust Fund (£1·5 million)
7. Tocantins Forestry and Rural Development Project (£1·1 million)
8. Tapajos National Forest Management Project (£0·8 million)
9. Aromatic Plants Developments Project (£0·7 million)
10. Central Amazonia Flora and Vegetation Project (£0·6 million)
11. Recife Environmental Control Project (£0·4 million)

12. Floodplain Forest Ecology and Management Project (£0·3 million)
13. Sao Paulo State Water and Sewerage Project (£0·2 million)
14. Assistance to the Brazilian Indian Agency, FUNAI (£0·2 million)
15. Yanomami Health Project (£0·2 million)

The United Kingdom signed a memorandum of understanding on environmental co-operation with the Government of Brazil in July 1989. This provides the main focus for the programme which is the United Kingdom's largest in Latin America.

In addition to these bilateral projects, we provide some £1·8 million per annum to finance post graduate and technical training awards for Brazilian students in the United Kingdom. Also, ODA's joint funding scheme is presently supporting 53 small projects in Brazil, managed by British non-government organisations, at a cost of more than £0·7 million. Other small projects are supported by the British ambassador's discretionary scheme, including a £55,000 grant to the Sao Martinho shelter for street children in Rio de Janeiro.

Vietnam

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans there are to make grants from the know-how fund available for Vietnam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The know-how fund provides specialist skills and training for the former Soviet Union and eastern and central Europe. We are providing £10 million worth of similar technical co-operation for Vietnam under our aid programme to that country.

Commonwealth Institute

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with other Commonwealth Governments about the increasing their funding of the Commonwealth Institute; and what discussions he has had with the Commonwealth Secretariat about improving links between the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Institute, and expanding financial support from the Commonwealth to the Commonwealth Institute.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All Commonwealth high commissioners in London and the Commonwealth Secretary-General are, ex-officio, governors of the institute's board. Through them, the assessors on the board, appointed by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to represent Government Departments in the United Kingdom, maintain a continuing dialogue on the level of funding and support provided by Commonwealth Governments and the Commonwealth secretariat, in addition to the direct contacts between the institute's staff and high commissions and the secretariat.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what purpose the Commonwealth Institute building would be put if the Commonwealth Institute closes or virtually closes in 1996; and what representations have been made to him by the appropriate local authority about the planning implications of the closure of the Commonwealth Institute, or about acceptable alternative uses for the building.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The board, the director-general and staff of the institute are developing a re-launch strategy to ensure that the institute does not close in 1996. Any alternative use to which the institute's building could be put would have to take account of the building's grade II* listed status and the terms of the 999 year lease governing the use of the site and building.

On 13 October 1993, the Council of the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea adopted the following resolution:

"That this Council notes with dismay the proposal to withdraw funding from the Commonwealth Institute and regrets that should the Institute close, its valuable role in promoting inter-cultural awareness will be lost."

In conveying the resolution to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, the Leader of the council argued that since it occupies a grade II* listed building the Commonwealth Institute was unique in the borough and that alternative uses for the building would be very hard to find if the institute had to leave.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received urging his Department to continue grant in aid to the Commonwealth Institute beyond 1996; what were the main conclusions of the inquiry, carried out by Lord Armstrong, into the Commonwealth Institute; if he will place a copy of Lord Armstrong's report in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received many representations from MPs and members of the public.

In his review of the Commonwealth Institute, Lord Armstrong identified four options for the institute:

(i) a larger grant in aid
(ii) a continuation of the status quo
(iii) the transfer of the Institute's collection elsewhere, and look separately at the buildings
(iv) the closure of the Institute.

In his conclusions, Lord Armstrong advised against closure; assumed increased Government funding to be unlikely; and recommended that the institute should be enabled to continue to run as at present, while the feasibility of transferring the collection of objects to another institution was examined. He judged that if there was no prospect of a significant increase in Government funding it would be unsatisfactory for all concerned to keep the institute ticking over indefinitely at the present level.

I have placed a copy of Lord Armstrong's review in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with the Departments for Education and for National Heritage and other Government Departments from his Department about spreading or switching funding of the Commonwealth Institute; and what discussions he has had with private sector interests about private sponsorship of the work of the Commonwealth Institute.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My Department consulted other Government Departments, including the Departments for Education and National Heritage, before the decision to cease funding in 1996 was announced on 21 September 1993. No other Government Department was able to assist financially.

The outlines for a relaunch plan were presented by the board of governors to the institute's annual general meeting on 16 November 1993. The detailed implementation including the financing of this plan is under preparation by the director-general.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Post Office users councils for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. McLoughlin: The members of the Post Office users councils for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as at 21 January 1994 are as follows:

Scotland

Mr. Andrew O. Robertson (Chairman)
Mr. Richard J. Ardern
Dr. Tom N. A. Begg OBE JP
Lady Jane Forbes
Mrs. Vivian B. Greenhill
Mr. D. G. Marnoch
Mrs. Elizabeth A. Packard
Mr. Alastair J. Turnbull
Mr. Peter Wilson JP
Mr. Edward Young

Wales

Dr. Eleanor M. James (Chairman)
Mr. Gordon Donaldson
Mr. Donald R. Dutton JP
Mr. Graham S. Hall
Mr. C. F. Hay
Mrs. Margaret M. Kerridge
Mr. Huw Ifor Lewis
Mr. Lawrence Murphy
Miss Meryl Pike
Mr. Ellis Roberts
Mr. Neville W. Simms MBE
Mr. Anthony D. White

Northern Ireland

Mrs. Gwen Savage (Chairman)
Mr. Ralph G. Bauer
Mrs. R. P. M. Goldie
Mrs. Olive M. Marshall
Mr. James O. McDonald MBE
Deaconess Hilary M. McDowell
Mr. Albert J. Sherrard
Mr. John D. Thompson
Mr. George B. Turkington

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for England.

Mr. McLoughlin: The members of the English Advisory Committee on Telecommunications as at 21 January 1994 are:

Miss Moira E. Black (Chairman)
Ms Anne Ballard
Mrs. Diana C. Banks OBE
Mr. Harry Branchdale
Mr. Iain R. Bryce
Mr. Samuel J. Cooper
Mr. John D. Green
Mr. Robert F. Little
Mr. Brian M. Love
Ms Claire B. Milne
Mr. Douglas R. Oram
Dr. Joyce M. Wood

Aerospace Industry

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's assistance to the British aerospace industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since 1979 the Department has provided over £1·5 billion of support for major civil aerospace projects in the form of launch aid and support for research and technology. The DTI also helps the industry to sell its products and services abroad, in co-operation with other Departments, and ECGD has provided over £735 million of export credit cover to support these sales over the last three years.

Ferrous Scrap

Mr. Michael: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what is his assessment of the impact of increased demand and price for ferrous scrap internationally on the United Kingdom industry; and what steps he intends to take to help the United Kingdom industry;

(2) what assessment his Department has made of *(a)* demand and *(b)* price of ferrous scrap in the current year and in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government have been closely monitoring recent developments. Ferrous scrap is an internationally traded commodity and as such will vary in price according to the level of supply and demand.

I have agreed to meet a delegation from the steel and foundry industries. We have also discussed these matters with the European Commission, which is currently undertaking an in-depth study of the international scrap market. We will be studying the results carefully.

Mr. Michael: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of export of ferrous scrap *(a)* in terms of tonnage and *(b)* in terms of value in each of the past 10 years; and what is his projection for 1994.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is published in the "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom, Central Statistical Office", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Eggar: The Department's publicity advertising in the current year has included the following:

Export Services
Objective: to encourage firms to make use of Overseas Trade Services in tackling markets abroad.

Assessment: responses and take up of information and services.

Business in Europe
Objective: to encourage United Kingdom firms into other European markets, and to provide information and help.

Assessment: responses and take up of information and services.

Small firms merit award for research and technology
Objective: promotion of the SMART scheme to stimulate technological innovation in small firms.

Assessment: responses and applications.

Firework safety
Objective: to alert the public to the need to enjoy fireworks safely.

Assessment: injury statistics are published annually.

Inward investment
Objective: to promote the United Kingdom as the preferred European location for foreign investment.

Assessment: awareness and monitoring of the number and quality of responses.

Queen's awards
Objective: to attract applicants for the Queen's Awards for Export, Technological and Environmental Achievement.

Assessment: responses and applications.

The Department has many other promotional programmes, most of which have involved little or no advertising expenditure in the current year. Each has its own objectives and evaluation arrangements. Examples of topics covered are: DTI services to business; export promotion; small firms and business link; innovation and technology services; consumer affairs; industry sponsorship; business and the environment; deregulation; renewable energy; United Kingdom space interests; assisted areas; manufacturing and management best practice; and United Kingdom offshore supplies expertise.

Most of these activities will continue in 1994-95, and media allocations will be made during the year according to need.

Details of advertising and other promotional activities by the Department's agencies are not held centrally.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade for what reasons the reprocessing of a final load of pressure for the reactor fuel was authorised following the termination of the fast reactor programme.

Mr. Eggar: Reprocessing the spent fuel represents the best value for money, based on both technical and economic grounds.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the implications for the frequency of plutonium nitrate shipments from Dounreay to Sellafield of plans to increase the rate of prototype fast reactor spent fuel reprocessing over the next three or more years.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) on 22 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *134*.

Research and Development

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on United Kingdom industrial research and development spending, by sector, in each of the past five years; what these figures are as a percentage of *(a)* sales, *(b)* profits and *(c)* dividends; and what comparison his Department has undertaken with the top 200 companies world wide.

Mr. Sainsbury: Data on United Kingdom business enterprise research and development expenditure by detailed product group for 1988-1992 were published in table 2 of the Central Statistical Office "First Release" (CSO(93)188) a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Research and development expenditure as a percentage of sales is given in table 3 of the same publication.

Research and development expenditure as a percentage of sales, profits, and dividends for individual United Kingdom companies is published in "The 1993 UK R&D Scoreboard" a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. This publication also contains similar data for the 200 international companies spending most of research and development. The data in the scoreboard are drawn from annual reports and accounts and are not directly comparable to the data published by the Central Statistical Office.

Net Book Agreement

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the Office of Fair Trading report of the inquiry into the net book agreement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: This is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading who announced on 23 November 1993 that he would consider again the case for applying to the restrictive practices court for leave to have its decision in respect of the net book agreement reviewed.

Charter Markets

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has consulted the Secretary of State for the Environment on the environmental effect of his proposals to change the legislation regarding charter markets; and what assessment he has made of the compatibility of those proposals with recent planning guidance on out-of-town shopping developments.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Consultations have, of course, taken place between myself and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment, on all these matters and the Government's proposals in the Deregulation Bill take due account of all the relevant issues.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a list of all initiatives that are currently planned or operating which will exploit tidal power.

Mr. Eggar: The Department's tidal energy programme is now being completed. Remaining work consists mainly of generic studies of the impact of tidal barrages on the environment.

Specific studies are being completed on steel-concrete sandwich composite for use in tidal barrages, mud transport in shallow water, fish deterrence, estuary sediment prediction, bird populations and mesocosm studies.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the non-fossil fuel obligation fund is allocated to *(a)* nuclear power, *(b)* wind power, *(c)* geothermal power, *(d)* tidal power and *(e)* other renewable energy sources.

Mr. Eggar: The level of payments to the individual technologies contracted under the non-fossil fuel obligation, and financed by the fossil fuel levy, depends on the contracts which the regional electricity companies sign in fulfilment of the NFFO orders, on the amounts of electricity generated under these contracts, and the market price of electricity. The Director General of Electricity Supply has estimated that in 1993-94 around 6 per cent. of the amount raised by the fossil fuel levy will go to renewables generators.

Mr. Asil Nadir

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action the Official Receiver has taken against Mr. Asil Nadir under the Insolvency Act 1986.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Official Receiver has discharged his usual functions under the Insolvency Act, 1986 in relation to the bankruptcy of Mr. Nadir.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when Mr. Asil Nadir will be eligible to be discharged as a bankrupt; and if he will give an assurance that he will not automatically be discharged.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Under section 279 of the Insolvency Act, 1986 most bankrupts are automatically discharged on the third anniversary of their bankruptcy. In Mr. Nadir's case the third anniversary of his bankruptcy is 25 November 1994. However, the court may, on the application of the Official Receiver, suspend the discharge of any bankrupt who fails to comply with any of his obligations under the Act, for example to co-operate with his trustee.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, pursuant to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, columns *522-23;* what qualifications the Committee of Selection ascertained under the terms of paragraph 2 of Standing Order No. 86 in respect of the nomination of the hon. Members for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), for Hexham, (Mr. Atkinson), for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) and for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) to serve on the First Scottish Standing Committee in respect of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: It is not the practice of the Committee of Selection to comment upon its private deliberations.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, pursuant to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, columns *522-32*, what documents the Committee of Selection had before it in ascertaining the qualifications of hon. Members nominated to serve on the First Scottish Standing Committee in respect of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: It would not be appropriate to disclose the material the Committee of Selection uses during its private meetings.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the national museum of science and industry.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the science museum are:

Sir Austin W. Pearce CBE *(Chairman)*
Professor Sir Eric Ash CBE FEng FRS
Dr. Mary D. Archer
The Lord Brabourne CBE
The Viscount Downe DL
Miss Mary S. Goldring OBE
Mrs. Anita Higham BA Lesl Med
Mrs. Joanna Kennedy CEng
HRH The Duke of Kent KG GCMG GCVO ADC
Dr. Bridget Ogilvie FI Biol
Sir Michael Quinlan GCB
Sir Dennis E. Rooke CBE ERS FEng
Leopold de Rothschild Esq CBE
Professor Sir John M. Thomas FRS
Sir Christopher S. Wates FCA

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the Board of the Greater Manchester museum of science.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the Manchester museum of science and industry are:

John Lee Esq. *(Chairman)*
Michael Bailey Esq.
Louis Brennan Esq.
Mrs. Joan Brown
Ms Gayle Broughall
Michael Dyble Esq.
Professor Michael Gordon Gibbons BSc BEng MSc PhD
Mrs. Virginia Halliwell
Ben F. Hurren Esq.
Ms Sue Runyard
Sir Gilbert Thompson
Dr. John Thynne
Col. John Timmins
Anthony Wilson Esq.
F. D. Wilson Esq.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the national portrait gallery.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the national portrait gallery are:

Rev. Professor Owen Chadwick, OM, KBE, DD, PPBA *(Chairman)*
Sir Anthony Acland
Mrs. Jane Benson
Sir Roger de Grey *(ex officio)*
Henry N. L. Keswick, Esq, MA
Professor Norbert C. Lynton, BA
Sir Oliver N. Millar, KCVO, FBA
Lord Morris, MA, DPhil
The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP *(ex officio)*
Professor Sir Eduardo Luigi Paolozzi
Professor John M. Roberts, MA, DPhil
Sir David Scholey, CBE
Mrs. Claire Tomalin
Mrs. Winifred Tumin
John Tusa, Esq
Lord Weidenfield

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the British library.

Mr. Sproat: The present members of the British library board are:

Sir Anthony Kenny FBA *(Chairman)*

Full-Time Members
Brian Lang (Chief Executive)
Michael Smethurst (Director, General Humanities and Social Sciences)
David Russon (Director General, Science Technology and Industry)

Part-Time Members
Penelope Lively
David Peake
The Hon. Edward Adeane, CVO
John Forty, CBE, PhD, DSc

Ronald Utiger, CBE
Michael Griffith, CBE, DL
Dame Ann Warburton, DCVO
Henry Heaey, FLA
Timothy Rix

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the Library and Information Services Council.

Mr. Sproat: The present members of the Library and Information Services Council (England) are:

Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer KBE, FRS *(Chairman)*
Peter Cox
Philip Holmes
Nigel Macartney
Sally Marshall
Michael Messenger
Nigel Oxbrow
Sheila Pantry
Keith Crawshaw
Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey
Duncan Turner
Christopher Heinitz
David Leadbeater
Brian Burch
John Hicks
Robert McKee
Brian Lang
Gillian Cross
John Sumsion OBE
Rosemary Gray

Museums and Galleries (Attendances)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the attendance figures for 1993 reported by the national museums and galleries in England for which he is responsible, broken down into the individual institutions, but including their outstations, with figures in each case of the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1992.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* Except for the British museum these attendance figures are now provided for financial years not for calendar years.

I list forecasts for the number of visitors to the 11 national museums and galleries in England for which I am responsible for the current financial year and the actual figures for the financial year 1992-93. More accurate figures for 1993-94 will be available later in July.

	Attendance in 1992-93 (million)	*Forecasts of attendance in 1993-94 (million)*	*Provisional percentage increase/decrease over the previous year*
Imperial War Museum	1·148	1·150	+0·2
National Gallery	4·200	3·700	−12·0
National Maritime Museum	0·541	0·510	−5·8
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	1·207	1·200	−0·6
National Portrait Gallery	0·563	0·600	+6·6
Natural History Museum	1·729	1·750	+1·2
Science Museum	2·579	2·635	+2·2
Tate Gallery	2·185	2·550	+16·7
Victoria and Albert Museum	1·454	1·435	−1·0
Wallace Collection	0·198	0·165	−16·7
Total[2]	15·804	15·695	—0·7
British Museum[1]	6·725	6·209	−7·7

[1] British Museum figures are for calendar years 1992 and 1993.
[2] Excluding British Museum attendances.

It is not possible to identify the number of visitors to the Royal Armouries which at present forms part of the Tower of London.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who are the members currently appointed to the court of the Bank of England.

Mr. Nelson: The current members of the Bank of England court are as follows:

Edward George, Esq (Governor)
Rupert Pennant-Rea, Esq (Deputy Governor)
Sir George Cadbury
Anthony Coleby, Esq
Sir Colin Corness
Mrs. Frances Heaton
Sir Christopher Hogg
Sir Martin Jacomb
Pendarell Kent, Esq
Mervyn King, Esq
Gavin Laird, Esq, CBE
Sir David Lees
Sir Christopher Morse, KCMG
Sir David Scholey, CBE
Professor Sir Roland Smith
Sir Colin Southgate
Brian Quinn, Esq

Ministers (Travel)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by Her Majesty's Treasury on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and in 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson: There was no specific budgetary provision for travel by the Chief Secretary in 1992-93. Expenditure on foreign travel was £660, all of which was incurred after 11 April 1992 attending ministerial meetings at the request of the Chancellor. There was no expenditure on internal travel.

International Monetary Fund

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is the policy of the IMF to publishes only general economic data and not specific policy advice.

Mr. Nelson: Discussions between IMF staff and country authorities are confidential. The IMF publish its assessment of the world economy in the "World Economic Outlook" which is published twice a year.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Department ever asked British Nuclear Fuels plc for a copy of the Touche Ross report on the economic prospects for THORP; and whether his Department has seen a copy of the report.

Mr. Portillo: My Department has neither seen nor asked for a copy of the Touche Ross report. We have received all the information we required on the economics of THORP from the Department of Trade and Industry.

Minimum Lending Rate

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table giving the minimum lending rate of the Bank of England on 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October in each year from 1 January 1990; what is the average mortgage interest rate for the leading building societies at each of these dates; and what is the differential between them.

Mr. Nelson: The minimum lending rate was not in use on any of the dates specified. The table gives the clearing banks' base rates on those dates, and the average mortgage interest rate of all building societies.

	Base rate	*Mortgage rate*	*Differential*
1990			
January	15·0	14·44	–0·56
April	15·0	15·24	0·24
July	15·0	15·25	0·25
October	15·0	15·25	0·25
1991			
January	14·0	14·34	0·34
April	12·5	14·24	1·74
July	11·5	12·75	1·25
October	10·5	11·82	1·32
1992			
January	10·5	11·39	0·89
April	10·5	10·96	0·46
July	10·0	10·82	0·82
October	9·0	10·60	1·60
1993			
January	7·0	8·98	1·98
April	6·0	8·04	2·04
July	6·0	8·01	2·01
October	6·0	8·00	2·00
1994			
January	5·5	8·00	2·50

PRIME MINISTER

Consultancies

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister how much the Government spent on employing private sector consultants for each year from 1979.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what recent discussions he has had with any of his EU counterparts on the environmental and proliferation implications of THORP.

The Prime Minister: I meet my European Union counterparts from time to time, when we discuss a range of issues.

Sir Peter Levene

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the report of Sir Peter Levene into the Government's use of external consultants.

The Prime Minister: At this early stage of the scrutiny no specific decision to publish has been taken but it is the normal practice for efficiency unit reports to be published.

Northern Region

Mr. Bates: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will list the results of the Government's policies in the northern region since 1983; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will list, by Government Departments, the principal aid given to the northern region in each year since 1983.

The Prime Minister: Since 1983, Government policy and programmes have helped with the transition of the economy of the north-east region to its present more diversified base.

This process has been substantially helped by overseas investment of over £2 billion. The Department of Trade and Industry has also committed over £1 billion in assisting industrial and commercial projects, helping to create or safeguard around an estimated 50,000 jobs. Unemployment in the north-east has fallen from a peak of 19·6 per cent. in 1986 to 12·7 per cent. now.

Visits, Scotland

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *406*, what were the dates and locations of each of his 13 visits to Scotland.

The Prime Minister: In 1991, I made five visits to Scotland, including Edinburgh, Glasgow—twice—Perth and Deeside.

In 1992, I also made five visits to Scotland, including Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, Strathclyde and Deeside.

In 1993, I made three visits to Scotland, including Glasgow, Edinburgh and Deeside.

Railway Manufacturing

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a copy of the representations made to him by the Design Council about the future of the British railway manufacturing industry and a copy of his response to the Design Council.

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, I have received no such letter.

Car Industries

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will urge the German, French and Italian Prime Ministers to encourage the sale of their indigenous car industries.

The Prime Minister: The commercially-driven trend towards more cross-border, joint ventures and strategic alliances is expected to continue in the European car industry. I am sure that my German, French and Italian opposite numbers will not stand in the way of this process, which will strengthen Europe's global competitiveness.

I am delighted that the French Government are following the United Kingdom's example and going ahead with their plan to privatise Renault.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the President of Cyprus on the talks now taking place under the role of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

The Prime Minister: I discussed United Nations efforts to resolve the Cyprus problem with President Clerides during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting last October. I have not had any discussions with him about the talks due to begin on 17 February. However my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, has been in close touch with the parties. He met the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Michaelides, on 2 February.

Biodiversity Convention

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what action he is taking to co-ordinate the policy of the FCO and the Department of the Environment in relation to the ratifaction of the biodiversity convention to include the land and marine environments of Ascension Island, British Indian Ocean territory, the Cayman Islands, Chagos Archipelago, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn Island, St. Helena, South Georgia and the south Sandwich Islands, Tristan da Cunha, Turks and Caicos Islands and Virgin Islands.

The Prime Minister: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has overall responsibility for the administration, and direct responsiblity for certain external relations, of the United Kingdom's 14 dependent territories and two dependencies.

Policy towards the territories is co-ordinated through an inter-departmental group, including the Department of the Environment, chaired by my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. That group has endorsed a strategy for consultation with the dependencies on whether they wish to be included in the United Kingdom's ratification of the biodiversity convention and, if not, whether they envisage the convention being extended to them at a later date.

As part of that process dependent territory Governments need to consider taking on the new commitments arising from Rio. The FCO is helping the dependent territories to assess the costs and benefits to them of any new legislation required.

Government Car Service

Mr. Soley: To ask the Prime Minister what is the procedure for recording the use of ministerial cars; and what arrangements are made to allow inspection of it by hon. Members.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

The procedure is that car log sheets are maintained for recording the use of all ministerial cars. The log sheets are retained as internal documents.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Spongiform Encephalopathy advisory committee.

Mr. Soames: The members currently appointed to the Spongiform Encephalopathy advisory conmmittee are:

Dr. D. A. J. Tyrrell, FRS, Chairman
Professor I. V. Allen
Professor F. Brown, FRS
Dr. R. H. Kimberlin
Mr. D. B. Pepper
Dr. W. A. Watson
Dr. R. G. Will
Dr. W. D. Hueston

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Veterinary Products committee.

Mr. Soames: The current membership of the Veterinary Products committee is as follows:

Chairman

Professor J. Armour, CBE
PhD, Dr. hc (Utrecht), MRCVS, FRSE

Members

Dr. D. N. Bateman
BSc, MB BS, Fian CV MRCS, MD, FRCP

Professor P. M. Biggs, CBE
DSc, Dr. hc (Liege), DVM (hc) Munich, FRC Path, CBiol, FIBiol, FRCVS, FRS

Professor J. W. Bridges
DSc, PhD, MRC Path, CChem, FRSC, CBiol, FIBiol, M Inst Env Sci, FIOSH

Professor J. R. Brown
BSc, MSc, PhD, FRPharmS, CChem, FRSC, CBiol, FIBiol

Mr. D. S. Collins
MVB, CBiol, MIBiol, DVPH(MH), MRCVS

Dr. A. Cooke
BSc, PhD, CBiol, MIBiol

Dr. R. Gaskell
BVSc, PhD, MRCVS

Professor G. Gettinby
BSc, PhD

Miss K. Gibson
BVMS, MRCVS

Dr. R. J. Heitzman
BSc, PhD

Dr. M. H. Jepson

BPharm, MSc, PhD, FRPharmS, MInstPkg, MIInfSc, MCPP

Professor G. E. Lamming OBE
DSc, PhD, MA, BSc, BSc (Agric), FIBiol, NDA BSc, Hon Assoc RCVS

Professor P. Lees
BPharm, PhD, Hon Assoc RCVS, CBiol, FIBiol, Dr hc (Gent)

Dr. K. A. Linklater
BVMS, PhD, FRCVS

Dr. Q. McKellar
BVMS, PhD, MRCVS

Dr. C. J. Powell
BSc, MSc, PhD, DipRCPath, MRCPath

Professor R. H. Richards
BA, MA, VetMB, PhD, MRCVS

Professor I. K. M. Smith
MSc, PhD, MRCVS

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to each of the agricultural wages committees (England).

Mr. Jack: The following persons are appointed to the agricultural wages committees in England:

Northern region—Carlisle
Mr. D. Hill
The Rev. Cannon R. W. Grayson
Mr. J. Brandwood
Mr. C. H. Saunders
Mr. J. N. Anthony

North Mercia region—Crewe
Mrs. J. Bond
Mr. G. Horey
Mr. S. W. Martin
Mr. G. B. Carvell

North east region—Northallerton
Mr. I. Potter
Mr. A. Nilson
Dr. W. Belfield
Mrs. M. Law
Mr. C. Oakley

East midlands region—Nottingham
Mr. I. D. McKinnell
Mr. R. W. Tinn

Anglia region—Cambridge
Mr. D. S. King
Mr. J. R. Leishman
Mr. K. S. John
Mr. E. J. Peskett

Wessex region—Bristol
Mrs. M. R. Sellers

South Mercia region—Worcester
Mr. H. Band
Mr. S. R. Haswell

South east region—Reading
Dr. W. T. Jackson
Miss P. Thorne
Mr. H. Pollins
Mr. A. J. Olson

South west region—Exeter
Mr. A. C. Gregson
Wing Commander G. W. E. Newby

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the agricultural dwelling house advisory committees.

Mr. Jack: Agricultural dwelling house advisory committees are not standing committees but are set up as required, with a membership drawn from panels of representative and independent members. The panels of independent members for England are appointed as follows:

Northern region—Carlisle
Mr. T. H. Richardson
The Rev. Cannon R. W. Grayson
Mr. D. Hill
Mr. J. Brandwood
Mr. C. H. Saunders
Mr. J. N. Anthony

Anglia region—Cambridge
Mr. C. Gillot
Mr. N. J. Mills
Ms J. I. Firrell
Mr. E. T. Kirby
Mr. M. J. Harrison
Mr. A. F. Felstead
Mr. K. S. John
Mr. E. J. Peskett
Mr. C. J. Barker
Mr. M. J. Coles
Mr. P. G. Scates
Mr. J. L. Fielding
Mr. D. S. King
Mr. D. P. Scarle
Mr. A. W. J. Langford
Mr. J. R. Leishman

Wessex region—Bristol
Mrs. M. R. Sellers
Mr. G. N. Sellers
Mr. W. H. Spray
Mr. G. F. Vincent
Wing Commander N. Rollin

South Mercia region—Worcester
Mr. H. Bank
Mr. S. R. Haswell
Mr. A. Druitt
Mr. C. P. Love
Mrs. E. M. Milton
Mr. G. Nicholas
Mrs. J. Thomas

South East region—Reading
Mr. M. R. Alden
Mr. A. L. Rowley
Mr. B. Brownsey
Group Captain J. Richardson
Mr. H. Pollins
Mr. P. J. Longhurst
Mr. A. J. Olson
Ms D. Thornton
Mr. D. M. Saunders
Dr. W. T. Jackson
Mr. A. Basford
Miss P. Thorne
Mr. G. B. Miller
Mr. R. Colling
Mr. M. G. Lang
Mrs. E. Slade
Mr. D. W. A. Stevens
Mr. A. T. R. Fletcher
Mr. R. Baden-Smith

North Mercia region—Crewe
Mr. R. D. Durrand
Mr. E. Lloyd
Mr. G. Horey

Mr. J. Waterhouse
Mr. J. M. Darlington
Mrs. M. M. Carpenter
Mr. H. Harland
Mr. S. W. Martin
Mr. G. V. Covell

North East region—Northallerton
Mr. I. Potter
Mr. I. Nelson
Dr. W. Belfield
Mrs. M. Law
Mr. C. Oakley

East Midlands region—Nottingham
Mr. R. J. Arnold
Mr. B. J. Clayton
Mr. R. W. Tinn
Mr. T. A. Twigg
Mr. A. W. Wilde

South West region—Exeter
Mr. A. C. Gregson
Mrs. S. Weston
Mr. B. K. Milner
Mr. P. M. Tresidder
Mrs. J. Thompson
Wing Commander S. W. E. Newby

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to allow the United Kingdom through the EC to join the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The European Community applied to join the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna—ICCAT—in the mid-1980's. Since ICCAT's constitution did not allow for regional organisations to become members, an amendment was necessary before the EC's application could be progressed.

The EC's application has now to be ratified by all the members of ICCAT before it can be accepted. Currently, ratification is still required from two member states; Morocco and Gabon, who have both indicated that they will be ratifying in due course.

The EC currently holds observer status with ICCAT whilst France, Spain and Portugal are members in their own right.

Farmers' Early Retirement Scheme

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which EU member states have implemented a farmers' early retirement scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Under Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2079/92 the farmers' early retirement scheme is optional for all member states. The following countries have implemented the scheme: France, Ireland and Belgium.

The United Kingdom, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Luxembourg, Spain and the Netherlands have to date not implemented the EC early retirement scheme. The scheme is not suited to the structure of farming in the United Kingdom and if implemented the cost required to come from national resources could be provided only by reducing expenditure on existing United Kingdom programmes.

Livestock Premium Scheme

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the due payment date for each livestock premium scheme for each year since 1985; what percentage has been paid for each after this date; and what representations she has received on late payment.

Mr. Jack: For the suckler cow premium scheme, European Community rules specified payment within 12 months of the opening of the scheme for 1985 to 1988, within 15 months of the opening of the scheme for 1989, and within 20 months of the opening of the scheme for 1990 to 1992. For the 1993 scheme, payments must be completed by 30 June 1994. Nearly all payments are made before the deadline.

There was no payment due date for the beef variable premium scheme which operated until March 1989. For its successor, the beef special premium scheme, European Community rules required payment to be made within nine months of a claim between 1989 and 1992. For the 1993 scheme, payments must be completed by 30 June 1994. Between 1989 and 1992, less than 0·1 per cent. of claims were paid after the due date. Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

European Community regulations specify that sheep annual premium payments must be paid by 15 October —31 December for the 1992 and earlier schemes—of the year following that to which the scheme relates. Nearly all payments are made before the deadline. There is no payment due date for the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme.

Representations are received from time to time about late or delayed payments. Every effort is made to pay premium as quickly as possible consistent with the need to ensure that applications meet the conditions of the schemes.

Fish Exporters

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to compensate fish exporting merchants and others who suffer financially as a consequence of action by French fishermen; if she will seek compensation from the French Government; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend has been in touch with the French Minister, Mr. Puech, and left him in no doubt that we expect him to ensure that the deplorable behaviour of some French fishermen is brought to an end as soon as possible.

We have secured the co-operation of the French authorities in providing police protection for fish consignments on arrival in France upon prior notification, via MAFF, of transport plans. A number of consignments have already passed through this system, which remains available to help trade continue.

We have also secured the French Government's assurance that compensation will be available, from the regional authorities in France, to those who suffer direct losses as a result of acts of vandalism. MAFF officials can advise and assist exporters on the construction of claims.

It is totally unacceptable that people going about their lawful business should be subjected to violence and intimidation. We shall maintain our pressure on the French authorities to restore normality.

Sheep Dipping

Mr Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will now make sheep dipping compulsory; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans to do so.

Fishing Fleets (Monitoring)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money has been made available by the EU to improve monitoring of fishing fleet activity; and how it will be spent.

Mr. Jack: Responsibility for ensuring compliance with the provisions of the common fisheries policy rests with individual member states. Under the terms of Council decision 89/631 EEC the Commission may contribute up to 50 per cent. of the costs of the acquisition or modernisation of capital equipment for use in fisheries enforcement. This scheme runs from 1991 to 1995 and provision is made for expenditure of up to 22 million ECUs in each calendar year. To the end of 1992 a total of 32 million ECUs had been spent.

EDUCATION

Learning Disabilities

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps have been taken during the implementation of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to ensure the continuation and expansion of non-vocational courses for students with learning disabilities.

Mr. Boswell: The duties on the Further Education Funding Council and LEAs under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 require them to ensure that adequate further education provision, including non-vocational courses, is available for students with learning difficulties or disabilities. We have promoted, through guidance to the Council and LEAs, the maintenance and development of provision for these students. The Government funds the FEFC to enable it to meet its responsibilities, and the local authority grant settlement takes account of all local authority responsibilities, including provision of non-vocational further education for students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by his Department *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Robin Squire: In 1993-94, the campaigns listed included newspaper advertising but did not include radio or television advertising:

The 1993 school testing campaign

The objective was to advertise the availability of an information leaflet for parents summarising tests and assessments at seven, 11 and 14 in the national curriculum.

GM schools campaign

The objective is to advertise the availability of publications giving factual information about grant-maintained status.

The 1994 school testing campaign

The objective is to advertise the availability of an information leaflet for parents which summarises tests at seven, 11 and 14 in the national curriculum.

The following campaign included both press and radio advertising:

The Charters for Further Education and Higher Education

The objective was to publicise the charters to allow as many students, potential students, parents, employers and others to obtain copies.

All of the above advertising campaigns offered individuals the opportunity to order their own copy of the relevant information leaflet. In each case, providing the public with a mechanism for directly obtaining information was an important objective of the campaign.

The following campaign did not include advertising:

The DFE roadshow—A Sound Education

The roadshow visited a number of venues around the country with the objective of updating parents on the Department's education policies and explaining how they can become more involved in their children's education.

Campaigns are evaluated by pre- and post-campaign market research into their effectiveness, the number of coupon and telephone responses and the number of leaflets issued.

Publicity activities for 1994-95 have not yet been decided.

Capital Programmes

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to changing place cost multipliers in assessing capital programme allocations to take into account real costs incurred by local authorities.

Mr. Forth: The cost-multipliers used in the calculation of cover for basic need projects are derived from analysis of actual costs incurred by local education authorities through projects to provide new places. They represent a challenging but achievable target.

My right hon. Friend will consider carefully any representations he receives about changing the means by which cover is provided to meet basic need.

Examinations

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the extent of anomalies in the published tables of school examination results arising from pupils entering for GCSE a year early; and what proposals he has for rectifying the figures for the overall performance of schools for pupils at the age of 16 years.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend is well aware of the arguments concerning the basis on which GCSE information should be presented in school performance tables, and has considered them carefully on several occasions. He continues to believe that the case for publishing data which reflect pupils' achievements before or during the year in which they reach the age of 16 has much to commend it, since it provides a clear and consistent record of results gained by the end of compulsory schooling. He will however shortly be

consulting about the basis on which the 1994 tables should be published. Final decisions will be taken in the light of that consultation.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement concerning the validity of comparing results in different areas when they are based on examinations of different boards.

Mr. Robin Squire: Such comparisons should be generally valid since national examinations have built-in safeguards to ensure consistency in examining standards. All GCE A/AS level and GCSE syllabuses must satisfy criteria set by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority—SCAA. GCSE examinations must be conducted in accordance with the code of practice which my right hon. Friend introduced last year. The Office for Standards in Education has reported that the GCSE code has had a beneficial effect on examining and awarding standards at that level in 1993, and my right hon. Friend has now commissioned SCAA to develop a similar code for GCE. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications requires the awarding bodies for general national vocational qualifications to comply with a code of practice on external testing.

School Governors

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to introducing a scheme for payment of loss of earnings for members of school governing bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: No such scheme has been considered. There is little difficulty in recruiting people to school governorship, which is part of the long tradition of unpaid voluntary service in this country.

Dyslexia

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *933*, if he will provide details as to the way in which the £300,000 for research into dyslexia is being spent; and what plans exist for additional spending into the early identification of this condition.

Mr. Forth: The Department has provided £250,000 for a research project based at Harris city technology college which is examining ways in which information technology can assist dyslexic pupils; and £74,500 for joint research being carried out by the Hereford and Worcester Dyslexia Association and the University of Birmingham into phonological awareness in pre-school children and ways in which teachers can identify and teach children with dyslexia. The latter amount includes £43,500 which the Department has recently agreed to provide to enable the research to continue for a further two years until 1996. The Department is currently considering further requests for funding research into dyslexia.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children are estimated to suffer from dyslexia in England and Wales; what is the trend in numbers; and how the figures are collected.

Mr. Forth: The Department does not collect such statistics.

The British Dyslexia Association estimates that approximately 300,000 children in England and Wales have dyslexia. There is no discernible trend in the number of children with dyslexia.

SCOTLAND

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many times the sites of special scientific interest appeals committee has met; and what decisions have been taken on each occasion.

Sir Hector Monro: The advisory committee on sites of special scientific interest has met five times. Those meetings have been used to put in place the procedures under which the committee will consider any cases referred to it by Scottish Natural Heritage. SNH is required to receive and consider the advice of the committee on the matters that have been referred to it. To date no cases have been referred to the committee. A copy of the committee's report for 1992-93 has been placed in the Library.

Astronomer Royal

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he hopes to reach conclusions about the appointment of an Astronomer Royal for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Advice will be given in due course to Her Majesty the Queen on an appointment to the office of Astronomer Royal for Scotland.

Arable Area Payments Scheme

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the maximum, *(b)* the minimum and *(c)* the average amount paid out under the arable area payments scheme in Scotland in the latest available year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* In 1993, the maximum payment made to a Scottish producer under the arable area payments scheme was just over £340,000. The minimum AAPS payment cannot be identified at this time because of the need to update the computer system for recording individual claims under the simplified element of AAPS. The average AAPS payment in Scotland in 1993 was £8,100, although this figure does not take into account the final oil seeds payment due to be paid by the end of March.

Diabetics

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of insulin-dependent diabetics in Scotland; and how many of them live alone.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* The number of insulin-dependent diabetics in Scotland is not recorded. However, in 1986 a working group of the National Medical Consultative Committee estimated that there were some 50,000 diabetics in Scotland, and that some 35 per cent. of them were insulin-dependent. On that basis the number of insulin-dependent diabetics in Scotland would be about 17,500, of whom perhaps 25 per cent. live alone.

Environmental Sponsorship

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many requests for environmental sponsorship have been received by Scottish Natural Heritage; and if he will list those granted and those rejected.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 4 February 1994]:* Details of grants made in 1992-93 will be given in SNH's annual report for that year which will be published later this month.

Holyrood House

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what accommodation is designated for members of the royal family excluding Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Phillip at Holyrood house; what accommodation is available for their staff; and how costs are allocated between the occupants and his Department.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend is responsible for the entire cost of the maintenance of the fabric of the palace, for security and for the cost of utilities such as fuel and telephones. All other costs are met by the royal household, which is also responsible for the allocation of accommodation within the palace. I understand that no accommodation is allocated to any particular member of the royal family.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will visit the west Dykebar area of Paisley to discuss with residents the provision of local government services.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit the west Dykebar area. The hon. Member will, of course, have the opportunity to raise the issue of the provision of local government services in west Dykebar and other parts of Scotland during the passage of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Local Authorities (Applicants)

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to make regulations governing the vetting of qualifications, claimed by applicants to senior and promoted posts in local government; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the arrangements made by local authorities to vet the qualifications of applicants for professional posts in local government; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what advice he has given to local authorities on the vetting of professional qualifications claimed by applicants for promoted posts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* It is for local authorities, as independent corporate bodies, responsible for the appointment of staff, to arrange to vet the qualifications of job applicants as they consider necessary. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has no locus in this matter.

After School Care Initiative

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was given to each local enterprise council in 1993-94 for the after school care initiative; and what is the estimated outturn expenditure by each LEC in 1993-94 in that area of activity.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The allocation of resources to the local enterprise companies is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairmen of those bodies to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Scottish Arts Council

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations or individuals in receipt of awards from the Scottish Arts Council; if he will give details of the funding of the Scottish Arts Council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland, will assume responsibility for the Scottish Arts Council from my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, on 1 April 1994. The Scottish Arts Council's annual reports, copies of which are available in the Library, list the organisations and individuals in receipt of Scottish Arts Council funding. Subject to Parliamentary approvals, funding for the Scottish Arts Council in 1994-95 will be £23·777 million.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May".

Scottish Homes

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many properties have been sold by Scottish Homes in the parliamentary constituency of Cunninghame, South during each of the last five years; and how much money has been raised from these sales;

(2) how many Scottish Homes properties there are in each of the parliamentary constituencies in Scotland; and what is the current valuation of the Scottish Homes' properties in each.

Lord James Dougas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* The information requested is a matter for Scottish Homes. I have asked its chairman, Sir James Mellon, to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Training

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Scottish Office and European Community money has been spent on training *(a)* unemployed youths aged 16 to 18 years, *(b)* 18 to 24 years and *(c)* the long-term unemployed in the parliamentary constituency of

Greenock and Port Glasgow; how many such trainees subsequently found employment; and which organisations were so financed to (i) commission and (ii) conduct the training programme in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* Responsibility for the delivery of Government training programmes in Scotland was transferred from the training agency to Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise in April 1991. The information on expenditure requested by the hon. Member is not available at parliamentary constituency level.

Old Royal High School

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to put the former Crown Office building, the Old Royal high school in Edinburgh on the market.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

Detailed consideration has been given to the future use of the Old Royal high school in conjunction with the Scottish Office and the House authorities. An announcement on that will be made shortly.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Science and Engineering

36. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives he is taking to promote a greater interest by young people in science and engineering.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right to highlight the importance of encouraging young people to take an interest in science and engineering. This campaign which I launched last month includes a range of activities aimed at young people. In particular, the Office of Science and Technology is providing grants of £150,000 for projects involving school children.

41. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many scientists and engineers there are employed in Britain in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the work force; and what is the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. David Davis: The spring 1993 labour force survey indicated that of just over 24 million employees, just over 1·5 million, or 6·7 per cent., held a higher education qualification in a science, engineering or technological subject. According to OECD figures, which are based on 25 to 34-year-olds only, in 1991 there were about 770 science and engineering graduates per 100,000 of the United Kingdom labour force. This compares with a mean for the OECD of 633 per 100,000.

37. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the costs of the citizens charter, to the latest possible date.

Mr. David Davies: The citizens charter applies to all public services, and this is reflected in their individual expenditure programmes. Centrally, the cost of the charter unit between the inception of the citizens charter and 31 December 1993 was £6,870,549.

38. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further plans he has to make the citizens charter justiciable.

Mr. Waldegrave: The strength of the citizens charter lies in raising the standard of public services. We have no plans to make it legally enforceable. However, where necessary, specific charter provisions are backed by legislation.

Civil Service

39. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has had from staff organisations regarding his plans to introduce changes to the civil service.

Mr. David Davis: The Government keep in touch with the civil service unions on key issues as they arise.

Science White Paper

40. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response he has received from industrialists and academics for the technology foresight proposals set out in the science White Paper.

Mr. Waldegrave: Industrialists and academics have welcomed the technology foresight proposals set out in the White Paper. Well over 3,000 individuals, representing companies, academic institutions, Government Departments and other organisations have been consulted.

Research Programmes

42. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what research programmes he has authorised directly connected to his Government's commitments at the United Nations conference on environment and development.

Mr. Waldegrave: The research councils already make a major contribution to the strategic areas addressed by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development through established and developing research programme, which are reviewed annually. The Government's commitments post-Rio did not include an undertaking to commission new research programmes in any particular area.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil service posts have now been included in executive agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Over 346,000 civil servants, 60 per cent. of the total, are now working in 91 executive agencies and other organisations operating on next steps lines. Functions covering over a further 88,000 civil servants are under consideration for agency status.

Public Bodies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he has given to the establishment of a national register of members of appointed public bodies and authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have no proposal to establish a United Kingdom-wide register of members of appointed public bodies and authorities. It is normal practice for the names of members of public bodies to appear in the individual body's annual report. Public bodies should always be ready to provide a list of their membership and the organisation's postal address at which members may be contacted.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what requirements are made in respect of members and appointed public bodies and authorities as to the availability to the public to their names, addresses, telephone numbers, occupations, political affiliations and financial interests.

Mr. Waldegrave: Because of the diversity in the nature and functions of these bodies, there are no general requirements. "Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs): A Guide to Departments" states that Departments are responsible for ensuring that appropriate rules of conduct are brought to the attention of candidates for membership; that the legislation founding NDPBs with trading or other financial objectives should include safeguards against conflicts of financial interest; that Departments considering restrictions on business appointments by NDPB board members should seek legal advice; and that members of NDPBs are expected to follow the long-standing rules on participation in political activities. For those bodies which are not NDPBs, Departments are expected to make separate provisions.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Natural Environment Research Council.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current members of the Natural Environment Research Council are:

Mr. R. Malpas, CBE, FEng (Chairman)
Dr. Eileen Buttle (Acting Chief Executive)
Professor J. R. L. Allen, FRS
Professor G. S. Boulton, FRS
Dr. P. J. Bunyan
Dr. M. J. Carter
Professor W. G. Chaloner, FRS
Lord Chorley
Dr. D. J. Fisk
Dr. I. J. Graham-Bryce
Mr. E. R. Hassall
Professor M. P. Hassell, FRS
Professor B. J. Hoskins, FRS
Professor H. E. Huppert, FRS
Professor P. S. Liss
Dr. R. J. Pentreath
Professor D. A. Ritchie, FRSE
Dr. G. W. Robinson
Professor J. I. Sprent, FRSE
Professor S. A. Thorpe, FRS

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Board for Research Councils.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Advisory Board for the Research Councils was abolished on 31 December 1993.

Roads

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *698*, how may private citizens obtain information relating to local authorities cost-benefit analysis calculations in respect of local highway schemes.

Mr. Waldegrave: Private citizens should write to the director of transport within the relevant local authority.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what provisions of the citizens charter assist private citizens wishing to ascertain the background assumptions and method of calculation for cost-benefit analysis prepared by local authorities in respect of local road schemes.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no such provisions within the citizens charter. However, local authorities have discretion to disclose what information they see fit. There are also statutory requirements within the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 which requires local authorities to provide members of the public with information of this type.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *698*, regarding cost-benefit analysis carried out by local authorities in respect of bypass schemes, what powers he has to compel local authorities to disclose this information to citizens.

Mr. Waldegrave: Ministers do not have such powers over local authorities.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Personal Pensions

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of those covered by personal pensions at the rebate-only level are entitled only to the minimum benefits needed to contract out of state earnings-related pensions.

Mr. Hague: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) on 30 November 1993 at column *433*.

National Insurance Rebate

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the progress of his discussions on the reconsideration of the national insurance rebate for those contracted out of state earnings-related pensions and in particular the possibility of changing an age-related rebate.

Mr. Hague: The Government are committed to considering options for a new system of rebates related to age for personal pension holders and possibly other contracted-out schemes. A consultation exercise was conducted between 10 December 1993 and 15 January 1994. We are now considering the responses received.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps the Chancellor has taken to promote the citizens charter in respect of the Child Support Agency and discrimination against men.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency is committed to the principles of public service set out in the citizens charter. This commitment is underpinned by its own client charter, published in April 1993 at the agency's launch.

The agency's charter sets out the standards of service that clients using its services are entitled to expect, and is freely available from agency offices. A leaflet explaining these standards is sent out automatically with every child support maintenance application or enquiry pack.

A basic principle of the Child Support Act is that parents should provide financial support for their children whenever they can afford to do so, whatever their relationship may be with each other. Child maintenance is calculated using a formula which assesses the ability of both parents to contribute towards the upkeep of their children, irrespective of which parent has day-to-day care of them.

Income Support

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to monitor the circumstances of income support claimants resident in care or nursing homes to ensure that the placement being funded is appropriate to their particular circumstances.

Mr. Burt: Under the community care scheme people who need financial help to enter residential care or nursing homes have their care needs assessed by their local authority who are also responsible for placement and funding. Responsibility for monitoring the new scheme rests with the Department of Health.

For claimants with preserved rights to the special limits of income support payment is made depending on the registration category of the home.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if people eligible for income support disability premium on the grounds of incapacity, but not receiving severe disablement allowance or incapacity benefit, will be eligible from April 1995 for payment of that premium from the 53rd week of incapacity.

Mr. Burt: From April 1995, for those who have no other means of entitlement to the disability premium, the period of incapacity needed to qualify will be 52 weeks.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if people eligible for income support disability premium only by reason of receipt of severe disablement allowance will be entitled from April 1995 to payment of the premium from the 53rd week of incapacity.

Mr. Burt: Severe disablement allowance will continue to be payable after 28 weeks incapacity, and receipt of severe disablement allowance will continue to bring entitlement to the disability premium.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if people claiming the income support disability premium on grounds of incapacity, but not in receipt of severe disablement allowance or incapacity benefit, will undergo the new incapacity test after the first 28 weeks of incapacity.

Mr. Burt: People receiving income support because of their incapacity will be expected to undergo the new incapacity test in the same way as anyone else who is claiming a social security benefit on the basis of being incapable of work.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were taken off invalidity benefit in Fife in 1993 and in *(a)* the first three months and *(b)* the last three months of 1993.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if existing claimants of invalidity benefit who pass the new incapacity test will continue to receive benefit at the rate of their previous invalidity benefit if *(a)* they start therapuetic work, *(b)* they start voluntary work, *(c)* they go abroad for fewer than eight weeks or *(d)* they go into hospital for fewer than eight weeks.

Mr. Scott: Existing claimants of invalidity benefit whose incapacity benefit is paid at their previous rate of invalidity benefit will continue to be entitled to incapacity benefit at that rate for as long as their period of incapacity for work continues unless an adult dependency increase ceases to be payable for more than eight weeks. In this case the new rules governing that increase will then apply.

Benefit would continue at the invalidity benefit rate for people who start working and satisfy the new therapeutic work rules or voluntary work rules. It would also continue for a period abroad of less than eight weeks, except in some exceptional circumstances when payment may cease. Where a person is in hospital for a period in excess of six weeks the normal hospital downrating rules will apply. At the end of that period in hospital, or a period of less than eight weeks abroad, the previous rate of benefit would again apply.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if existing claimants of invalidity benefit who pass the new incapacity test will continue to receive the same level of allowances for adult and child dependants as their previous invalidity benefit; and under what circumstances these allowances could be reduced or lost.

Mr. Scott: The replacement of invalidity benefit by incapacity benefit will make no difference to provision for child dependants for those people on invalidity benefit at the point of change. The rules on adult dependants will change but all those transferring from invalidity benefit will be protected, including those who are required to satisfy the new incapacity test. The Government propose, however, that the new rules should apply if an adult dependency increase ceases to be paid for more than eight weeks, or two years in the case of people who receive disability working allowance or undertake training for work.

Disability Premium

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated saving to his Department from delaying entitlement to the disability premium in *(a)* income support, *(b)* housing benefit and *(c)* council tax benefit.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

Benefit	*1995-96 £ million*	*1996-97 £ million*
Income Support	20	25
Housing Benefit	*	*
Council Tax Benefit	*	*

Benefit	1995-96 £ million	1996-97 £ million
Total	20	25

Notes:

1. Estimates are expressed in constant 1993-94 prices and are rounded to the nearest £5 million. "*" denotes savings of less than £2·5 million.
2. Estimates show the savings that would arise if the policy of extending the qualifying period for the disability premium paid with the income-related benefits were introduced in isolation.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the value of the Christmas bonus in the next financial year if it had increased in line with *(a)* prices and *(b)* earnings since 1979.

Mr. Hague: Value of Christmas bonus in 1994-95 if increased in line with prices—£22·35. Value of Christmas bonus in 1994-95 if increased in line with earnings—£32·00.

Notes:

1. Prices revaluation based on movement in the Retail Prices Index.
2. Earnings revaluation based on movement in the New Series Index (Whole Economy) Unadjusted.
3. Amounts rounded to the nearest 5p at each uprating.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to extend the length of the qualifying period of incapacity for severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Scott: None.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will answer the questions from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton tabled for answer on 27 January regarding the appointments he makes to public bodies.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given on 9 February 1994 at column *364-65*, 10 February 1994 at column *392-93*, and 11 February 1994 at column *497-98*.

TRANSPORT

London Underground

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing for each London underground station and line, for the period January to December 1993, the number and length of station closures *(a)* exceeding 20 minutes during usual period for passenger travel, *(b)* exceeding one hour during usual period for passenger travel, *(c)* exceeding one day, *(d)* exceeding one week and *(e)* exceeding one month; which stations closed during the above period have yet to be re-opened; when each closed station will re-open; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: None of this information is held by the Department on a station-by-station basis. Line-by-line data for closures over 20 minutes and one hour are shown on the table. Longer station closures over the period in question have included Cannons Park station—closed between 9 August 1993 and 13 September 1993—Mornington Crescent station—closed since 24 October 1992—and a number of stations on the Central line which were open for ticket issue only between 24 and 29 November 1993.

Station closures—including non attributable causes between 3 January 1993 and 1 January 1994

	Period													
Line	*11*	*12*	*13*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*Total*
(a) Closures over 20 minutes														
Bakerloo	7	11	6	7	10	8	8	15	13	5	4	6	12	112
Central	24	21	30	22	29	19	34	22	27	21	26	57	43	375
Circle/H&C	12	14	0	2	2	1	2	3	6	1	12	0	6	61
District	7	16	10	11	5	6	4	1	6	9	15	9	9	108
Jubille/Ell	2	7	9	5	13	1	1	2	3	1	4	5	5	58
Metropolitan	13	22	29	17	8	10	9	3	9	10	10	15	5	160
Northern	17	23	15	20	7	14	14	12	20	5	13	21	53	234
Piccadilly	15	25	16	1	12	12	4	7	12	13	6	6	10	139
Victoria	4	9	10	9	9	14	3	8	3	1	11	10	6	97
Total	101	148	125	94	95	85	79	73	99	66	101	129	149	1,344
(b) Closures over 1 hour														
Bakerloo	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	2	3	3	7	1	3	0	1	1	22
Central	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	9	9	6	0	5	1	2	8	1	48
Circle/H&C	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
District	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	5
Jubilee/Ell	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	6
Metropolitan	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3
Northern	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	2	3	3	5	2	0	2	3	0	23
Piccadilly	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	7
Victoria	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	6
Total	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	18	17	14	14	9	6	6	17	4	121

Notes:

1. Data is not available for the length of time of each individual station closure.
2. Data on one hour closures has only been collected since the beginning of this financial year.

3. Period 11 commenced on 3 January 1993; each period is 4 weeks long.
4. H&C=Hammersmith & city; Ell=East London line.

Source: London Underground Limited.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing for each London underground station and line, for the past 12 months and as a total over the same period, the number of fire and smoke incidents.

Mr. Norris: Figures on a line-by-line basis are shown in the table. The Department does not hold this data on a station-by-station basis.

London Underground: Fire and Smoke incidents between 3 January 1993 and 1 January 1994

	Period													
Line	*11*	*12*	*13*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*Total*
Category A														
Bakerloo	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	11
Central	0	2	4	1	5	2	4	5	2	3	0	3	1	32
Circle/H&C	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
District	2	5	5	3	2	7	4	0	3	1	1	0	0	33
Jubilee/Ell	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	5	3	0	0	1	13
Metropolitan	0	0	3	1	3	5	4	4	5	1	1	2	1	30
Northern	2	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	2	1	16
Piccadilly	0	1	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	11
Victoria	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	5
Total	5	11	17	14	17	19	16	11	15	11	5	8	6	155
Category B														
Bakerloo	2	0	2	3	0	1	1	0	0	4	1	3	1	18
Central	8	9	5	8	9	8	11	4	9	7	3	2	6	89
Circle/H&C	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	2	1	13
District	1	5	6	6	2	8	1	3	5	2	3	2	4	48
Jubilee/Ell	1	1	3	3	4	2	2	0	3	1	1	1	1	23
Metropolitan	4	3	7	2	6	7	6	7	4	2	5	7	2	62
Northern	4	1	6	5	2	1	1	2	2	3	3	2	1	33
Piccadilly	4	4	1	0	3	1	1	0	2	5	2	1	3	27
Victoria	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	8
Total	26	25	32	27	27	32	24	16	25	28	19	20	20	321
Overall Total (A and B)	31	36	49	41	44	51	40	27	40	39	24	28	26	476

Notes:

1. Category A incidents are where the presence of LFCDA or other fire brigade is required; Category B incidents are those dealt with by London Underground staff themselves.
2. Period 11 commenced on 3 January 1993; each period is 4 weeks long.
3. H&C=Hammersmith & city.
4. ELL=East London Line.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing for each London underground station and line, for each of the past 12 months and as a total over the same period, the number of employee lost time injuries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Figures on a line-by-line basis are shown in the table. The Department does not hold this data on a station-by-station basis.

London underground: lost time injuries between 3 January 1993 and 1 January 1994

	Period													
Line	*11*	*12*	*13*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*Total*
Bakerloo	2	3	2	3	2	3	6	7	3	6	5	3	5	50
Central	7	5	4	5	9	6	5	9	9	8	6	7	4	84
Circle/H&C	0	1	2	2	4	0	5	1	3	1	1	1	1	22
District	5	8	2	2	8	3	8	3	5	6	3	6	3	62
Jubilee/ELL	1	1	1	4	2	1	0	2	1	1	0	2	2	18
Metropolitan	3	4	2	4	3	3	5	5	2	3	5	1	4	44
Northern	8	6	4	11	6	17	3	5	7	5	15	9	9	105
Piccadilly	3	3	3	5	2	1	2	5	6	8	4	7	3	52
Victoria	5	5	6	1	0	2	1	0	7	3	2	0	2	34
Total	34	36	26	37	36	36	35	37	43	41	41	36	33	471

Note

Period 11 commenced on 3 January 1993; each period is 4 weeks long.

London Underground

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish a table showing for each London underground station and line, for each of the past 12 months and as a total over the same period, the number of non-violent crimes broken down into *(a)* theft from the person, *(b)* theft from the vehicle and *(c)* sexual offences; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing for each London underground station and line, for each of the past 12 months and as a total over the same period, the number of violent crimes broken down into *(a)* assault and *(b)* robbery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department does not hold this information in exactly the form requested. The table breaks down the 1993 crime figures on a line-by-line basis between crimes of violence—including assaults—robbery and other crimes.

London Underground

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing for each London underground line, for each of the past 12 months and as a total over the same period, the number and percentage of escalators out of service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: This information is not available in exactly the form requested. The table shows the percentage of escalators which were not in customer service throughout each peak hour—morning and evening—between January and December 1993.

Percentage of escalators out of service between 3 January 1993 and 1 January 1994

	Period												
Line	*11*	*12*	*13*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*Average*
Bakerloo	4·2	4·3	4·2	6·7	10·5	7·9	8·6	6·5	5·6	3·7	3·9	6·0	3·9	5·8
Central	12·4	13·2	10·8	13·1	1·6	14·8	13·7	13·0	12·4	10·3	9·1	10·4	7·9	11·0
Circle/H&C	50·0	50·0	32·5	10·8	0·0	8·7	28·7	1·2	5·3	0·0	1·2	3·7	0·0	14·8
District	3·9	2·3	0·7	2·4	6·6	5·1	3·2	1·2	9·3	5·2	6·3	7·0	5·3	4·5
Jubilee/ELL	1·2	5·4	11·6	2·2	1·8	3·1	0·8	9·6	6·6	6·2	11·2	0·4	14·8	5·8
Metropolitan	10·4	7·8	6·0	3·6	5·2	9·8	6·2	7·4	7·9	7·6	7·1	0·3	0·3	6·1
Northern	11·8	16·7	14·3	12·6	13·9	17·0	16·1	12·3	11·0	9·8	10·3	7·1	7·8	12·4
Piccadilly	14·0	16·0	17·6	17·3	16·2	16·4	18·2	17·7	14·0	14·1	15·0	14·4	12·9	15·7
Victoria	11·0	14·0	12·6	14·4	14·7	9·9	7·5	6·5	1·0	3·8	3·5	3·4	4·8	8·2

Notes:
1. Figures show the percentages of scheduled escalator hours out of service. Each four week period contains 80 peak hours.
2. Period 11 commenced on 3 January 1993; each period is 4 weeks long.
3. H&C=Hammersmith & City; ELL=East London line.

Source: London Underground Limited.

London Underground: Crime figures 1993

Line and type of crime	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*Total*
Bakerloo													
Crimes of violence	1	3	3	3	2	4	3	5	6	5	2	6	43
Robbery	4	3	3	3	3	0	3	2	1	5	2	4	33
Other offences	59	53	55	63	57	66	61	50	47	58	54	46	669
Central													
Crimes of violence	3	7	4	8	4	5	7	11	11	5	4	7	76
Robbery	7	3	5	6	4	7	2	6	2	2	2	6	52
Other offences	202	155	221	195	224	220	236	182	168	173	250	179	2,405
Circle/H&C													
Crimes of violence	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	4	3	14
Robbery	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	1	0	2	0	9
Other offences	24	19	35	22	30	37	23	28	21	17	42	27	325
District Line													
Crimes of violence	8	3	10	7	10	8	8	13	6	6	3	7	89
Robbery	9	6	3	6	9	4	10	7	2	8	2	3	69
Other offences	125	108	141	159	190	163	134	128	92	155	123	130	1,648
Jubilee/ELL													
Crimes of violence	1	3	1	4	5	1	3	2	4	1	1	5	31
Robbery	0	1	0	0	5	1	3	4	6	2	2	3	27
Other offences	34	37	37	42	41	29	33	36	39	32	26	27	413
Metropolitan													
Crimes of violence	7	4	2	7	6	5	2	3	4	9	3	4	56
Robbery	5	5	2	4	4	4	6	10	5	6	6	3	60
Other offences	110	87	95	94	125	110	108	111	91	93	93	82	1,199
Northern													
Crimes of violence	10	9	9	12	12	13	8	15	6	4	9	18	125
Robbery	8	19	11	7	8	16	6	11	10	8	10	5	119
Other offences	197	174	209	193	189	176	161	140	104	129	174	126	1,972

Line and type of crime	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Piccadilly													
Crimes of violence	9	9	8	4	5	3	7	8	10	13	7	15	98
Robbery	4	6	2	10	13	3	8	8	2	3	10	5	74
Other offences	316	290	327	310	307	249	239	245	182	291	347	251	3,354
Victoria													
Crimes of violence	7	10	8	1	6	5	5	8	7	5	4	6	72
Robbery	9	3	1	6	3	1	4	7	2	2	9	2	49
Other offences	100	99	126	114	84	129	136	88	80	87	107	83	1,233
Total	1,260	1,117	1,319	1,282	1,346	1,262	1,216	1,131	910	1,120	1,298	1,053	14,314

Notes:
1. H&C = Hammersmith & City Line.
2. ELL = East London Line.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing for each London underground station and line, for each of the past 12 months and as a total over the same period, the number of major customer injuries, broken down into *(a)* accident, *(b)* crime related, *(c)* suspected suicide, *(d)* reckless behaviour and *(e)* medical condition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Figures on a line-by-line basis are shown in the table. The Department does not hold this data on a station-by-station basis.

London underground: major customer injuries between 3 January 1993 and 1 January 1994

Line	Period													
	11	12	13	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
(A) Accidental														
Bakerloo	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3
Central	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	5
Circle/H&C	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
District	4	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	7
Jubilee/Ell	1	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Metropolitan	—	1	3	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	2	1	10
Northern	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3
Piccadilly	—	1	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Victoria	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
TOTAL	6	2	5	5	6	0	1	0	1	2	1	3	4	36
(B) Crime-Related														
Bakerloo	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Central	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Circle/H&C	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
District	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Jubilee/Ell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Metropolitan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Northern	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2
Piccadilly	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Victoria	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
TOTAL	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	5
(c) Suspected suicide														
Bakerloo	1	—	—	1	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	5
Central	1	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	5
Circle/H&C	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
District	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Jubilee/Ell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Northern	1	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	5
Piccadilly	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	3
Victoria	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	3
TOTAL	4	1	2	1	1	4	2	2	2	0	2	1	1	23

Line	Period 11	12	13	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
(D) Reckless behaviour														
Bakerloo	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	2
Central	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Circle/H&C	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
District	1	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Jubilee/Ell	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Metropolitan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Northern	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Piccadilly	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2
Victoria	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Total	2	1	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	11
(E) Medical condition														
Bakerloo	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Central	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3
Circle/H&C	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
District	2	—	—	1	2	—	—	1	1	2	—	—	1	10
Jubilee/Ell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Metropolitan	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	5
Northern	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	—	6
Piccadilly	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	3
Victoria	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total	5	1	0	1	5	1	1	2	4	2	1	3	2	28
Overall Total	17	5	10	8	12	7	4	5	9	4	6	7	9	103

Note:
Period 11 commenced on 3 January 1993; each period is 4 weeks long.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing for each London underground station and line, for the past 12 months and as a total over the same period, the number and length of incidents, including cancellations, which resulted in a headway of more than 20 minutes.

Mr. Norris: The Department does not hold information about headways on a station-by-station basis, or details on the specific length of incidents, including cancellations, which have resulted in a headway of more than 20 minutes. Line-by-line data showing the number of headways over 20 minutes are shown in the table.

Train service incidents resulting in a headway of more than 20 minutes —including non-attributable causes between 3 January 1993 and 1 January 1994

Line	Period 11	12	13	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Bakerloo	15	22	16	13	8	9	13	15	8	15	17	12	12	175
Central	40	27	61	33	35	37	35	26	32	28	29	49	36	468
Circle/Hammersmith and City	15	28	19	9	6	5	6	7	5	6	11	9	11	137
District	21	27	19	17	15	21	20	8	12	9	21	21	11	222
Jubilee/East London Line	10	27	20	13	15	10	7	3	9	5	6	8	4	137
Metropolitan	32	36	36	26	22	26	26	22	24	22	28	34	20	354
Northern	13	26	23	17	10	11	17	14	12	18	20	22	15	218
Piccadilly	15	25	18	5	14	11	10	14	20	13	15	8	19	187
Victoria	3	11	8	8	7	9	5	8	4	5	10	17	9	104
Total	164	229	220	141	132	139	139	117	126	121	157	180	137	2,002

Notes:
1. Headway is the timed interval between trains.
2. Period 11 commenced on 3 January 1993; each period is four weeks long.

Source: London Underground Limited.

Rail Fares

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if franchise agreements for shared rail routes following privatisation will require mandatory inter-availability and common pricing for *(a)* full fare standard, *(b)* first class and *(c)* discounted tickets.

Mr. Freeman: It is our intention to include the following paragraph in the Secretary of State's formal guidance to the franchising director:

"In considering the need for tickets to be inter-available between franchisees, you should consider whether the benefits outweigh the likely benefits of price competition and service diversity. You should encourage appropriate arrangements for co-operation between operators on the pricing of tickets and apportionment of revenues."

In many cases, private operators will make arrangements to ensure that ticket inter-availability continues because it will be in their own interests to do so. However, the franchising director has said that he expects inter-availability normally to be a requirement of franchise agreements for season and full-fare standard and first class tickets on routes over which two or more franchisees operate. At the same time, there would be freedom for

operators to introduce differential pricing and validity restrictions on discounted tickets in order to attract customers to their particular services.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he was first made aware by Eurotunnel that commencement of freight and passengers services through the channel tunnel would be delayed beyond 7 March and 6 May; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information was supplied to him by Eurotunnel about possible delays in opening the tunnel by its published deadlines of 7 March for freight and 6 May for passengers, before he agreed to extend the channel tunnel concession period for a further 10 years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the commissioning programmes and commissioning tests which have to be repeated or rescheduled before opening of the channel tunnel can take place; what information Eurotunnel has supplied to him about the likely additional time which will be needed for commissioning locomotives; what plans he has to meet with Eurotunnel to discuss the further delays in opening of the channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The probability of delay became clear at meetings between United Kingdom and French officials and Eurotunnel in January. Those contacts are continuing to cover the timing and content of outstanding commissioning tests for fixed equipment and rolling stock. Public statements about the programme can have commercial importance and financial consequences, and I think it should continue to be for Eurotunnel to make them.

Trains, Glasgow

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish a list of all correspondence between his Department and *(a)* Strathclyde passenger transport executive and *(c)* Lombard Tricity Finance regarding operational leasing for new trains in the Glasgow commuter network area; what assessment he has made of the implications of local government organisation for the immediate future of such operational leasing deals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a list of all meetings held by Ministers or officials in his Department with Ministers or officials in any other Government Departments regarding operational leasing for new trains in the Glasgow commuter network area, giving *(a)* the dates of each meeting, *(b)* a full list of those attending and *(c)* the outcome of each meeting; whether any further such meetings are planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There have been no exchanges of correspondence between the Department and *(a)* Strathclyde passenger transport executive and *(b)* Lombard North Central about the Strathclyde rolling stock leasing deal. I wrote to Councillor Waugh on 5 November saying that I was aware of nothing in the Government's proposals for local government reform in Scotland that would alter the Accounts Commission's view that it would be in order for the regional council to conclude the leasing deal.

My officials and I attended meetings in November and December 1993 with Scottish Office Ministers and officials, present at which were representatives of Strathclyde region and Strathclyde passenger transport executive. These meetings discussed a range of issues including the leasing deal and concluded that that issue was primarily a matter for the local authority to resolve. A further meeting is planned for later this month at which representatives of Lombard North Central will be present.

Probationary Drivers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce a "P" sign for probationary drivers.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 9 February by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend, the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) at column *270*.

British Rail

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what meetings he has held with British Rail concerning the operation and funding of the Barking to Gospel Oak line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend and I regularly have meetings with British Rail management. None has been held specifically to discuss the Barking to Gospel Oak line.

Commuter Car Traffic

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the average volume of commuter car traffic entering *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* central London per day for each of the last 10 years; and what are his predictions for the next five years.

Mr. Norris: The available information is given in the following table:

Cars entering London daily between 7 am and 10 am

Thousands

	London boundary cordon	*Central London cordon*
1983	231	[1]—
1985	[1]—	127
1986	235	[1]—
1987	[1]—	123
1989	249	127
1991	[1]—	123
1992	259	[1]—

[1] Not available.

No predictions have been made of traffic five years ahead but over the longer term growth is expected to continue broadly in line with previous trends. This would give an increase of around one per cent. a year in the number of cars entering Greater London during the morning peak but no change in the number entering central London.

M25

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost per mile at 1994 prices of the construction of the M25; and what will be the cost at 1994 prices of the construction of a widened M25.

Mr. Key: The cost of building the M25 was nearly £1,000 million which gives a price of approimately £6·85 million per mile. The price base in 1986 when the M25 was

completed, was similar to the current level according to the road construction price index. Using current prices the estimated cost of widening the M25 to four lanes is £7.59 million per mile. The estimated costs of the link roads proposed between junctions 12 and 16 work out at £15.45 million per mile. Proposals for other sections considered to need capacity beyond dual four-lane carriageways have not been assessed in sufficient detail to give comparative figures.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the widening of the M25; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The plans for the further development of the M25 were announced by my right hon. Friend last July. Subject to anything that might emerge from the review of the national road programme, I have no reason to reconsider that strategy.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many visits abroad the Minister of State for Public Transport made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Freeman: I made four trips abroad during 1993.

Place and purpose	*Cost (£)*
Bonn/Berlin	
To meet the German Transport Ministry and Deutsches Bundesbahn for discussions on Rail Privatisation in Germany and to promote British Railway supply industry in Germany	826.97
Paris	
To meet the French Transport Ministry for discussions on Channel Tunnel security issues and to visit GEC'S factory in Ayte to review progress on Eurostar trains	320.20
China	
To meet Chinese Ministry officials for discussions on railway issues	[1]268.000
Paris	
To meet the French Transport Ministry for discussions on Channel Tunnel security issues	242.00

[1] Engagement undertaken during private holiday.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many visits abroad the Minister for Transport in London made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Norris: I made five trips abroad during 1993.

Place and purpose	*Cost (£)*
Chicago	
To study parking enforcement and adjudication systems	1,274.12
Paris	
To attend the Paris Air Show	813.89
Brazil	
To deliver a paper and chair a session on alcohol, drugs and traffic safety as part of the annual conference of the International Disciplinary Group of Studies on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence	3,099.58
Berlin	
To address Initiative Haupstadt's Capital Club, on traffic problems and solutions in London	438.40
Hong Kong/Singapore	
To study public transport operations and congestion charging systems	5,029.57

Belfast International Airport

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what broad criteria his Department requires operators to meet when applying for a licence to operate services out of Belfast international airport; what applications he has received to run *(a)* transatlantic routes and *(b)* other routes from Aldergrove; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The criteria for the grant of an operating licence are laid down in EC Council Regulation 2407/92. The criteria relate principally to the adequacy of financial resources, fitness and insurance. In addition holders of operating licences must be majority owned and effectively controlled by EC member states or their nationals.

Holders of EC operating licences do not need formal permission to operate scheduled or charter services within the EC provided that traffic rights are available under Council Regulation 2408/92. Carriers planning scheduled services outside those allowed by EC regulations will in most cases need to be formally designated by their authorities under the relevant bilateral air services agreements.

The Secretary of State for Transport gave exceptional permission outside the terms of the United Kingdom/United States air services agreement in April 1993 for American Trans Air to operate services between New York and Belfast, to enable Northern Ireland to have direct services to the United States which until then it did not have. The Department currently has a further application from American Trans Air for permission to operate fifth freedom services between Belfast and Riga.

Within Europe, the Civil Aviation Authority is considering two licence applications for services from Belfast international to the Isle of Man and Reykjavik respectively.

Stansted Airport

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last visited London Stansted airport.

Mr. MacGregor: I last visited London Stansted airport on Sunday, 20 June 1993, when I returned from Luxembourg to Stansted following a special EC Transport Council meeting.

Lorries

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in response to his proposed changes to the London night-time and weekend lorry ban.

Mr. Norris: I have received various representations from hon. Members, noble Lords, Members of the European Parliament, London borough councillors, the

London Boroughs Transport Committee, the Freight Transport Association and members of the general public. Many of these are seeking clarification of the proposals.

Executive Agencies

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the effect on each executive agency within his Department of the recently announced £25 million reduction in running costs.

Mr. MacGregor: The recently announced reduction in running costs compared to the PES 1992 baseline applies to the Department's gross running cost control total. Of the Department's five executive agencies, only the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's running costs fall within the control total. DVLA will reduce running costs in 1994-95 by efficiency savings that were already planned as part of its target setting and planning arrangements.

Foreign Airlines

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the adequacy of existing regulations for the safety of foreign airlines flying into and from British airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Minimum safety standards for foreign aircraft are set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. The United Kingdom is bound to recognise certificates of airworthiness issued according to these standards. Where there are indications of failure to meet ICAO standards, the Department asks the aeronautical authorities of the country concerned to investigate urgently and identify whether ICAO standards have been breached and, if so, to detail what measures have been taken to rectify the position. The Civil Aviation Authority also has powers to detain foreign aircraft where they consider there has or could be a serious breach of safety. It is also open to the United Kingdom to refuse operating permission for a non-EC carrier failing to meet ICAO standards.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who are the members currently appointed to the traffic commissioners/licensing authorities.

Mr. Key: The names and traffic areas of the traffic commissioners/licensing authorities are as follows:

Traffic commissioner/Licensing authority	*Traffic area*
Air Vice-Marshal Ronald Ashford, CBE (Senior Traffic Commissioner)	Western Traffic Area
Mr. Martin Albu	North Western Traffic Area
Mr. Michael Betts	Scottish Traffic Area
Brigadier Compton Boyd	Eastern Traffic Area
Mr. John Pugh	South Wales Traffic Area and West Midland Traffic Area
Brigadier Michael Turner	South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area
Mr. Keith Waterworth	North Eastern Traffic Area

NORTHERN IRELAND

Pensioners

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people of pensionable age in Northern Ireland are currently also receiving income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The information which is available shows that at 30 November 1993, there were 61,382 income support claimants in receipt of pensioner premiums in Northern Ireland.

Shipyards

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide the same level of assistance to Harland-Wolff Ship Repair Division Northern Ireland as is available to German and Dutch shipyards in 1994.

Mr. Tim Smith: It is the practice of the Government to provide intervention funding within the limits set by the European Commission in respect of eligible shipbuilding projects in the United Kingdom. The Government have consistently taken the view that priority should be given to protecting the builders of new ships, rather than those who repair or refit them. At the request of the Shipbuilders and Shiprepairers Association the Government recently reviewed this policy but have decided that it should remain unchanged.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will investigate assistance available to shipyards and ship repairers in other European Union countries and provide an equal level of support in Northern Ireland to make tendering for major refitting work a realistic option.

Mr. Tim Smith: Assistance available for shipbuilding and conversion projects in other European Community countries is a matter for the relevant authorities in the country concerned. It is not the policy of the United Kingdom Government to provide direct aid towards ship conversion. In certain circumstances alterations to ships carried out by United Kingdom yards can be considered for support under the home shipbuilding credit guarantee scheme. The seventh directive on aid to shipbuilding does not permit the granting of assistance for shiprepair.

Company Records

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when and why the company records of SRC Components Ltd. and Canira Technical Corporation Ltd. were removed from Companies house, Belfast.

Mr. Tim Smith: The company records of SRC Composites Ltd. and Canira Technical Corporation Ltd. are, and always have been, held by the Registry of Companies, Department of Economic Development, IDB House, 64 Chichester street, Belfast, BT1 4JX. There is no record of a company called SRC Components Ltd.

Scottish Interconnector

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the actual cost of the proposed interconnector link project between Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Mr. Tim Smith: Northern Ireland Electricity plc estimates the total cost of the project to be £175 million at December 1992 prices.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations he has had with regard to the contract and costs of the arrangement between Northern Ireland Electricity and Scottish Electric in respect of the interconnector project.

Mr. Tim Smith: None. This is a matter for the two parties concerned, NIE plc and Scottish Power plc.

Social Security Offices

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the social fund budget for each social security office in Northern Ireland in each of the last four years, the numbers of *(a)* loans and *(b)* community care grants applied for, the numbers awarded and their total values.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. John Hume, dated 10 February 1994:

As Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question on Social Fund budgets, applications and awards.

The information is not held in the form you have requested but I have set out the available data in the attached tables. Details for each Social Security Office can only be supplied for the period 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1991. From April 1991 the Social Fund has been managed on a District basis and I am therefore providing information from that date for each District.

You may be interested to know that information about the budget allocations, the number of crisis loans, budgeting loans and community care grants applications processed, the number of awards and the amount paid is available in the Library under Social Fund Data. The figures are updated on a monthly basis.

As the tables accompanying this letter are too long to be printed in the Official Report, arrangements will be made for a copy to be deposited in the Library.

I hope you will find this information helpful.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available about social fund budgets in each of the past four years to indicate the pattern of priority categorisation constraints for each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. However, I understand that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evaluation and comparative analysis has been conducted by the Department of Health and Social Services or the Social Security Agency of the distribution of the social fund budget with regard to equality of treatment and need targeting across all districts; and if he will publish that research.

Mr. Ancram: The Department of Health and Social Services and the Social Security Agency regularly monitor and evaluate the working of the social fund and information of the relative levels of need is one of the factors taken into account in allocating budgets to districts. Details of the basis of allocation and district allocations for 1993-94 have been placed in the Library.

Nurses

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of *(a)* whole-time equivalent registered nurses, *(b)* whole-time equivalent unregistered nurses and *(c)* whole-time equivalent nurses in training in Northern Ireland for each year from 1988 onwards.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

Whole-time equivalent nursing staff employed in Northern Ireland health and personal social services and nurses in training

Nurse type	*September 1988*	*September 1989*	*September 1990*	*September 1991*	*September 1992*	*September 1993*
Registered Nurses	12,222·72	12,199·94	12,158·44	12,217·62	12,098·54	11,930·78
Unregistered Nurses	2,777·05	2,832·26	2,947·19	3,190·92	3,274·22	3,343·23
Student Nurses	2,865·37	2,741·00	2,649·60	2,050·60	1,153·56	351·80
Project 2000	—	—	—	466·00	1,098·00	1,664·00

Notes:
1. Figures include Midwives
2. Project 2000 Students are not employees

HEALTH

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who are the members currently appointed to the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration.

Dr. Mawhinney: The current members of the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration are:

C. Brandon Gough, Esq. (Chairman)
Douglas T. Boyd, Esq.
Ms Tina Boyden
Ms Sally Field
Dr. Elizabeth Nelson
Professor George F. Thomason, CBE

There are currently two vacancies as the terms of Mr. Anthony J. P. Vineall and Mr. Dennis Fredjohn expired with the publication of the 23rd report.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who are the members currently appointed to the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine.

Mr. Sackville: The current members of the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine are:

Mr. Michael Bett, CBE (Chairman)
Mr. Jan Hildreth
Miss Anne Machie, OBE
Dr. Gillian Raab
Professor George F. Thomason, CBE
Miss Diana Wittingham

There are currently two vacancies as the terms of Dame Anne Mueller, DCB and Mrs. Rachel Pickavance expired with the publication of the 11th report.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Mathew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by her Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Secretary of State in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's travel costs are not budgeted separately from those of other Ministers. The travel and subsistence figures, excluding the cost of services provided by the Government car service, for all Ministers and their private office staff and those in the parliamentary relations unit are as follows:

	Travel and Subsistence	
Financial Year	*Domestic* £	*Overseas* £
1992-93		
planned	[1]51,619	
actual	49,296	11,085
1993-94		
planned[2]	70,000	50,000
actual[3]	46,138	57,641

[1] No specific sum allocation for domestic or overseas expenditure.
[2] Funds increased to take account of price increases, the addition of an extra Minister and private office and for commitments to visits overseas.
[3] To December 1994.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many visits abroad the Minister of State made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State made three overseas visits at an estimated cost of £5,526. Two of these visits were to attend meetings of Ministers of the European Community Health Council, while the third was a fact finding visit to the United States of America in connection with his ministerial responsibilities.

Pacing

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which hospitals carry out pacing and pacing follow-up in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: According to the national pacemaker database there are 133 centres providing pacing and pacing follow-up in the United Kingdom. A list of these centres will be placed in the Library.

Contraceptive Pill

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to limit the national health service prescribing of the contraceptive pill and make it available in pharmacies without NHS prescription; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has for freedom of speech by junior hospital doctors.

Dr. Mawhinney: The management executive advice "Guidance for staff on relations with the public and the media" was issued to national health service employers under cover of executive letter (93)51 on 8 June 1993. The guidance provides a framework within which local procedures can be developed to enable all NHS employees to raise concerns about health care issues. Copies of the executive letter and accompanying guidance are available in the Library.

Hepatitis B

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the percentage carrier rate for hepatitis B among pregnant women in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: These data are not collected routinely but studies have shown carrier rates between one in 2,000 —0·05 per cent.—in rural areas and 1 in 100—1 per cent. —in some inner city areas.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which EC countries have a hepatitis B universal vaccination strategy in place.

Mr. Sackville: We understand that only Italy has a universal vaccination strategy in place; in addition, seven of the autonomous regions of Spain have introduced universal adolescent vaccination. All other European Union countries have a selective strategy aimed at particularly higher risk groups.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the carrier rate of hepatitis B in England per 1,000 population.

Mr. Sackville: The prevalance of hepatitis B carriage in the United Kingdom is low. Recent data from analysis of blood donations suggest that it is in the order of one in 1,500—0·07 per cent.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has of acquisition of hepatitis B by blood products in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Confirmed cases of hepatitis B infection reported to the public health laboratory service's communicable disease surveillance centre—England and Wales—where the patient had a history of receiving blood or blood products within the United Kingdom during the previous six months, and where no other risk factors were present were:

	Number
1988	8
1989	4
1990	3
1991	3
1992	2

Figures for 1993 are still being received.

Infectious Diseases

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, hepatitis B, mumps, measles, rubella, tuberculosis, haemophilia influenzae and meningitis were reported in England in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of cases notified for polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, hepatitis B, mumps, measles, rubella, tuberculosis, haemophilus influenzae and meningitis in England for 1991 and 1992

	1991	*1992*
Polio	3	3
Diphtheria	2	8
Whooping Cough	4,908	2,171
Tetanus	8	6
Hepatitis B	471	481
Mumps	2,828	2,333
Measles	9,126	9,801
Rubella	6,917	6,024
Tuberculosis (all forms)	5,726	6,149
Haemophilus Influenzae	396	451
Meningitis (all forms)	2,558	2,361

Tobacco

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates she has made of decreases in consumption of tobacco as a result of the voluntary code on tobacco advertisements.

Mr. Sackville: In October 1992 the Department of Health published a discussion document, the "Effect of Tobacco Advertising on Tobacco Consumption", a copy of which is available in the Library, reviewing the evidence on the effects of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption. The review did not identify any studies which seek to quantify the reduction in smoking that can be attributed to the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising and promotion.

Lung Cancer

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female lung cancer deaths occurred in each region in 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table for 1992, the latest year for which data are available:

Numbers of deaths from cancer of the trachea, bronchus and lung (ICD 162[1]) for males and females by regional health authority, 1992

Regional Health Authority	*Males*	*Females*
Northern	1,780	918
Yorkshire	1,656	867
Trent	2,166	946
East Anglian	828	337
North West Thames	1,303	686
North East Thames	1,682	807
South East Thames	1,674	786
South West Thames	1,163	631
Wessex	1,228	517
Oxford	880	413
South Western	1,382	665
West Midlands	2,448	1,012
Mersey	1,198	700
North Western	1,903	1,031
Wales	1,324	653

[1] International classification of disease, ninth revision

Hospital Beds, London

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital beds here were in each of the last five years in the area covered by the London implementation group.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about the average daily bed availability in London for 1988-89 to 1992-93 is shown in the table.

Year	*Number*
1988-89	43,997
1989-90	41,947
1990-91	38,793
1991-92	36,045
1992-93	34,811

Source:
KHO3 return.

During the same period there was a 4·49 per cent. increase in the number of in-patients treated.

Referrals and Readmissions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how second referrals and readmissions are recorded within the NHS patient volume record system; and what percentage of finished consultant episodes are second referrals and readmissions;

(2) pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *531*, how readmissions are recorded in finished consultant episode statistics.

Mr. Sackville: All admissions to national health service hospitals are recorded as consultant episodes, reflecting the use of resources by consultant specialists. Readmissions from any source are included in the count but cannot be separately identified. On admission to hospital, a patient commences a hospital spell which may include periods of care under more than one consultant. There are about 103 consultant episodes for every 100 spells in hospital. Patients referred to hospital consultants by general practitioners are usually seen in out-patients clinics. New referrals, including second referrals for the same condition, are recorded as new attendances, subsequent attendances are recorded as consultant initiated attendances. Second referrals to out-patient clinics cannot be identified separately.

Mental Health Legislation

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received since April 1992 suggesting amendments in the mental health legislation providing for trustees to manage a person's financial affairs if two doctors certify that this is required.

Mr. Bowis: None. The Law Commission is currently reviewing the law and procedures relating to decision making on behalf of mentally incapacitated adults and will publish its report later this year.

Nurses

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of newly qualified nurses completed their training in NHS hospitals *(a)* in London

and *(b)* in England in the 12-month period ended in December 1993; and what percentage of them found full-time permanent employment (i) in London and (ii) in England in NHS hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance will be given to managers to measure the productivity of nurses in the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is currently drawing up guidance on the basic principles for local performance-related pay schemes.

Hospital Sales

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she is aware of to sell NHS hospitals to private health care providers.

Mr. Sackville: I am not aware of any.

Former Military Hospitals

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans there are in each region to invest in extending or adapting former military hospitals for NHS use; and how much it is planned to spend on each such hospital.

Mr. Sackville: There are currently discussions between the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health about the future use of one hospital, the Queen Elizabeth military hospital, Woolwich which is due to close by 1998. Further details will be available later this year.

Cervical Smear Tests

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the average time patients currently wait for the results of cervical smear tests in each health authority area in England and Wales.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 9 December 1993 at column *325-26*.

Community Health Sheffield Trust

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when and by whom a final decision will be made as to the land and buildings in the Sheffield area that will transfer to Community Health Sheffield trust.

Mr. Sackville: Trent regional health authority together with Sheffield District health authority and representatives of the proposed trust, will determine which land and buildings will transfer to Community Health Sheffield trust. Discussions are in progress and it is expected that a final decision will be reached by the end of March 1994.

AIDS

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the organisations involved in AIDS counselling, advice and information and the amount of grant each received from Government for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The information for 1993-94 is shown in the table. Each of these voluntary organisations includes HIV/AIDS counselling advice and information among its activities to a greater or lesser degree.

Name	*Amount (£)*
Aids and Housing Project	29,000
ACET (AIDS Care Education and Training)	150,000
Barnardo's	9,375
Black HIV/AIDS Network	40,000
Blackliners	40,050
Body Positive	50,000
CARA[1]	15,000
Globe Centre	29,000
Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence	73,400
Landmark	60,000
London East AIDS Network	25,000
London Voluntary Services Council	24,000
London Lighthouse	300,000
Mainliners	40,000
Mildmay Mission Hospital	150,000
National AIDS Trust	275,000
The NAZ Project	27,000
Positively Women	70,000
Streetwise Youth	20,000
Strutton Housing	12,000
Terrence Higgins Trust	450,000
Turning Point—Griffin Project	33,200

[1] Care and resources for people affected by AIDS and HIV.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those hospitals and medical research facilities undertaking research of AIDS; and if she will list the amount of central Government grant each attracts.

Mr. Sackville: The main agency through which the Government support research into HIV and AIDS is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

In the current financial year it is estimated that the Government will fund research on HIV/AIDS to a value of £26,209,000.

The annual report of the MRC and "The Health and Social Care of People with HIV Infection and AIDS", which list the hospitals and medical research facilities currently undertaking AIDS/HIV research for the Department and for the MRC, are available in the Library.

Special Transitional Grant

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what have been the reasons for the delay in announcing how much of the special transitional grant was to be spent on non-local authority services; what assessment has been made of the impact of this delay on local authorities and other care providers; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The decision was announced as soon as we had considered all the relevant factors. Local authorities should always be committed to value for money through the mixed economy of care.

Health Authorities (Capital Receipts)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 January, *Official Report*, column *116*, whether any restrictions are placed on health authorities with regard to the use of capital receipts.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 24 January at column *116*.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 January, *Official*

Report, column *116*, what Treasury guidelines have been issued to health authorities, or health trusts, as to the use of capital receipts.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* her Department and *(b)* her agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each one the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Sackville: The information for 1993-94 will be placed in the Library. Decisions have not been made on the use of advertising for 1994-95.

Special Health Authorities

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the revenue and capital expenditure for each of the special health authorities within the four London regional health authorities' areas for 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Information for the London postgraduate special health authorities is shown in the table.

Special health authority	*Revenue Expenditure* £	*Capital Additions* £
The Hospitals for Sick Children	65,197,843	19,392,220
The National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery	33,819,688	11,945,668
Moorfields Eye Hospital	27,622,311	1,881,459
The Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospital	53,325,496	2,038,647
The Royal Brompton National Heart and Lung Hospitals	59,771,478	2,361,637
The Royal Marsden Hospital	37,593,200	2,059,054
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Hospitals	76,963,054	12,952,118
The Eastman Dental Hospital	9,844,379	1,424,633

Source: Annual accounts special health authorities—London postgraduate teaching hospitals—England 1992-93.

Notes:

(a) Total additions of fixed assets purchased is used as the capital expenditure figure. Capital charges are included within revenue expenditure.

(b) Figures are provisional.

Mr. Fred Hoult

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leeds Central (Mr. Fatchett), *Official Report*, 31 January, column *536*, if he will name the companies of which Mr. Fred Hoult is a director.

Mr. Sackville: The directorships held by Mr. Hoult are:

Hoults Holdings Ltd.
Hoults Ltd.
Hoults Estate Ltd.
Hoults (London) Ltd.
Hoults (South West) Ltd.
Hoults (Cumberland) Ltd.
Wheelers of Gosforth Ltd.
Wheelers of Cramlington Ltd.
Lock N Store Ltd.
William Patterson Ltd.
G. F. Ryan and Co. Ltd.
Northumbria and Tyneside Residential Property Trust Ltd.
2nd Northumbria and Tyneside Residential Property Trust Ltd.
Lindisfarne Properties Ltd.

Super Janet Computer Network

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the potential contribution of the academic computer network Super Janet to patient care; and what steps she is taking to preserve the confidentiality of any patient information transferred to such a network, and to ensure the security and integrity of any NHS system to which an external network might be connected.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is monitoring the work currently being undertaken at the Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's hospitals to assess the potential benefits and problems associated with the use of the Super Janet network.

As regards the confidentiality of information, any person controlling personal health data who proposes to put them onto a computer network must abide by the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1984. In addition, the national health service-wide networking programme is addressing the security implications of connections to external networks including Super Janet.

Emergency Hospital Admissions

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what proportion the number of emergency admissions to hospitals in each health authority changed between 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Sackville: Nationally, the proportion of admissions to hospital which are non-elective has marginally declined. These account for some 47 per cent. of total recorded consultant episodes for the last three years, and it is estimated that over 80 per cent. of non-elective admissions are emergencies. Proportions of the total number of finished consultant episodes that are non-elective admissions by regional health authority for 1992-93 and 1993-94—forecast and subject to revision—are shown in the table.

Region	*1992-93* *Per cent.*	*1993-94 (forecast)* *Per cent.*
Northern	45·8	45·3
Yorkshire	47·3	45·7
Trent	47·8	46·6
East Anglian	49·1	46·0
North West Thames	45·8	43·6
North East Thames	50·2	49·3
South East Thames	47·8	48·0
South West Thames	46·5	46·2
Wessex	45·6	44·9
Oxford	45·7	45·0
South Western	43·7	44·2
West Midlands	47·6	48·5
Mersey	51·0	49·6
North Western	45·3	44·3
England	47·0	46·3

GP Fundholders

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the general practices in each health authority were fundholding on *(a)* January 1993 and *(b)* 1 January 1994.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information available centrally relates to the proportion of the population covered by fundholding practices in each regional health authority area. The figures for the first, second and third wave fundholders are shown in the tables.

Region	*Number of funds*	*Number of practices*	*Number of groups*	*Number of GPs*	*Population cover 000s*	*Percentage population covered by Fundholding Practices*
1st and 2nd Wave						
Northern	38	38	0	321	460	15·0
Yorkshire	55	61	3	338	693	18·9
Trent	54	57	2	311	659	13·8
East Anglia	13	13	0	85	168	8·0
North West Thames	43	49	3	235	493	14·2
North East Thames	23	23	0	107	266	7·1
South East Thames	29	29	0	147	339	9·2
South West Thames	38	39	1	225	463	15·8
Wessex	32	34	2	197	392	13·3
Oxford	46	48	1	279	570	21·9
South Western	38	42	0	244	386	11·0
West Midlands	58	59	1	410	659	12·6
Mersey	44	50	5	227	459	19·1
North Western	29	34	3	161	347	8·7
ENGLAND	540	576	21	3,197	6,354	13·0
3rd Wave						
Northern	31	34	3	161	303	9·9
Yorkshire	54	57	2	249	509	13·9
Trent	84	102	9	420	835	17·5
East Anglia	35	38	2	193	362	7·2
North West Thames	45	46	1	223	437	12·6
North East Thames	25	29	1	122	256	6·8
South East Thames	48	59	5	227	480	13·0
South West Thames	28	30	2	135	267	9·1
Wessex	22	23	1	128	253	8·6
Oxford	28	28	0	152	269	11·3
South Western	31	33	2	170	271	7·7
West Midlands	73	80	7	357	719	13·7
Mersey	40	51	7	196	379	15·8
North Western	37	49	6	168	344	8·6
ENGLAND	581	659	48	2,901	5,711	11·9

Brain-damaged Patients

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will respond to the report of the health service committee "Failure to Provide Long Term NHS Care for a Brain Damaged Patient"; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The report to which the hon. Member refers was produced by the health service commissioner, not the health service committee. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 9 February at column *328*.

Asthma (Road Traffic)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies are being made by her Department about the link between road traffic and child asthma; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is currently studying the effects on health from air pollutants from all sources. The Advisory Group on the Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes, set up in 1990, and the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants, which was established in 1992, are examining the evidence with a view to estimating the likely effects of air pollution in the United Kingdom and to recommend research needed. The advisory group produced reports on ozone in 1991 and on sulphur dioxides, acid aerosols and particulates in 1992, and on the effects of oxides of nitrogen—one of the main pollutants from motor vehicles—at the end of 1993. Asthma is an important health issue and the Department is concerned about the rise in its incidence among all age groups. Further research is needed to help identify the underlying causes of this rise in incidence. Air pollution is one possibility, but investigation is also under way into other factors, such as the indoor environment, smoking habits and diet. The newly formed Medical Research Council institute for environment and health, funded by the Department and by the Department of the Environment, has made research into the health effects of air pollution its first priority. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 20 October 1993 at column *236*.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are currently on the waiting list for organ transplant of kidneys, liver and heart-lung respectively; how many were added to the list in each category in the most recent 12-month period for which

figures are available; how many had transplant operations; and how many died while waiting for a suitable donor organ.

Dr. Mawhinney: The figures give are for the United Kingdom and are provisional. They have been supplied by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority.

At 31 December 1993 there were 3,947 patients awaiting kidney transplants—including 29 kidney and pancreas transplants—111 awaiting livers and 409 awaiting hearts—including 172 heart and lungs. During the year to 31 December 1993 there were 1,701 kidney transplants—including 125 transplants from live donors and 14 kidney and pancreas transplants—520 liver transplants and 336 heart transplants—including 35 heart and lungs transplants.

The latest year for which information on patients joining the list and those who died while waiting for a suitable donor organ is available is 1992. There were 1,992 added to the waiting list for kidneys—including 22 kidneys and pancreas—537 for hearts—including 124 for heart and lungs—and 419 for livers. One hundred and thirty patients died while waiting for a suitable donor heart transplant —including 60 heart and lungs—and 53 died while waiting for livers.

Children (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region the number of children on waiting lists for medical treatment for each year since 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on waiting lists for in-patient and day case treatment by regional health authority and specialty is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England". This is published twice yearly and copies are available in the Library. Information is given on waiting lists for various paediatric specialties, but the numbers of children and adults on waiting lists for other specialties are not counted separately.

NHS Employees

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to the NHS in the last financial year of salary payments for NHS employees suspended on full pay.

Dr. Mawhinney: I will write to the hon. Member.

WALES

Health Provision

13. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of health provision in West Glamorgan.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend will announce his decision following the period of public consultation currently underway in the county.

Departmental Efficiency

14. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to improve the efficiency of his Department.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office is already an efficient organisation successfully administering a very wide range of central Government functions throughout Wales. I am, nevertheless, continually looking for ways in which to improve its efficiency including, for example, through market testing and close controls on its running costs.

Labour Statistics

15. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females were unemployed in Wales at the latest available date; and what are the figures in percentage terms.

Mr. Redwood: Seasonally adjusted, there were 99,600 males and 26,500 females who were claimant unemployed in Wales in December 1993. These represent workforce-based unemployment rates of 13·6 per cent. and 4·9 per cent. respectively.

Tir Cymen

16. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what appraisal there has been of the take-up rate and the general success of the Tir Cymen pilot schemes in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A pilot scheme was launched in July 1992 and is planned to run for five years. A full appraisal will take place towards the end of the period. The target for take-up of the scheme is to have 50 per cent. of eligible land entered within five years. To date some 25 per cent. has been entered. The indications are that the scheme is proving to be successful.

Welsh Development Agency

17. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the review of the management structure of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Parliamentary Boundaries

18. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had concerning the re-distribution of parliamentary boundaries in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Whilst my right hon. Friend has responsibility for the appointment of one of the members of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales, overall responsibility for the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England and Wales rests with my right hon. and learned Friend, the Home Secretary. My right hon. Friend has received two representations in respect of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales' latest proposals.

National Curriculum

19. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consult the Welsh Language Board regarding proposed changes to the national curriculum in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, which supersedes the Curriculum Council for Wales on 1 April, will undertake consultations

this year on proposals for revised national curriculum orders. I shall ensure that the authority consults the Welsh Language Board on revisions to the National Curriculum Order for Welsh.

M4 Relief Road

20. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he received during the consultation period on the proposal to extend the M4 relief road through the Gwent levels; how many of these representations approved of the Welsh Office proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A report on the results of the consultation and the issues raised is in preparation. The information requested will be made public when a decision is taken on whether or not to proceed with any of the published routes.

Sustainable Development

21. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is taking to promote sustainable development following the United Nations conference on environment and development.

Mr. Redwood: A number of important measures in support of sustainable development objectives are already underway in Wales, for example the Welsh Development Agency's major land reclamation programme which is returning derelict and contaminated land to beneficial use. Welsh Office Ministers are also keen to ensure that Wales makes an appropriate contribution to the follow up action planned on the recently published "UK Strategy on Sustainable Development", copies of which have already been distributed to key Welsh interests.

Quangos

23. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applicants for posts in Welsh quangos have notified the Secretary of State of their connections with the Tory party within the last two years.

Mr. Redwood: The information supplied by nominees to the register of candidates for public appointment is confidential.

25. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he is making in the elimination of bureaucracy, waste and mal-administration in the conduct of non-Governmental public bodies in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have impressed upon the chairmen of non-departmental public bodies the need for the highest standards of propriety in the conduct of public affairs in Wales. Steps have been taken to tighten up procedures and I am introducing new arrangements for monitoring and controlling the performance of bodies in Wales. I will make sure that both the number of bodies and appointments to them are strictly controlled.

Wind Farms

24. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the planning guidelines issued by his Department on the siting and construction of wind farms in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Guidance is contained in the annex to planning policy guidance note "Renewable Energy", which was published jointly by the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment in February 1993.

Local Government Finance

26. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the total credit approvals for capital spending for all the local authorities in Wales in the years 1986-87, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 at 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Total credit approvals used to finance local authority capital expenditure in Wales at 1993-94 prices are:

Year	*£m*
1991-92	326·803
1992-93	331·376
1993-94	[1]311·430

[1] Forecast

A comparable figure for 1986-87 is not available. A credit approval system was introduced in 1990-91: the previous system placed controls on authorities' total capital expenditure.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what rate support grant Clwyd county council would receive in 1993-94 if it were treated for standard spending assessment purposes as the average within Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: An authority's revenue support grant, share of redistributurbed non-domestic rates and council tax income at a standard level, together equal its standard spending assessment. The standard spending assessment per head of population for county councils in Wales for 1993-94 is £675. For Clwyd it is £644, 95·4 per cent. of the Wales average.

Education

27. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new initiatives he intends to take to improve education in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have a comprehensive programme of reforms to improve standards in education and to provide improved opportunities for all. We are currently implementing the wide-ranging provisions of the Education Act 1993 and have introduced further legislative proposals on teacher training matters. We announced on 5 January the changes that will be made as a result of the review of the national curriculum. These changes will be implemented promptly and fully. They will remove bureaucracy and over-prescription and substantially ease the burden on teachers.

Housing

28. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is taking in relation to the recent housing policies of the Development Board for Rural Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Public Accounts Committee, at a hearing on 24 January, took evidence from the

accounting officer of the Welsh Office and the chief executive of the Development Board for Rural Wales about matters raised in the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the board's 1992-93 annual accounts. The Committee will report in due course on the results of its inquiry. I do not wish to anticipate or pre-empt that report. The DBRW introduced revised rules and procedures for housing allocations in September 1993 which meet the statutory requirements.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the development of national health service trusts in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are currently 14 operational NHS trusts in Wales and my right hon. Friend announced on 19 November 1993 that he was establishing a further eight trusts with an operational date of 1 April 1994.

Additionally, public consultation on applications received from north unit—Morriston hospital—in West Glamorgan and Taff Ely health unit—East Glamorgan hospital—Mid Glamorgan has now ended. In the light of representations received, and taking account the individual merits of both applications, my right hon. Friend has decided to establish these units as NHS trusts also to become operational from this April. The orders giving effect to these decisions have been signed today. I will announce shortly the details on the chairmen and non-executive directors of these further NHS trusts.

This announcement today means that, from april 1994, some 90 per cent. of acute services and 85 per cent. of community services in Wales will be delivered by NHS trusts.

Pupil-teacher Ratio

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the pupil-teacher ratio in Welsh in each local education authority for pupils preparing for key stage 4.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available.

Welsh Language

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will discuss with Clwyd education authority and the Welsh Language Board the refusal by the Associated Examinations Board to translate A-level physical exercise examination papers into the Welsh language; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The translation of the A-level physical education paper offered by the Associated Examinations Board is a matter for the board to consider. Discussions are continuing between the individual school concerned, AEB and the Welsh Joint Education Committee to make appropriate arrangements for pupils to take the 1994 examinations in the language of their choice.

Welshpool Bypass

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any specific proposals for safety improvement on the Welshpool bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Action has already been initiated as a result of driver behaviour on the bypass and, as is normal practice with newly improved sections of trunk road, the situation is being closely monitored.

A detailed review has been completed and the opinions of the local highway authority and the police have been obtained. Works already undertaken to improve driver awareness include the relocation and modification of some direction signs and the provision of additional warning signs; the introduction of ladder hatched centre lines to discourage overtaking and reduce speeds; the addition of white hatching to hard strips through each junction to emphasise the carriageway edges and to reduce speeds; the provision of extra chevron plates at roundabouts and the re-positioning of tourist information signs away from junctions.

Further measures are being considered including the banning of right turn manoeuvres from Salop road.

Housing Subsidy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the amount of housing revenue account subsidy paid per council house to each district council in Wales for the years 1992-93 and 1993-94, showing the percentage increase or decrease in each case.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A wide range of factors affect subsidy calculations. Subsidy is not paid on a per dwelling basis alone.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of notional rent set by his office for the purposes of calculating housing subsidy for each district council in Wales, and for Wales as a whole, for each financial year since 1991-92 and for 1994-95.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Authorities calculate guideline rents according to a formula within the housing revenue account subsidy determination for the relevant year. The guideline rents calculated by each authority for the years 1991-92 to 1993-94 are given in the following table. The figures shown for Wales have been derived from these figures.

The Department's estimate of guideline rents for 1994-95 were given to the hon. Member in my reply on Friday 4 February 1994.

Notional rent per dwelling

	(a) 1991-92 £ p	*(b) 1992-93* £ p	*(c) 1993-94* £ p
Aberconwy	24·25	25·67	26·94
Alyn and Deeside	20·40	23·81	26·56
Arfon	23·08	25·88	27·88
Blaenau Gwent	27·25	28·38	29·63
Brecknock	24·62	27·15	29·10
Cardiff	27·88	30·87	33·23
Carmarthen	24·67	27·29	29·56
Ceredigion	25·58	28·13	29·87
Colwyn	23·50	24·81	26·27
Cynon Valley	24·88	26·02	28·17
Delyn	24·19	25·65	27·69
Dinefwr	21·77	24·17	26·04
Dwyfor	21·79	25·19	26·31
Glyndwr	22·37	24·94	26·77
Islwyn	23·88	25·88	27·94
Llanelli	23·48	24·62	25·87
Lliw Valley	25·79	26·92	28·17
Meirionnydd	23·42	24·75	25·81
Merthy Tydfil	23·52	24·65	25·90

	(a) 1991-92 £ p	(b) 1992-93 £ p	(c) 1993-94 £ p
Monmouth	28·77	32·17	34·92
Montgomeryshire	24·69	28·10	30·85
Neath	23·62	24·75	26·00
Newport	27·62	31·02	33·62
Ogwr	27·65	28·79	30·04
Port Talbot	24·87	26·19	27·54
Preseli Pembrokeshire	22·62	25·88	27·90
Radnorshire	24·71	27·58	29·85
Rhondda	28·67	29·81	31·06
Rhuddlan	20·81	24·04	26·58
Rhymney Valley	27·56	28·69	29·94
South Pembs	25·46	28·87	31·52
Swansea	24·48	26·00	27·25
Taff Ely	24·79	25·92	27·17
Torfaen	26·83	29·73	32·13
Vale of Glam	25·81	29·21	31·96
Wrexham Maelor	19·75	23·15	25·50
Ynys Môn	24·65	26·06	27·31
WALES	25·05	27·24	29·11

Source:
(a) Audit Final Subsidy claims for 1991-92.
(b) Audit Final Subsidy claims for 1992-93 (except for Cardiff where information has been taken from the 1992-93 Advance Final claim).
(c) Second Advance Subsidy claims for 1993-94.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the amount of housing revenue account subsidy for 1992-93 and 1993-94 for each district council in Wales, and for Wales as a whole, showing the percentage change in each case.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The amount of housing revenue account subsidy claimed by local authorities is set out in the following table:

Housing Revenue Account Subsidy

Local Authority	1992-93 (a) £	1993-94 (b) £	Percentage change
Aberconwy	1,584,274	1,613,843	1·9
Alyn and Deeside	2,520,527	2,566,612	1·8
Arfon	2,942,801	2,860,306	−2·8
Blaenau Gwent	10,775,958	10,967,070	1·8
Brecknock	715,009	759,755	6·3
Cardiff	19,343,579	23,291,119	20·4
Carmarthen	2,513,450	2,348,352	−6·6
Ceredigion	1,895,725	1,932,664	1·9
Colwyn	2,109,823	2,194,617	4·0
Cynon Valley	4,947,233	4,914,395	−0·7
Delyn	3,620,231	2,957,483	−18·3
Dinefwr	1,246,634	1,486,992	19·3
Dwyfor	840,681	958,012	14·0
Glyndwr	827,842	803,215	−3·0
Islwyn	5,369,027	5,242,264	−2·4
Llanelli	7,044,582	7,501,220	6·5
Lliw Valley	4,308,923	4,157,709	−3·5
Meirionnydd	1,061,048	1,238,429	16·7
Merthyr Tydfil	6,869,166	7,588,053	10·5
Monmouth	3,789,654	3,815,493	0·7
Montgomeryshire	666,527	496,002	−25·6
Neath	4,776,019	4,921,454	3·0
Newport	11,244,593	10,363,902	−7·8
Ogwr	7,692,875	7,702,537	0·1
Port Talbot	4,749,752	4,668,643	−1·7
Preseli Pemrokeshire	2,755,958	2,848,229	3·3
Radnorshire	555,486	525,905	−5·3
Rhondda	8,623,018	8,301,654	−3·7
Rhuddlan	1,324,330	1,276,569	−3·6
Rhymney Valley	10,884,002	11,347,929	4·3
South Pembrokeshire	1,642,291	1,427,901	−13·1
Swansea	16,023,302	17,353,927	8·3
Taff Ely	6,938,835	6,816,221	−1·8
Torfaen	13,023,578	13,076,949	0·4
Vale of Glamorgan	3,751,049	3,612,705	−3·7
Wrexham Maelor	6,998,218	7,839,056	12·0
Ynys Mon	4,311,794	4,438,990	2·9
Wales	190,287,794	196,216,176	3·1

Source:
(a) Audit Final Subsidy claims for 1992-93 except for Cardiff where information has been taken from the 1992-93 Advance Final claim
(b) Second Advance Subsidy claims for 1993-94

Unemployment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are unemployed in Wales and in Clwyd.

Mr. Redwood: In December 1993, the unadjusted numbers of claimant unemployed in Clwyd and Wales were 15,866 and 128,299 respectively.

Cardiff Bay

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation in relation to its consultancy contract with Quadrant public relations.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what communications he has received from the European Commission on the future of the Cardiff bay site of special scientific interest; and if he will place the relevant correspondence in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: The Government have had various contacts with the Commission about the issue of Cardiff bay. In accordance with long-standing convention, the substance of the correspondence on this matter is confidential.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the complaint by the World Wide Fund for Nature to the European Commission in relation to the future of the Cardiff bay site of special scientific interest; and if he will place these representations in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: I have received a number of representations about the complaint by the World Wide Fund for Nature to the EC Commission. Some appear to have been inspired by the fund's "Factsheet" of September 1993 which contained acknowledged errors.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of Cardiff Bay development corporation in relation to the corporation's public relations agents soliciting the names of companies employed by the city council from council employees.

Mr. Redwood: I have had none personally and have not raised the issue with others.

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales in relation to *(a)* the advertising of the vacant post of executive director, *(b)* additions or subtractions in respect of the membership of the board and *(c)* completion of the management reorganisation plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The appointment of a new chief executive is a matter for the chairman and the board of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales. However, I would expect the chairman to keep the Welsh Office fully informed of the actions that are being taken.

I have had no consultations with the chairman about any membership issues.

The management reorganisation of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales was fully implemented on 17 January 1994.

Quango Guidelines

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue new guidelines to the Welsh quangos on the conduct of public relations consultancy contracts so as to debar the interference with commercial printing contracts let by third parties.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has given to the chairman of *(a)* all quangos in Wales and *(b)* Cardiff bay development corporation on the conduct of public relations consultants to whom they give contracts.

Mr. Redwood: I have issued no such guidelines to non-departmental public bodies in Wales.

Health Board Rights

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he will issue in relation to the rights of members of health authority or trust boards with respect to the principles of open government and its applicability to the operations of those authorities and trusts.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend wrote to health authorities and NHS trusts about corporate governance matters on 27 January and indicated that the Department of Health was undertaking further work on open government. It will be consulting on their recommendations in early summer and we propose to undertake parallel consultation in Wales.

A copy of the letter is being placed in the Library of the House.

Nurses

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of *(a)* whole time equivalent registered nurses, *(b)* whole time equivalent unregistered nurses and *(c)* whole time equivalent nurses in training in Wales for each year from 1988 onwards.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information available, which relates to nursing and midwifery staff, is given in the following tables:

Directly employed NHS nurses[1]

	Registered[2]	*Unregistered*[3]	*Learners*[4]
1988	17,507	7,076	3,337
1989	17,849	7,070	3,118
1990	17,986	7,032	3,075
1991	18,009	7,019	2,934
1992	18,096	7,355	1,970
1993	17,986	7,220	1,033

Nurses employed by general medical practitioners[5]

	Number
1988	198
1989	268
1990	459
1991	524
1992	519
1993	544

Nurses employed in private nursing homes, hospitals and clinics[6]

	Registered nurses and midwives	*Unregistered nurses and midwives*
1988	1,157	1,888
1989	1,541	2,838
1990	1,927	3,634
1991	2,298	4,575
1992	2,623	5,274

[1] Staff in post (whole-time equivalents as at 30 September). Includes staff employed by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority. The use of locally devised payscales from 1991 onwards may affect the comparability of figures as these staff cannot be allocated centrally to a specific staff group and are not, therefore, included in the table.
[2] Enrolled nurse and above in 1988, grade C and above thereafter.
[3] Nursing auxiliaries and nursery nurses in 1988, grades A and B thereafter.
[4] Pupil and student nurses. Since the autumn of 1991 student nurses have been classified as students and are no longer included in the NHS staff figures. Staff included here are students finishing courses begun before this date. However at 1 October 1993 there were about 1,900 Project 2000 nursing students in Wales.
[5] Staff in post as at 1 October (whole-time equivalents). All these staff are registered nurses.
[6] Staff in post as at 31 March (whole-time equivalents) as notified by the individual premises.

Health Service

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received with respect to the suitability for appointment, reappointment or continuation in office of the chairmen of present health authorities or health trusts and trusts-designate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Over the last 18 months I have received around 20 representations on these matters.

DEFENCE

Engagements (Extension)

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Too ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the available figures for each year since 1990-91 on the numbers and proportions of those officers and other ranks in each service who have applied for extension of their original engagement.

Mr. Hanley: The figures as requested for the Royal Air Force are set out in the tables. The Royal Navy and Army

could provide this information in the exact form requested only at disproportionate cost; details on extensions granted are, however, set out in the tables.

Royal Air Force: applications for extension of service

Financial year	Officers	Airmen/ women	Total	Total trained strength at 31 March	Proportion of trained strength who applied for extension (Per cent.)
1990-91	520	1,971	2,491	82,621	3·0
1991-92	573	3,848	4,421	81,973	5·4
1992-93	339	4,262	4,601	78,863	5·8

Royal Naval Services: extensions of service granted

Financial year	Officers	Ratings	Total	Total trained strength at 31 March	Proportion of trained strength who were granted an extension (Per cent.)
1990-91	92	933	1,025	57,078	1·8
1991-92	22	703	725	56,052	1·3
1992-93	33	437	470	56,064	0·8

Army: extensions of service granted

Financial year	Officers	Soldiers	Total	Total trained strength at 31 March	Proportion of trained strength who were granted an extension (Per cent.)
1990-91	876	944	1,820	137,240	1·3
1991-92	1,002	929	1,931	136,514	1·4
1992-93	818	827	1,645	133,366	1·2

Notes:

1. Figures include non-commissioned personnel who have applied for/been granted, an extension beyond their 22 year point.
2. Figures exclude personnel who have converted from Short Service Commissions to longer commissons and those whose service is extended automatically upon reaching a certain rank.

Premature Voluntary Release

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the latest available figures for each service, by rank and length of service, of applications for premature voluntary release, together with any available information on the reasons given.

Mr. Hanley: The breakdown by rank and service of the numbers of applications for premature voluntary release in the 12 months ended 1 October 1993, the latest date for which figures are available, is given in the table. Details of the length of service of applicants for premature voluntary release could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The reasons most frequently give for asking to leave prematurely are:

Civilian job offer
Disillusionment with service life
Lack of opportunities for promotion
Family/compassionate reasons

Applications for premature voluntary release in the 12 months ended 1 October 1993

NATO rank code[1]	Royal Naval Services	Army	Royal Air Force
Officers			
OF7	—	—	2
OF6	—	7	3
OF5	2	21	11
OF4	9	36	15
OF3	23	58	38
OF2	25	82	58
OF1/OD	—	15	7
TOTAL	59	219	134
Non-Commissioned Personnel			
OR9	32	44	50

NATO rank code[1]	Royal Naval Services	Army	Royal Air Force
OR8	1	65	—
OR7	273	78	105
OR6	207	196	125
OR4	285	685	164
OR3	—	1,229	—
OR2/OR1	892	3,369	679
TOTAL	1,690	5,666	1,123

[1] NATO Rank Codes equate to United Kingdom Service Designations as shown in the following table.

NATO Rank Codes equating to United Kingdom Service Designations

	Royal Naval Services			
NATO rank code	Royal Navy	Royal Marines	Army	Royal Air Force
OF–7	Rear-Admiral	Major General	Major General	Air Vice Marshall
OF–6	Commodore	Brigadier	Brigadier	Air Commodore
OF–5	Captain	Colonel/Lieutenant Colonel	Colonel	Group Captain
OF–4	Commander	Major	Lieutenant Colonel	Wing Commander
OF–3	Lieutenant Commander	Captain	Major	Squadron Leader
OF–2	Lieutenant	Lieutenant	Captain	Flight Lieutenant
OF–1	Sub-Lieutenant	—	Lieutenant/2nd Lieutenant	Flying Officer/Pilot Officer
OF(D)	Officer Designate	Officer Designate	Officer Designate	Officer Designate
OR–9	Warrant Officer	Warrant Officer Class 1	Warrant Officer Class 1	Warrant Officer
OR–8	—	Warrant Officer Class 2	Warrant Officer Class 2	—
OR–7	Chief Petty Officer	Colour Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Flight Sergeant/Chief Technician
OR–6	Petty Officer	Sergeant	Sergeant	Sergeant
OR–4	Leading Rate	Corporal	Corporal	Corporal
OR–3	—	—	Lance Corporal	—
OR–2	Able Rate	Marine (1st Class)	Private (Classes 1 to 3)	Junior Technician/ Senior Aircraftman/ Leading Aircraftman
OR–1	Ordinary Rate/Junior	Marine (2nd Class)/Junior	Private (Class 4)/Junior	Aircraftman

NATO rank code (Officers)	QARNNS	NATO rank code (Non-commissioned personnel)	QARNNS
OF–6	Commandant Nursing Officer	OR–9	Warrant Officer RGN/Warrant Officer EN(G)
OF–5	Principal Nursing Officer	OR–7	Chief RGN/Chief EN(G)
OF–4	Chief Nursing Officer	OR–6	Petty Officer RGN/Petty Officer EN(G)
OF–3	Superintending Nursing Officer	OR–4	Leading RGN/Leading EN(G)
OF–2	Senior Nursing Officer	OR–2	Student Nurse/Pupil Nurse EN(G)
OF–1	Nursing Officer	OR–1	Probationary Nurse

Low Flying

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information is held by his Department on the proportion of low flying complaints which are made by persons who have not previously complained about low flying.

Mr. Hanley: Records are not maintained of the proportion of low flying complaints received from those who have not complained about the training before.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if details of complaints about low flying are held on a computer database by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: Yes.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities are made available to Royal Air Force strike/attack/reconnaissance aircrew deployed on operational duties to *(a)* Italy, *(b)* Turkey and *(c)* Saudi Arabia, for low flying training at less than 250 ft above ground level.

Mr. Hanley: All necessary training is undertaken prior to deployment.

Colonel Edward S. Cowan

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the official dates and engagements of Colonel Edward S. Cowan since July 1992 in regard to his position at the Ministry.

Mr. Hanley: Colonel Angus Edward Frances Cowan retired early from the Army on 12 August 1990 at his own request.

Royal Navy (Fishing Protection)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps is is taking to instruct the Royal Navy to protect British fishing activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Royal Navy Fishery Protection Squadron conducts fishery protection duties on behalf of

the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency under a contract arrangement.

Laser-guided Bombs

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the award of the contract for the low-level laser-guided bomb.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 3 February 1994 at column *907*.

Defence Procurement Tender List

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines he has issued with respect to the validity of ISO9001 quality assurance systems certificates issued by Bureau Veritas UK for the purposes of the defence procurement tender list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Bureau Veritas UK does not issue ISO9001 quality assurance systems certificates; neither does it hold national accreditation to do so.

Service Women (Pregnancy)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take measures to withdraw from any liability for compensation to dismissed service women whose dismissal related to pregnancy at a time when such a dismissal was public policy.

Mr. Hanley: My Department accepted at a High Court hearing in December 1991 that the policy of discharging service women on grounds of pregnancy was in breach of the EC Equal Treatment Directive 76/207 which came into effect on 9 August 1978. Consequently the Department has accepted liability to pay compensation to service women dismissed on pregnancy between that date and August 1990 when the policy was discontinued and maternity leave was introduced.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Statistics

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were placed in employment by Lewisham's job centres in each month since April 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 14 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of people placed into employment by Lewisham Jobcentres in each month since April 1992.

There are two Jobcentres in close proximity in the Lewisham district, Lewisham and Catford. Jobseekers from Lewisham also use the Catford Jobcentre so I have shown the information required for both of these offices on the tables attached.

I hope this is helpful.

Placings achieved by Lewisham and Catford Jobcentres April 1992 to March 1993

Month	Lewisham jobcentre	Catford jobcentre	Total
April 1992	98	137	235
May 1992	89	207	296
June 1992	97	218	315
July 1992	128	237	365
August 1992	76	155	231
September 1992	122	180	302
October 1992	113	168	281
November 1992	133	178	311
December 1992	82	122	204
January 1993	126	236	362
February 1993	111	183	294
March 1993	110	183	293

Placings achieved by Lewisham and Catford Jobcentres April 1993 to January 1994

Month	Lewisham Jobcentre	Catford Jobcentre	Total
April 1993	98	189	287
May 1993	81	170	251
June 1993	127	189	316
July 1993	112	188	300
August 1993	105	162	267
September 1993	132	203	335
October 1993	110	198	308
November 1993	194	208	402
December 1993	104	117	221
January 1994	119	200	319

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has made or is planning to make to the European Commission in response to the Commission's review of the employee acquired rights directive; whether he sought the views of the trade unions whose members are affected by the directive; and if he will publish the representations he has made.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government welcome the review of the acquired rights directive. The European Commission has not yet published any results of the review and the Government have not, therefore, made any representations in response to it. Any response will accordingly depend on any proposals that the Commission may bring forward following its review. The normal practice is for the Commission to consult social partners on any proposed changes to a directive, and for the Government to present an explanatory memorandum to Parliament. It is expected that this will be done in due course.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the table.

The Department is undertaking the following campaigns in 1993-94 budgeted to cost in excess of £10,000:

Campaign	*Objective*	*Evaluation*
Make It Your Business	To increase awareness of Investors in People and National Vocational Qualifications among senior managers	Pre- and post-campaign market research, measurement of direct response to the campaign (ie requests for further information)
1993 National Training Awards	To invite entries for the competition and to publicise the winners	Post-campaign market research, number of requests for entry packs to the competition
Career Development Loans	To invite enquiries about Career Development Loans	Market research and assessment of the number of enquiries received
Careers Service	To announce the availability of the Careers Service prospectus	Post-campaign market research
New Horizons for Women	To encourage women to diversify their participation in the workforce and in public life	Assessment of the number of people attending the New Horizons events.
Just the Job/New Measures	To raise awareness of Employment Service programmes among long-term unemployed people	Tracking research and take up of publications
Employer Campaign	To raise awareness and encourage the use of Jobcentre services among employers	Tracking research
Disability	To raise the awareness of disabled people and employers of the help available to disabled workers	Tracking research
Workstart	To promote the Workstart programme to employers in its pilot areas	Number of responses from employers
Jobfinders Grant	To launch the Jobfinders grant in its pilot areas	Number of people who take up the grant
Work Trials	To promote Work Trials to employers and the long-term unemployed	Number of places offered by employers and take up by unemployed people
Community Action	To launch Community Action to employers and the long-term unemployed	Numbers taking part in the programme

Note:
It is planned that the above campaigns will continue in 1994-95. New campaigns are planned to form the relevant groups about the modern apprenticeships programme and the new small firms training loan scheme.

Objective 3 Funding

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications have been submitted for EC funding under objective 3 for funds to assist with retraining in parts of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Until the negotiations on the objective 3 plan to use European social fund resources throughout Great Britain have been concluded, it is not possible for the Employment Department to approve any applications for ESF assistance. The Government submitted the objective 3 plan at the beginning of November 1993, and there have been a number of discussions since then. We continue to press upon the Commission the need for an urgent decision so that essential training for the unemployed is not disrupted.

Access to Work

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many companies applied for grants under the access to work scheme in each region during 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Access to work is not yet operational.

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people took part in the job interview guarantee scheme in each region and in Great Britain as a whole in 1993; how many participants secured full-time or part-time employment with their sponsoring employers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Alex Carlile, dated 14 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the Job Interview Guarantee Programme.

The table attached shows the number of unemployed people who took part in or who were assisted by the Job Interview Guarantee in 1993. It also shows regional figures and Great Britain as a whole.

The information relating to numbers of people gaining employment includes those placed into both part-time and full-time jobs. Separate statistics are not collected on those going into part-time work.

I hope this is helpful.

Job interview guarantee January to December 1993

	Number of people assisted	*Number of people placed into jobs*
North	21,275	7,301
Yorkshire and Humberside	56,368	17,202
East Midlands and Eastern	23,120	9,047

	Number of people assisted	Number of people placed into jobs
London and South East	105,922	44,775
South West	32,564	12,918
Wales	22,741	10,255
West Midlands	26,607	14,307
North West	42,198	19,848
Scotland	24,284	17,917
Great Britain	355,079	153,570

Income Support

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in each region and Great Britain as a whole were refused income support in 1993 because they were deemed to be not actively seeking work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department does not hold information about the number of income support claimants who are refused benefit on that ground.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each region and for Great Britain as a whole how many people who received unemployment benefit for 12 months were refused income support after being means-tested in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: I have been asked to reply.
The information requested is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of disabled people out of work in each region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following table shows the number of ILO unemployed people who, in response to questions in the summer 1993 labour force survey, said that they had a short-term or long-term disability or health problem which limited the kind of paid work that they could do.

ILO unemployed amongst those with health problems or disabilities
Great Britain—summer 1993

thousands

Standard region	Numbers ILO unemployed with health problems or disabilities
South East	121
Greater London	57
Rest of South East	64
East Anglia	15
South West	28
West Midlands	38
East Midlands	27
Yorkshire and Humberside	46
North West	44
North	23
Wales	20
Scotland	36
Great Britain	397

Source: Labour force survey (not seasonally adjusted).

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people and what percentage of the labour force in each region and for Great Britain as a whole were classified as being in temporary employment in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: For the years from 1984 onwards, this information is available from the labour force survey and can be obtained via the Quantime LFS service available in the Library.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest estimates from the labour force survey, for each region, of the number and percentage of *(a)* all males, *(b)* all adults over 50 years of age and *(c)* all males between 50 and 65 years of age who are recorded as economically inactive; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Latest estimates from the summer 1993 labour force survey are given in the following table. The numbers who are economically inactive relate to those who are neither in employment nor ILO unemployed, and will therefore include, for example, all those who are looking after a home or are retired.

Economically inactive persons

Standard region	Men aged 16+ (Thousands)	As percentage of all men aged 16+ (Per cent.)	All persons aged 50+ (Thousands)	As percentage of all persons aged 50+ (Per cent.)	Men aged 50-64 (Thousands)	As percentage of all men 50-64 (Per cent.)
South East	1,612	24·1	3,295	64·0	275	21·4
Greater London	655	25·5	1,196	65·1	117	25·3
Rest of South East	957	23·1	2,099	63·4	157	19·2
East Anglia	204	24·8	442	65·8	33	20·6
South West	495	27·2	1,072	66·8	89	24·4
West Midlands	521	26·0	1,067	65·8	107	25·8
East Midlands	403	25·8	816	65·1	80	25·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	512	27·1	1,053	68·7	112	29·9
North West	683	28·7	1,356	69·4	159	32·7
North	360	31·0	707	72·8	94	39·2
Wales	360	32·8	701	73·6	91	39·9
Scotland	512	27·0	1,060	68·7	125	32·8
Great Britain	5,662	26·5	11,569	67·1	1,166	27·5

Source: Labour Force Survey—summer 1993 (not seasonally adjusted).

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each standard occupational

and industrial classification *(a)* the numbers employed, *(b)* the numbers unemployed and *(c)* the numbers of long-term unemployed under the International Labour Organisation classification where previous occupation or employment fell within each classification for each region and Great Britain as a whole at the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is available from the summer 1993 labour force survey and can be obtained via the Quantime LFS service available in the Library.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list for each region *(a)* the number of people unemployed, *(b)* the percentage of the total number who are unemployed and *(c)* the percentage of the labour force unemployed for 12 months or more for each month since January 1991; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list for each region *(a)* the number of people unemployed, *(b)* the percentage of the total number who are unemployed and *(c)* the percentage of the labour force unemployed for six months or more for each month since January 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is available from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Training

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people were participating in *(a)* employment training, *(b)* employment action, *(c)* the enterprise allowance scheme and *(d)* youth training in each region and in Great Britain as a whole in 1992-93 and 1993-94 to date; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing, for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, the destination of leavers from employment action, giving the most recent figures available and figures for each year since the scheme began, broken down by *(a)* full-time employment with their work experience employer, *(b)* full-time employment with another employer, *(c)* employment in their own business, *(d)* part-time employment, *(e)* voluntary employment, *(f)* another Government training programme, *(g)* full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* job club and *(k)* other; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will publish a table showing for each region and for Great Britain as a whole the destination of leavers from youth training, giving the most recent figures available and figures for each year since the scheme began, broken down by *(a)* full-time employment with their work experience employer, *(b)* full-time employment with another employer, *(c)* employment in their own business, *(d)* part-time employment, *(e)* voluntary employment, *(f)* another Government training programme, *(g)* full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* job club and *(k)* other; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will publish a table showing for each region and for Great Britain as a whole the destination of leavers from employment training, giving the most recent figures available and figures for each year since the scheme began, broken down by *(a)* full-time employment with their work experience employer, *(b)* full-time employment with another employer, *(c)* employment in their own business, *(d)* part-time employment, *(e)* voluntary employment, *(f)* another Government training programme, *(g)* full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* job club and *(k)* other; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will publish a table showing for each region and for Great Britain as a whole during 1993 how many unemployed disabled people participated in *(a)* employment training, *(b)* restart and *(c)* training and enterprise council schemes and the destinations of those participating; and if he will make a statement;

(6) if he will list for each training and enterprise council the total number of leavers from training courses and the number and percentage who went on to *(a)* full-time employment, *(b)* part-time employment, *(c)* further training, *(d)* a further course, *(e)* further education, *(f)* unemployment and *(g)* other destinations in each quarter of 1993; and if he will make a statement;

(7) if he will list for each training and enterprise council *(a)* the number of participating trainees who are over 40 years old, *(b)* the male to female ratio and *(c)* the number of disabled trainees; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: As the information is contained in a large number of tables, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure on *(a)* employment training, *(b)* employment action, *(c)* the enterprise allowance scheme and *(d)* youth training in each region and in Great Britain as a whole in 1992-93 and 1993-94 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the following tables for each of the Employment Department regions.

The information for Scotland and Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales.

Region	*Employment Training 1992-93 Fees*[1]	*Employment Training 1992-93 Allowances*[2]	*Employment Action 1992-93 Fees*[1]	*Employment Action 1992-93 Allowances*[2]	*Training for Work planned provision 1993-94*[1]
South East	26,103,435	—	5,297,520	—	58,546,858
London	48,829,069	—	9,615,545	—	121,994,814
Eastern	11,377,369	—	3,107,496	—	47,941,033
South West	25,130,165	—	4,824,910	—	63,155,516
West Midlands	38,046,222	—	5,906,981	—	85,352,355
East Midlands	25,278,836	—	5,083,041	—	55,034,206
Yorkshire and Humberside	43,622,900	—	7,264,185	—	98,032,276
Greater Manchester	26,772,290	—	4,685,380	—	44,923,749
North West	29,343,048	—	4,952,157	—	77,470,576
Northern	48,888,393	—	4,163,560	—	79,474,688

Region	Employment Training 1992-93 Fees[1]	Employment Training 1992-93 Allowances[2]	Employment Action 1992-93 Fees[1]	Employment Action 1992-93 Allowances[2]	Training for Work planned provision 1993-94[3]
Total	323,391,727	303,067,713	54,900,775	65,573,569	727,926,071
National	326,418,091	303,067,713	[4]61,604,106	[4]75,673,568	781,826,600

[1] Employment Training and Employment Action superseded by Training for Work on 1 April 1993.
[2] Employment Training and Employment Action allowances were not allocated regionally.
[3] Training for Work planned provision includes both fees and allowances.
[4] National figures for Employment Action include Scotland.

Region	[1]Business Start Up Scheme 1992-93	BSUS planned provision for 1993-94
South East	6,965,460	8,579,810
London	7,430,643	11,552,288
Eastern	2,542,104	5,719,354
South West	6,949,773	9,342,602
West Midlands	7,485,364	9,930,889
East Midlands	6,136,123	7,418,052
Yorkshire and Humberside	8,743,013	11,199,176
Greater Manchester	6,023,815	6,682,285
North West	6,158,712	8,113,344
Northern	3,789,207	5,290,509
Total	62,224,214	83,828,309
National	62,224,214	92,792,000

[1]Enterprise Allowance Scheme superseded by Business Start Up Scheme on 1 April 1991.

Region	Youth training 1992-93	Youth training planned provision for 1993-94[1]
South East	78,638,773	73,530,796
London	53,642,580	67,791,627
Eastern	37,803,269	62,900,706
South West	53,295,224	60,607,999
West Midlands	78,281,944	85,848,948
East Midlands	61,528,473	61,255,629
Yorkshire and Humberside	78,747,999	87,356,769
Greater Manchester	47,177,959	49,755,760
North West	58,099,250	82,823,343
Northern	55,879,335	60,242,404
Total	603,094,806	692,113,981
National	617,021,080	704,363,000

[1] Youth training planned provision excludes bridging allowance.

Earnings

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the average total weekly earnings in *(a)* each travel-to-work area and *(b)* Great Britain as a whole in (i) cash and (ii) current prices for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Information by each travel-to-work area is not available. The following tables provide details of average earnings by area at April of each of the last five years. The information on the retail prices index, all items, at April, to convert 1989 figures to 1993 prices is published in table 6.4 of the *Employment Gazette* and in table 26 of the annual supplement to "Economic Trends" for April of earlier years.

The majority of areas show a positive change in real earnings over the five-year period. Outside London and the south-east there is little evidence of any great disparity in earnings. Any differences that do exist result from the concentration of industries and occupations with relatively lower earnings in certain regions.

Average gross weekly earnings of full time adults—pay unaffected by absence: at April

	1989 £	1990 £	1991 £	1992 £	1993 £
Great Britain	239·7	263·1	284·7	304·6	316·9
England and Wales	241·5	265·0	286·6	306·4	319·0
England	242·7	266·7	288·3	308·1	320·9
Wales	215·9	232·1	252·2	270·9	281·2
Scotland	221·4	244·0	265·3	286·7	296·8
South East Region	275·0	303·6	326·7	348·6	365·5
Greater London	304·6	336·3	361·1	385·3	408·0
City of London	408·5	455·1	486·0	510·4	543·3
Barking	271·8	296·5	322·4	340·9	363·2
Barnet	272·6	308·4	305·0	318·0	345·4
Bexley	257·5	281·1	317·1	354·7	339·0
Brent	265·4	295·4	316·4	336·3	364·1
Bromley	257·9	285·4	288·0	305·8	321·5
Camden	317·0	346·9	368·7	390·6	404·2
Croydon	265·2	296·0	321·8	339·8	342·0
Ealing	270·9	307·2	336·1	356·3	361·9
Enfield	252·6	270·1	298·8	326·0	339·4
Greenwich	254·6	268·8	292·4	310·6	330·1
Hackney	310·4	353·9	374·0	—	—
Hammersmith	289·3	316·2	352·4	373·2	393·6
Haringey	242·1	272·0	283·7	303·0	323·1
Harrow	267·6	286·0	322·7	335·4	349·8
Havering	239·1	258·6	292·2	315·5	319·3
Hillingdon	280·6	309·4	327·1	382·6	422·8
Hounslow	311·2	345·0	354·8	365·3	357·9
Islington	290·2	330·1	360·0	388·4	425·3
Kensington and Chelsea	284·6	311·9	335·2	358·3	371·9
Kingston-upon-Thames	269·0	292·1	324·6	364·9	361·4
Lambeth	310·9	340·2	370·9	381·6	418·5
Lewisham	252·7	266·4	299·5	325·1	336·3
Merton	269·4	294·6	316·2	332·9	366·0
Newham	255·8	280·4	313·5	338·5	358·8
Redbridge	240·5	274·2	287·1	319·1	339·9
Richmond-upon-Thames	274·6	299·6	332·7	347·1	350·0
Southwark	315·0	344·4	367·5	396·7	412·4
Sutton	279·5	321·1	319·5	335·8	340·1
Tower Hamlets	319·3	351·1	382·7	423·9	474·3
Waltham Forest	235·9	263·2	283·1	304·7	305·0
Wandsworth	260·9	294·1	307·9	332·9	372·5
City of Westminster	329·9	365·1	397·8	415·7	447·3
Remainder of South East region	248·5	274·0	295·3	315·6	328·7
Bedfordshire	244·4	269·3	287·4	314·9	324·3
Berkshire	286·1	299·3	326·6	349·1	370·0
Buckinghamshire	281·6	290·4	307·1	326·1	330·6
East Sussex	220·3	238·6	260·9	272·7	287·8
Essex	242·9	268·4	287·2	305·5	316·7
Hampshire	241·7	266·9	285·6	306·6	322·5
Hertfordshire	259·8	290·3	314·2	326·7	342·1
Isle of Wight	217·6	225·5	255·2	270·8	259·9
Kent	235·7	256·3	280·4	298·6	308·3
Oxfordshire	237·6	264·1	285·5	307·9	327·6
Surrey	266·0	299·6	322·2	346·0	362·4
West Sussex	248·3	270·6	287·8	314·4	320·9

	1989 £	1990 £	1991 £	1992 £	1993 £
East Anglia Region	227·3	249·6	268·9	288·4	292·2
Cambridgeshire	236·2	261·8	280·7	299·6	306·9
Norfolk	220·3	239·5	259·1	280·5	281·4
Suffolk	224·9	246·4	266·0	283·9	286·8
South West Region	225·0	246·8	265·5	283·1	298·4
Avon	241·3	263·0	283·9	296·1	315·0
Cornwall	196·3	214·2	219·9	239·5	252·4
Devon	203·6	227·1	243·4	263·9	280·4
Dorset	225·4	247·5	261·1	278·4	292·0
Gloucestershire	230·1	251·4	276·9	294·8	306·7
Somerset	226·3	236·2	256·3	272·6	287·2
Wiltshire	234·0	262·8	281·2	306·1	319·4
West Midlands Region	220·4	240·6	261·1	279·9	291·9
West Midlands MC	225·2	247·7	268·1	287·8	301·3
Hereford and Worcester	208·0	227·6	246·1	262·8	279·8
Shropshire	202·1	222·9	242·5	263·0	275·4
Staffordshire	215·6	230·9	251·7	268·7	273·6
Warwickshire	230·7	246·6	270·8	290·8	299·9
East Midlands Region	216·3	241·6	261·3	276·1	285·7
Derbyshire	217·2	250·9	269·5	281·0	288·9
Leicestershire	212·0	237·5	257·9	169·9	285·0
Lincolnshire	207·7	226·6	244·9	263·7	270·5
Northamptonshire	224·0	250·6	265·3	286·6	298·7
Nottinghamshire	220·3	241·6	263·4	277·5	283·7
Yorkshire/Humberside Region	219·7	239·6	257·9	277·3	287·4
South Yorkshire MC	224·8	242·7	263·6	280·3	287·2
West Yorkshire MC	217·1	241·1	257·9	278·3	288·9
Humberside	222·4	237·6	252·5	275·9	286·3
North Yorkshire	215·6	231·0	253·1	270·2	283·3
North West Region	283·6	244·5	267·1	285·5	298·8
Greater Manchester MC	223·1	243·0	267·1	285·8	297·2
Merseyside MC	222·9	242·9	265·0	282·0	297·2
Cheshire	237·8	261·4	284·0	303·1	325·6
Lancashire	214·1	235·7	254·8	274·5	281·7
North Region	216·1	236·7	258·0	282·3	288·6
Tyne and Wear Metropolitan Council	212·7	234·2	257·4	282·3	287·0
Cleveland	234·4	246·3	267·1	291·6	297·9
Cumbria	220·1	246·7	270·1	287·0	299·2
Durham	206·3	230·5	245·2	272·7	279·9
Northumberland	206·1	221·1	247·0	273·6	276·3
Wales	215·9	232·1	252·2	270·9	281·2
Clwyd	215·2	236·7	253·0	271·9	281·6
Clywd, West	200·1	223·3	231·5	254·1	262·2
Clwyd, East	222·0	242·3	262·1	280·2	290·6
Dyfed (excluding Llanelli)	205·0	220·3	236·2	250·6	274·8
Gwent	212·2	226·6	250·6	263·6	273·1
Gwynedd	215·3	225·5	246·3	259·7	264·1
Mid-Glamorgan	220·0	232·7	249·9	270·7	278·5
Powys	206·2	210·1	226·8	251·6	262·5
South Glamorgan	224·4	245·0	265·4	282·2	299·3
West Glamorgan (including Llanelli)	213·4	230·5	253·7	281·1	283·0
Scotland	221·4	244·0	265·3	286·7	296·8
Borders	187·9	205·7	242·9	258·2	262·5
Central	220·0	238·5	257·7	281·8	295·5
Dumfries and Galloway	207·6	226·5	239·4	255·1	264·7
Fife	206·2	228·7	251·9	273·4	280·6
Grampian	2253·8	287·6	318·8	336·9	336·2
Highland	211·6	229·2	253·2	269·3	273·7
Lothian	223·9	244·8	2263·2	290·8	306·2
Strathclyde	219·7	243·1	260·6	279·3	293·3
Tayside	204·5	222·4	248·1	269·3	280·2
Orkney, Shetlands, Western Isles	..	..	..	..	..
Highlands and Islands	219·7	232·3	261·5	280·2	280·5

Source: New Earnings Survey.
Note: ".." denotes sample too small and/or standard error too large for reliable estimate.

Job Clubs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing for each region and for Great Britain as a whole during 1993 *(a)* the number of job clubs in operation, *(b)* the number participating in job clubs and *(c)* the destinations of those participating, broken down by (i) full-time employment, (ii) part-time employment, (iii) self-employment, (iv) further participation in job club, (v) full-time education or training course, (vi) unemployment and (vii) other options; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Alex Carlile, dated 14 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about Jobclubs.

The attached table shows the number of Jobclubs open in December 1993, the number of people who joined Jobclub from 1 January to 31 December 1993 and the number who left during the same period to go into jobs, other positive outcomes and for other reasons.

Details of the number who joined Jobclub during the year have been given on the table as records of the number participating on the programe at any one time are not kept.

As the primary focus of Jobclub is on getting people into work we do not keep detailed statistics on the different destinations of Jobclub leavers. Included in the "other positive outcomes" category are those leaving to go into full-time education, training (including Training for Work), self-employment, or to join a temporary work programme. The "other leavers" category includes people who are still unemployed on leaving the Jobclub and those leaving for other reasons such as health problems, or taking up part-time education. There are no figures available to show how many people subsequently re-join a Jobclub.

A more detailed examination of the destination of Jobclub leavers was carried out in January 1991. This was based on a postal survey of individuals who joined in Autumn 1989. At that time 43 per cent. of respondents went into full-time employment, 10 per cent. into part-time employment, 2 per cent. into self employment, 14 per cent. joined Employment Training, 2 per cent. went into full-time education or training and the remaining 29 per cent. left for other reasons.

The Employment Service is planning a wide ranging evaluation of its programmes and services which lead to jobs. This should begin in spring 1994 and will, amongst other things, allow us to update our information abut the destination of leavers.

Jobclubs continue to be an effective and popular programme. We are now helping more people than ever before and almost half of those who join leave with a job to go to.

I hope this is helpful.

Jobclub information 1993

	Number of Jobclubs	Number of entrants	Number into jobs	Number into other positive outcomes	Number of other leavers
Northern	99	14,316	5,739	7,134	1,258
Yorkshire and Humberside	120	20,509	9,154	2,724	7,811
East Midlands and Eastern	125	20,945	9,603	2,660	7,670
London and South East	429	80,354	32,003	10,086	32,302
South West	121	17,646	7,905	2,246	6,078
Wales	84	13,555	7,129	1,790	4,002
West Midlands	156	20,870	9,606	3,275	7,504
North West	184	32,593	14,312	3,595	14,429
Scotland	138	21,718	10,222	2,727	8,133
Great Britain	1,456	242,506	105,673	36,237	89,187

Jobcentres

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the number of vacancies in jobcentres that were *(a)* temporary and *(b)* permanent in each quarter since December 1990 in each region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Alex Carlile, dated 14 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the numbers of vacancies in Jobcentres.

Tables showing the number of temporary and permanent vacancies notified to Jobcentres by region were published in Hansard on 8 December 1993, column 212 refers. The information covers the period from April 1987 to 8 October 1993.

I enclose a table which gives similar information for the latest available period, from 11 October 1993 to 7 January 1994.

I hope this is helpful.

Details of permanent and temporary notified vacancies 11 October 1993 to 7 January 1994

Region	Period 11 October 1993 to 7 January 1994 Permanent vacancies notified	Temporary vacancies notified
Northern Region	15,619	5,769
Yorkshire and Humberside Region	28,980	8,466
East Midlands and Eastern Region	35,125	12,076
London and South East Region	99,996	30,770
South West Region	28,889	9,637
Office for Wales	20,909	13,155
West Midlands Region	32,415	9,240
North West Region	54,348	22,229
Office for Scotland	42,347	16,614
National Total	358,628	127,956

Early Retirement

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many men took early retirement in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those topics on which it is not his practice to answer parliamentary questions; and if he will list any recent changes in the practice of his Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* There has been no change from the practice of this and previous Administrations, as described on page 292 of the current edition of "Erskine May". Also, it is not this Department's practice to reply on matters that are "in confidence" or "commercial in confidence".

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 15 February 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are two executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Lord Chancellor's Department: the Legal Aid Board and the Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board. The Lord Chancellor makes the appointments of both the chair and members of each of them.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, for each of the non-departmental bodies sponsored by his Department, whether the public has a statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings and to inspect *(a)* minutes of meetings, *(b)* the annual reports and *(c)* the annual accounts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There is no statutory right to attend the board or committee meetings, or to inspect the minutes, of any of the Lord Chancellor's Department's non-departmental public bodies. However, as far as the tribunals are concerned, it is open to the public to attend the hearings.

The following bodies are required by statute to produce annual reports which are laid before Parliament:

Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct
Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board
Legal Aid Board
Council on Tribunals
Legal Aid Advisory Committee
Legal Aid Advisory Committee (NI)
Transport Tribunal
Law Commission

The first four of these bodies include their accounts in their reports; the others do not produce accounts. In addition:

—the annual report of the Advisory Council on Public Records is included in the annual report of the Keeper of Public Records which is required by statute to be laid before Parliament; and

—the Judicial Studies Board produces periodic reports which are published by HMSO, but no accounts.

The remaining bodies produce neither reports nor accounts.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department has two executive non-departmental public bodies: the Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board and the Legal Aid Board.

Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board

	£ million
1990-91	0·290
1991-92	0·349
1992-93	0·231

The figure for 1990-91 was the cost of setting up the board, which has been inactive since March 1992. The costs in 1992-93 relate to on-going costs and the scaling down of its operations. No provision was made for its financing after 31 March 1993.

Legal Aid Board
Gross public expenditure

	£ million
1990-91	634
1991-92	886
1992-93	1,117
1993-94	[1]1,328
1994-95	[1]1,592
1995-96	[1]1,808

[1] estimated outturn.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The membership of the Authorised Conveyancing Practitioners Board at 31 January 1994 is as follows:

Members
Alan Brakefield Esq
Ms Tamara Goriely
Alan Mills Esq
Ms Katharine Mortimer
Mrs. June P. O'Dell OBE

There is currently a vacancy for the post of chairman.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Council on Public Records.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The membership of the Advisory Council on Public Records as at 31 January 1994 is as follows:

Chairman
Sir Thomas Bingham, the right honourable Master of the Rolls

Members
Professor Bernard Alford
Sir John Blelloch
Dr. Alan Borg
Mrs. Lynne J. Brindley
Alexander Charles Carlile Esq. MP
Professor Richard Chapman
Terence Anthony Gordon Davis Esq. MP
Professor Richard Barrie Dobson
Miss Andrea Duncan
Victor Gray Esq
Mrs. Lynette Lithgow
Professor Shula Marks
David Sumberg Esq. MP
David Vaisey Esq. FSA

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Legal Aid Board.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The present members of the Legal Aid Board are John Pitts, chairman, Martin Acland, Diana Beale, Valerie Boakes, Fred Collins, Peter Jones, Kate Markus, Steve Orchard, Penelope Pearce, George Pulman QC, David Sinker, John Smith and Andrew Thomas.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the General Commissioners of Income Tax.

Mr. John Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost. The latest figures available show that there are 3,948 general commissioners in England and Wales. If the hon. Member wishes me to give the names of general commissioners on particular divisions I shall be pleased to do so.

Stubbings *v.* Webb

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will now consider amending section 11 of the Limitation Act 1980, in light of the House of Lords decision in the case of Stubbings *v.* Webb; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The matter is presently under consideration.

Financial Services Tribunal

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Financial Services Tribunal.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Current appointments to the panel of the Financial Services Tribunal:

Chairmen

Mr. J. M. Bowers
Mr. D. Campbell
Mr. P. E. Heim
Mr. E. C. Woods
Mr. A. Gordon
Mr. J. E. Drummond Young

Members

Mr. K. A. Blundell
Mr. W. M. Carson
Mr. P. G. Green
Mr. G. C. Grover
Mr. J. L. Kirkpatrick
Mr. A. F. Lamb
Mr. H. G. Littlefair
Sir James McKinnon
Mr. A. W. Mallinson
Mr. W. O'Farrell
Mr. J. B. Page
Mr. R. C. Ritchie
Mr. R. P. Wilkinson
Mr. G. Willetts
Mr. P. D. Williams
Mr. H. Woods

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Batons

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when all police areas will have access to expandable batons.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Chief officers may equip their officers with any of the expandable batons currently undergoing trials, although the approval of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is required in the case of the Metropolitan police.

Fraud Sentences

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce the result of the review to determine whether unduly lenient sentences in cases of serious and complex fraud should be referrable to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Maclean: I hope shortly to make an announcement about the scope of the Attorney-General's power to refer lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what considerations he takes into account when deciding whether an asylum seeker should be detained;

(2) what is his policy on keeping asylum seekers in detention where relatives are prepared to offer sureties.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The policy is to use the powers of detention under the Immigration Act 1971 only where there is no alternative and where there are good grounds for believing that the person concerned will not comply with any conditions attached to his release. All relevant factors are taken into account, including the person's previous immigration history, the existence of any connections with the United Kingdom, the likelihood and time scale of removal and any compassionate circumstances, including the person's medical condition.

Any application to an immigration officer to grant release on bail in accordance with paragraph 29 of schedule 2 of the 1971 Act is considered on its merits taking into account all relevant factors, including the willingness of relatives to offer sureties. A similar approach is taken in deciding whether or not to oppose an application for bail to the independent immigration appellate authorities or to the courts.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost in the last year available for keeping asylum seekers in detention.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information does not identify separately those detention costs which relate to asylum seekers.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers are currently detained in prisons *(a)* in the west midlands and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 10 February, 46 men who had claimed asylum at some stage were detained in the west midlands area, all at Birmingham prison. The number detained in prisons nationally was 278.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to announce section 11 funding for the current financial year for the London borough of Wandsworth;

(2) what has been the total financial funding under section 11 that has been made to the London borough of Wandsworth in the current financial year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Section 11 grant is currently paid on the basis of an authority's actual expenditure. Grant payable in relation to expenditure by the London borough of Wandsworth in the first two quarters of the current financial year amounted to £921,859.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of teachers employed in schools in the Tooting constituency of the London borough of Wandsworth whose salaries are paid in full or part from section 11 funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Some 48·6 full-time equivalent teaching posts approved for funding under section 11 are currently allocated to schools identified as being in the Tooting constituency. This figure does not include posts in central teams which provide a service to schools throughout the borough, but does include posts in grant-maintained schools which have opted out of local authority projects.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on section 11 funding for schools within the Greater London area for the coming financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education was consulted about national changes to the levels and the methodology of the grant.

Trial by Jury

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to retain the right to choose trial by jury in all cases where election is currently possible.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are still considering the recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice on this matter.

Ritual Abuse

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the result of the survey carried out into the nature and extent of ritual abuse in Britain by Jean La Fontaine and the Obscene Publications Department of Scotland Yard; and if the result will be made public.

Mr. Maclean: The results of research carried out by the Obscene Publications Branch of the Metropolitan police are not yet ready for publication. It will be for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to decide what information he wishes to make public, as it will be for the Department of Health to decide in the case of the separate research study by Professor la Fontaine.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the members currently appointed to the Parole Board.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Membership of the Parole Board is set out in its annual report which is placed in the Library of the House. As there have been changes since the report was last published, I will arrange for an up-to-date list of the membership to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the local review committees.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are more than 2,000 members of local review committees in England and Wales. The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The chairman of the Commission is the Speaker of the House of Commons. The deputy chairman is the hon. Sir Malcolm Pill. The members are Mr. Murray McLaggan JP DL MA and Mr. Peter Davey CBE.

Prisons

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of cells at each prison in England and Wales and the number of prisoners presently held.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. J. Butler to Mr. Stephen Byers, dated 15 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of cells in prisons in England and Wales and the number of prisoners presently held.

Accommodation for prisoners consists of cells, double cells, cubicles and rooms or dormitories. Most prisons consist of more than one type of accommodation. The latest date for which a breakdown of these types of accommodation is available is 31 March 1993. The numbers for the separate parts of each establishment are listed in Apprendix 1 to the Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts for April 1992—March 1993, Volume Two, which is available both in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office. The list is followed by definitions of each of the types of accommodation.

The attached table gives the total number of prisoners held at each establishment on 4 February 1994.

Establishment population on 4 February 1994

Establishment	*Population*
Acklington	616
Albany	328
Aldington	98
Ashwell	385
Askham Grange	101
Aylesbury	226
Bedford	266
Belmarsh	719
Birmingham	754
Blakenhurst	633
Blantyre House	93
Blundeston	391
Brinsford	454
Bristol	444

Establishment	Population
Brixton	593
Brockhill	132
Bullingdon	617
Bullwood Hall	107
Camp Hill	383
Canterbury	238
Cardiff	423
Castington	286
Channings Wood	559
Chelmsford	318
Coldingley	263
Cookham Wood	117
Dartmoor	517
Deerbolt	359
Dorchester	195
Dover	242
Downview	275
Drake Hall	187
Durham	527
East Sutton Park	72
Elmley	613
Erlestoke	197
Everthorpe	224
Exeter	409
Featherstone	593
Feltham	752
Finnamore Wood	58
Ford	373
Frankland	402
Full Sutton	539
Garth	511
Gartree	265
Glen Parva	767
Gloucester	242
Grendon	158
Guys Marsh	137
Haslar	142
Hatfield	176
Haverigg	374
Hewell Grange	163
High Down	533
Highpoint	614
Hindley	271
Hollesley Bay	290
Holloway	496
Holme House	631
Hull	419
Huntercombe	216
Kingston	128
Kirkham	575
Kirklevington	65
Lancaster	253
Lancaster Farms	362
Latchmere House	137
Leeds	1,148
Leicester	325
Lewes	354
Leyhill	401
Lincoln	604
Lindholme	548
Littlehey	522
Liverpool	1,337
Long Lartin	345
Low Newton	259
Maidstone	462
Manchester	346
Moorland	608
Morton Hall	174
The Mount	463
New Hall	162
North Sea Camp	185
Northallerton	155
Norwich	455
Nottingham	214
Onley	407
Parkhurst	226
Pentonville	678
Portland	342
Prescoed	86
Preston	537
Pucklechurch	60
Ranby	340
Reading	151
Risley	693
Rochester	229
Rudgate	259
Send	111
Shepton Mallet	182
Shrewsbury	295
Spring Hill	200
Stafford	519
Standford Hill	273
Stocken	391
Stoke Heath	275
Styal	202
Sudbury	437
Swaleside	506
Swansea	269
Swinfen Hall	181
Thorn Cross	155
Thorp Arch	165
Usk	120
The Verne	524
Wakefield	644
Wandsworth	834
Wayland	545
Wellingborough	309
Werrington	110
Wetherby	147
Whatton	212
Whitemoor	482
Winchester	346
The Wolds	325
Woodhill	510
Wormwood Scrubs	858
Wymott	181

Police Inquiries (Press Leaks)

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the manner in which details of police inquiry are released to the media; if he will take steps to ensure that, in the case of death, no such details are released until the next of kin are officially informed; if he will issue new guidelines to Association of Chief Police Officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has established an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the divulging of information to the media in the tragic case my hon. Friend may have in mind. We shall consider in the light of the report of that inquiry if there are matters which should be pursued centrally.

Official Secrets Act 1989

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the numbers of *(a)* cases brought and *(b)* prosecutions leading to convictions under the Official Secrets Act 1989 from 1 March 1990 to 31 December 1993.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 February 1994]:* Information held centrally shows that there were two prosecutions in 1991, both of which resulted in convictions. There was also a further prosecution in 1992 where the defendant was committed for trial. Data for 1993 are not yet available.

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has made for the current year's review of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989; and how observations from interested persons or organisations should be submitted for consideration.

Mr. Howard *[pursuant to his reply 8 December 1993, column 276]:* I have now received a report from Mr. J. J. Rowe, QC and I have placed copies in the Library.

Criminal Justice Act 1993

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to implement the remaining provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1993.

Mr. Howard *[pursuant to my reply of 3 December 1993, column 786]:* The following new provisions to combat money laundering are being brought into force today by means of commencement order No. 4: sections 16 to 17, 29 to 31, 33, 47, 49 and 74, together with section 79 to the extent necessary to bring into force consequential amendments, repeals and revocations in schedules 5 and 6.

An announcement about implementation of the remaining sections of the Act will be made in due course.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Lorrain Osman

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Attorney-General what advice the Treasury solicitors offered to potential Government witnesses in the Lorrain Osman case.

The Attorney-General: The Treasury Solicitor was instructed by the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to act for them in connection with civil proceedings in the High Court in London brought by Lorrain Osman for writs of habeas corpus and for judicial review. The Treasury Solicitor assisted with the preparation and filing of affidavit evidence in these and related interlocutory proceedings. The advice given in this connection is protected by legal professional privilege.

The Treasury Solicitor was not involved in, and did not advise in connection with, the criminal proceedings brought in Hong Kong.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Internal Mail

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *859*, if he will request the Serjeant at Arms, in his review of the Members' internal mail service, to consider how hon. Members may mail all their colleagues without the expense of using franked envelopes.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Yes.

Photocopying Facilities

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will arrange for a small photocopying facility to be in or near the Table Office.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I have been asked to reply.

I shall arrange for this matter to be considered by the Administration Committee.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by the Privy Council Office *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office has conducted no such campaigns in the current financial year, and none are planned for 1994-95.

Parliamentary Broadcasting Signals

Mr. Page: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Broadcasting Committee's mid-term review of the performance by CCT Productions of its contract to provide the parliamentary broadcasting signals.

Mr. Newton: The contract between Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit Ltd.—PARBUL—and CCT Productions for the generation of the parliamentary broadcasting signals provides for a mid-term review of the financial and editorial aspects of the contract. The halfway point of the five-year contract fell at the end of 1993 and the Broadcasting Committee accordingly commissioned a series of reports on CCT's performance to date. In view of the generally satisfactory nature of these reports the Committee concluded that the present arrangements appeared to be working well and that no changes were called for at this stage. I have arranged for copies of the reports—from CCT, PARBUL, the Supervisor of Parliamentary Broadcasting, the House of Lords Broadcasting Committee, and the Assistant Serjeant at Arms—to be placed in the Library.

HEALTH

Safer Sex Advice

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much has been spent to date by the Health Education Authority on the safer sex advice integrated media campaign;

(2) what instructions have been issued by her Department to the Health Education Authority regarding the future of the safer sex advice integrated media campaign; and what were the reasons for those instructions.

Mr. Sackville: Since assuming responsibility for the HIV/AIDS/safer sex campaigns from the Department of Health, the Health Education Authority has been allocated the following sums for the purpose:

Year	*£ million*
1987-88	4·470
1988-89	8·500
1989-90	10·700
1990-91	8·500

Year	£ million
1991-92	9·500
1992-93	9·775
1993-94	9·756

The Health Education Council has a continuing general remit to develop programmes to deliver advice on safer sex through mass media and targeted campaigns. There is an agreed procedure for consulting United Kingdom Health Ministers about advertising material, which the HEA has followed with recent proposals. No specific instructions have been given about future campaigns.

Waiting Times

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the average waiting time for initial assessment in accident and emergency departments in 1992-93; and what proportion of people attending accident and emergency departments had to wait *(a)* five minutes or more, *(b)* 15 minutes or more and *(c)* 30 minutes or more;

(2) what proportion of NHS outpatients were given specific appointment times in 1992-93; and what proportion were seen within 30 minutes of their appointment time.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about average waiting times for initial assessment in accident and emergency departments is not available centrally. As at 31 March 1993, 74 per cent.—estimates based on samples—of patients were assessed within five minutes of arriving in an accident and emergency department.

From 1 April 1992 all patients should have a specific out-patient appointment time. As at 31 March 1993 73 per cent.—estimates based on samples—of patients were seen within 30 minutes of their out-patient appointment time.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 21 January, *Official Report*, column *888*, what actual examples she has of ways in which savings by general practitioner fundholders have been used for the benefit of patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: Fundholders are spending their savings in a number of ways—for example, reducing waiting times; and bringing more services into the practices. The rules governing how savings should be spent are in the National Health Service (Fundholding Practices) Regulations 1993, copies of which are in the Library.

Fulwood House Site

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the staff reduction at the Trent regional health authority Fulwood house site in the last two years; what space has been made available as a consequence; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for Trent regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Michael Carlisle, the chairman, for details.

Audiologists

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many vacancies there are for permanent audiologists in the London health service; how many permanent audiologists are employed in the London health service; how many agency audiologists are employed in the London health service; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There were 140 whole-time equivalent staff working in audiology in London, as of 30 September 1992. Information on the number of vacancies is not available centrally.

Smoking

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department first and last received representations from the British Medical Association for a ban on tobacco promotion as a major means of reducing smoking and if she will estimate the reduction in smoking *(a)* during that period and *(b)* from the peak to the present day.

Mr. Sackville: The Secretary to the Council of the British Medical Association, BMA, wrote to the Department of Health in May 1964, indicating the council's support for a general decrease in advertisements for tobacco products beginning with a ban on all television advertisements. The most recent occasion on which the BMA made a formal representation to the Government for a ban on tobacco advertising was 24 September 1993.

According to the estimates of the Tobacco Advisory Council—now the Tobacco Manufacturers Association—69 per cent. of men and 41 per cent. of women in Great Britain smoked cigarettes, pipes or cigars in 1964. The 1992 general household survey showed that 36 per cent. of men and 28 per cent. of women now smoke cigarettes, pipes or cigars. The two sources of data are not strictly comparable.

The Tobacco Advisory Council's estimates of smoking prevalence go back to 1948. The highest prevalence of smoking among men, 82 per cent., occurred in the first year of the series, 1948. The highest prevalence among women, 44 per cent., occurred first in 1957 and most recently in 1974.

Diabetes

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received regarding injection pens and special needles for diabetics in relation to prescription charges; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make injection pens and special needles available free on prescription for diabetics; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Disposable insulin injection pens are already available on national health service prescription. People with diabetes mellitus, except where treatment is by diet alone, are exempt from prescription charges. Reusable injection pens and their needles are not available on general practitioner prescription and there are currently no plans to make them available in this way. These pens, however, may be provided free of charge from hospitals if the consultant in charge of a patient's treatment thinks this is appropriate.

Dentistry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental patients have been deregistered in each family health services authority since July 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is contained in the table. Over the period 1 July 1992 to 4 February 1994 dentists notified their family health services authorities of 632,242 patient deregistrations. Over the shorter period of 1 July 1992 to 30 November 1994 there was a net increase in patient registrations of 1·890 million.

Number of patients deregistered since July 1992, by family health services authority

England

Family health service authority	*Number of patients deregistered*
England	631,242
Cleveland	2,569
Cumbria	13,118
Durham	344
Northumberland	2,650
Gateshead	717
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	—
North Tyneside	1
South Tyneside	11
Sunderland	—
Humberside	10,473
North Yorkshire	9,463
Bradford	—
Calderdale	843
Kirklees	678
Leeds	8,363
Wakefield	837
Derbyshire	19,084
Leicestershire	11,577
Lincolnshire	—
Nottinghamshire	4,798
Barnsley	—
Doncaster	23
Rotherham	44
Sheffield	1,203
Cambridgeshire	5,128
Norfolk	28,775
Suffolk	6,767
Bedfordshire	1,317
Hertfordshire	6,957
Barnet	4,862
Brent and Harrow	1,499
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	35
Hillingdon	—
Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea	2,288
Essex	14,852
Barking and Havering	3,825
Camden and Islington	296
City and East London	481
Enfield and Haringey	981
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	2,202
East Sussex	14,785
Kent	54,316
Greenwich and Bexley	4,305
Bromley	13,161
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	446
Surrey	26,573
West Sussex	35,157
Croydon	1,866
Kingston and Richmond	962
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	1,742
Dorset	22,544
Hampshire	24,058
Wiltshire	11,463
Isle of Wight	3,594
Berkshire	25,772
Buckinghamshire	18,818
Northamptonshire	3,075
Oxfordshire	25,407
Avon	15,236
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	14,578
Devon	27,076
Gloucestershire	49,521
Somerset	3,706
Hereford and Worcester	3,575
Shropshire	655
Staffordshire	7,457
Warwickshire	9,676
Birmingham	2,178
Coventry	1,540
Dudley	—
Sandwell	—
Solihull	2,505
Walsall	—
Wolverhampton	—
Cheshire	6,402
Liverpool	422
St. Helens and Knowsley	14
Sefton	590
Wirral	604
Lancashire	24,530
Bolton	631
Bury	675
Manchester	298
Oldham	—
Rochdale	1,904
Salford	151
Stockport	1,256
Tameside	742
Trafford	245
Wigan	—

Cornwall Health

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who will pay the legal costs of the Cornwall Health non-executive directors currently facing charges of libel.

Dr. Mawhinney: This matter is currently being considered by Sir Duncan Nichol, chief executive of the national health service management executive.

NHS Charges

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase current NHS charges and the value of optical vouchers; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall lay before the House regulations providing for increases in charges and spectacle voucher values in the national health service in England and Wales. These changes will take effect on 1 April 1994. The prescription charge will increase by 50p, from £4·25 to £4·75 for each quantity of a drug or appliance dispensed. The overall value of optical vouchers will be increased by an average of 4 per cent.

The new prescription charge is still significantly less than the average total cost of a single prescription item to the NHS. Extensive exemption arrangements and charge remission under the NHS low income scheme ensure that no one need be deterred from getting necessary treatment or medication for financial reasons. The rates for prescription prepayment certificates will rise in line with the increase in prescription charges.

A prescription charge is now paid on around only one item in five dispensed by community pharmacists and

appliance contractors. This compares with about two items in five when the Government took office. In 1992-93, the family health service drugs bill was over £2·6 billion.

Income from prescription charges in 1994-95 will raise about £292 million in much-needed revenue for the national health service. This money is sufficient to provide, for example, 71,000 hip replacement operations or 46,000 coronary artery bypass grafts or 221,000 cataract removals.

Charges for fabric supports supplied through the hospital service will increase by 50p. Charges for elastic stockings and tights, and wigs supplied through the hospital service, will also be increased by a similar percentage to the rise in the prescription charge.

The maximum patient charge for a single course of dental treatment begun on or after 1 April 1994 will increase from £250 to £275.

I am pleased to announce that from 1 April 1994, the overall value of optical vouchers will increase by an average of 4 per cent. However, the most commonly used vouchers, constituting over 85 per cent. of the total, will be increased by 4·5 per cent. and, as a result, the majority of beneficiaries will find themselves better off.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will lay regulations to increase charges and spectacle voucher sales in Scotland by the same amounts. Similar arrangements will apply in Northern Ireland. Details of the revised charges and voucher values have been placed in the Library.

Low Income Scheme

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if she has concluded her review of the administration of the NHS low-income scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: As part of the Government's commitment to ensuring ready access to financial help with national health service charges for those who need it, the NHS low income scheme provides help with prescription and other charges for many thousands of people on low incomes who are not exempt or otherwise automatically entitled to full charge remission through receipt of income support or family credit. We have recently reviewed the scheme.

In addition to making number of operational improvements, we have considered a large number of options arising from the review. We have concluded that the present arrangements for administering the low income scheme are satisfactory, and we have not identified any options for immediate change within what can be afforded.

Existing arrangements will be extended from 1 April 1995 to provide automatic charge remission for recipients of disability working allowance. This is in line with the announcement made on 1 December 1993 at column *1039* by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

The review of forms presently being carried out will continue to ensure that they are as easy to understand and use as possible. We are also examining the potential for computerisation.

Blind People

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding was made available for regional associations for the blind in each year since 1985; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The Department has made available to the regional associations for the blind the following levels of funding:

	South Regional Association for the Blind £	*North Regional Association for the Blind* £	*Total* £
1984-85	65,090	42,634	107,724
1985-86	74,746	53,738	128,484
1986-87	72,389	52,206	124,595
1987-88	75,905	52,007	127,912
1988-89	106,702	53,169	159,871
1989-90	107,381	62,097	169,478
1990-91	127,577	67,619	195,196
1991-92	132,084	71,768	203,852
1992-93	145,000	69,391	214,391
1993-94	143,079	84,100	227,179

From April 1994, under the visual impairment sub-programme of the training support programme TSP, the Department will be making £250,000 available to local authorities to spend specifically on the training of such workers.

Photorefractive Keratectomy

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which London hospitals provide excimer laser photorefractive keratectomy to national health service patients; what is the size of the waiting lists for each of the hospitals for this treatment; what is the average monthly rate of operations for each of the hospitals; what is the cost per operation for each of the hospitals; and what is the total cost of treating a patient under this programme for each of the hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: The treatment of myopia by excimer laser photorefractive keratectomy is still experimental and being evaluated. We are aware that this procedure is undergoing clinical trials in two London hospitals—St. Thomas's and Moorfields eye hospital.

West Yorkshire Health Authority

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline the budget which has been allocated for the West Yorkshire health authority for 1994-95; what the comparable figure was for 1993-94; what this increase represents in cash and percentage terms; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Allocations are made to regional health authorities and it is they who allocate to district health authorities.

West Yorkshire's health authority's allocations for resident population in 1993-94 and 1994-95 are:

1993-94 (£000's)	*1994-95 (£000's)*
214,026	225,279

This represents a cash increase of £11·253 million and a percentage increase of 5·26 per cent.

Additional sums for specific purposes may be added during the financial year.

NHS Purchasing Authorities

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to ensure that NHS purchasing authorities involve the general public in their purchasing decisions.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service management executive document "Local Voices" and the priorities and planning guidelines for 1994-95—EL(93)54—identified the steps that authorities need to take to ensure that they involve the general public in their purchasing decisions. I wrote last month to all district health authorities emphasising the importance that the Government attach to responsiveness to the views and needs of local people.

NHS Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of employees in each district health authority area were engaged in *(a)* management posts, *(b)* clerical and administration posts and *(c)* nursing and midwifery posts in each of the past five years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 17 December 1993]:* The information for 1988, 1989 and 1990 will be placed in the Library. Information for later years is not centrally available. The increase in general and senior managers should be treated with caution. Much of the increase arises from reclassification of existing staff, including many senior nurses, as managers.

Dental Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family health services authorities have been unable to provide emergency dental services in each month since July 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 11 February 1994]:* The available information is shown in the table.

General dental practitioners have an obligation under their terms of service to provide emergency cover to their registered patients. They may also offer emergency treatment to non-registered patients. Family health services authorities make arrangements for those patients who are not registered. All FHSAs report that they are able to help patients contacting them to obtain national health service dental treatment.

Total number of family health services authorities which were unable to provide emergency dental services in each week since July 1992[1] England

Week ending	*Family health service authorities*
3 July 1992	13
10 July 1992	7
17 July 1992	8
24 July 1992	7
31 July 1992	8
7 August 1992	8
14 August 1992	7
21 August 1992	7
28 August 1992	8
4 September 1992	8
11 September 1992	8
18 September 1992	8
25 September 1992	8
2 October 1992	8
9 October 1992	8
16 October 1992	8
23 October 1992	8
30 October 1992	8
6 November 1992	8
13 November 1992	7
20 November 1992	7
27 November 1992	7
4 December 1992	6
11 December 1992	6
18 December 1992	6
25 December 1992	—
1 January 1993	—
8 January 1993	6
15 January 1993	6
22 January 1993	6
29 January 1993	6
5 February 1993	6
12 February 1993	6
19 February 1993	6
26 February 1993	4
5 March 1993	7
12 March 1993	5
19 March 1993	5
26 March 1993	6
2 April 1993	6
9 April 1993	5
16 April 1993	5
23 April 1993	7
30 April 1993	5
7 May 1993	6
14 May 1993	6
21 May 1993	5
28 May 1993	6
4 June 1993	7
11 June 1993	6
18 June 1993	5
25 June 1993	5
2 July 1993	6
9 July 1993	5
16 July 1993	5
23 July 1993	5
30 July 1993	6
6 August 1993	5
13 August 1993	6
20 August 1993	6
27 August 1993	6
3 September 1993	5
10 September 1993	5
17 September 1993	5
24 September 1993	5
1 October 1993	5
8 October 1993	5
15 October 1993	5
22 October 1993	8
29 October 1993	7
5 November 1993	8
12 November 1993	6
19 November 1993	5
26 November 1993	6
3 December 1993	6
10 December 1993	6
17 December 1993	5
24 December 1993	—
31 December 1993	—
7 January 1994	6
14 January 1994	6
21 January 1994	7

Week ending	Family health service authorities
28 January 1994	5
4 February 1994	6

[1] Data were not collected during the Christmas and new year periods.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) who are the members currently appointed to the board of the British Tourist Authority;

(2) who are the members currently appointed to the English tourist board.

Mr. Sproat: Adele Biss is joint chairman of the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board. Other members appointed to the tourists boards are as follows:

British Tourist Authority

Hon. Rocco Forte
Ivor T. Manley CB
John H. J. Lewis
Gordon Dunlop CBE

The Development of Tourism Act 1969 confers membership of the British Tourist Authority on the chairmen of the Scottish and Wales tourist boards, currently Ian D. Grant CBE and Tony Lewis respectively. The chairman of the Northern Ireland tourist board also attends meetings by invitation. The current post holder is Hon. Hugh O'Neill. Appointments to these tourist boards are made by the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively.

English Tourist Board

John F. Jarvis CBE
John Poppleton
John Lee
Sir Basil Feldman
Geoffrey Thompson
Eve Pollard

In accordance with the Development of Tourism Act 1969, when members are appointed or reappointed to the boards of the British Tourist Authority and English tourist board, statements are placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the South Bank theatre board.

Mr. Brooke: The present members of the South Bank theatre board are:

The Lady Soames DBE
Mr. Anthony Everitt (Secretary-General, Arts Council of Great Britain)
Mr. Vaughan Rees (Department of National Heritage).

The post of chairman is currently vacant.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the British museum.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the British museum are:

Sir David Attenborough, CVO CBE FRS
Nicholas Barber Esq.
Professor Gillian Beer, FBA
Professor Rosemary J. Cramp, CBE FSA
Lord Egremont, DL
Sir C. Matthew Farrer, KCVO
HRH The Duke of Gloucester, GCVO
Graham Greene Esq., CBE
Professor Edward T. Hall, CBE DPhil FPhys FSA FBA
Charles E. A. Hambro Esq.
Sir Peter John Harrop, CB
Allen Jones Esq., RA
Simon Lindley Keswick Esq.
Professor Peter E. Lasko, CBE FSA FBA
The Hon. Mrs. Anna-Maria Marten, OBE DL
Sir John Morgan, KCMG
Sir Clause A. Moser, KCB CBE FBA
Right Hon. Sir Timothy Raison
Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn, FBA FSA
Professor Guenter H. Treitel, DCL FBA QC
Lord Weinstock, BSc FSS
Lord Windlesham PC CVO *(Chairman)*

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Brooke: I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 24 January, *Official Report*, columns *32-33*.

Television Licence Fee

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what is the present value of the television licence fee concession for people registered as blind, adjusted for inflation since it was set at £1·25;

(2) how many people who are registered as blind obtain the television licence fee concession of £1·25.

Mr. Brooke: The £1·25 concession for registered blind people, if adjusted for inflation since 1971, would be worth £8·92 today. I understand that, in the year ended 31 March 1993, 40,731 registered blind people received the concession.

EDUCATION

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much the Department for Education has spent on the operation of the assisted places scheme in each year since 1981; how many pupils have been covered by the scheme since 1981; and if there was any overspend on the budget allocated in each of these years.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is given in the following table for each year up to 1992-93, the latest year for which complete figures are available. Expenditure exceed the original budget estimate in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Year	Total cost £ million	Total number of assisted pupils
1981-82	3·0	4,185
1982-83	8·7	8,616
1983-84	15·0	13,102
1984-85	22·2	17,386
1985-86	29·6	21,412
1986-87	37·9	24,478

Year	Total cost £ million	Total number of assisted pupils
1987-88	46·0	26,899
1988-89	50·9	27,083
1989-90	56·5	27,008
1990-91	63·4	26,740
1991-92	75·7	27,641
1992-93	[1]92·8	28,674

[1] Includes £4·9 million brought forward from financial year 1993-94.
Note: The figures are for England only.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many formal assessments are currently being undertaken by Barnsley local education authority and what length of time each stage of the assessment has taken so far together, indicating whether that time exceeds the current legislative maximum time for each stage.

Mr. Forth: The Barnsley LEA has told my officials that it is currently undertaking 337 formal assessments. Information about the length of time taken for each stage of assessment is not availble centrally. There is at present no statutory maximum time for making a formal assessment. However, subject to Parliament's approval, regulations made under the 1993 Education Act will set statutory time limits for the making of assessments and statements, with effect from autumn this year.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many appeals have been submitted to his Department from within Barnsley local education authority since 1981; and what length of time each has been with his Department indicating when that time exceeds the current legislative maximum time for such appeals.

Mr. Forth: Since 1981, the Department has received a total of 28 appeals under the 1981 Act and related complaints under the 1994 Act from within Barnsley LEA. A breakdown of this figure for each year since 1981, and information about the length of time taken to resolve each appeal or complaint, could be made available only at disproportionate cost. There is no statutory maximum time for resolving appeals under the 1981 Act. The Department is currently consulting upon draft regulations and rules of procedure which will, subject to Parliament's approval, govern the operation of the new special educational needs tribunal, to be established under the Education Act 1993. The tribunal will set time targets for the various stages of an appeal. These will be set out in the tribunal's guide for parents. Performance will be assessed in the tribunal's annual report.

Dyslexia

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many children have been (i) statemented and (ii) formally assessed by Barnsley local education authority in each year since 1981, whose special need is as a result of diagnosis of dyslexia;

(2) how many appeals from Barnsley local education authority relating to dyslexia are being dealt with by his Department;

(3) how many appeals are currently with his Department in respect of children who have been statemented by Barnsley local education authority; how many statements have been issued; and how many children have been made the subject of formal assessment by Barnsley local education authority for each year since 1981.

Mr. Forth: The Department is currently dealing with eight appeals in respect of children with special educational needs from Barnsley local education authority —LEA. All concern children with specific learning difficulties, and four of these appeals are in respect of children who have been made the subject of a statement.

Information on the number of formal assessments and statements made by Barnsley LEA, for each year since 1981, is shown in the table. Information for the 1993 calendar year is still being collated, and is not yet available.

Statements of special educationdl needs: Barnsley LEA

Year[1]	Children for whom a statement was made for the first time	Children assessed for whom no statement was issued	Total
1981	45	[2]—	45
1982	45	[2]—	45
1983	12	[2]—	12
1984	74	[2]—	74
1985	60	[2]—	60
1986	68	[2]—	68
1987	44	[2]—	44
1988	34	5	39
1989	45	10	55
1990	95	7	102
1991	122	7	129
1992	173	10	183

[1] Calendar year
[2] Information not collected

Information on pupils who have been made the subject of a formal assessment or a statement is not categorised by disability.

Tuition Fees

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he proposes to take as a consequence of the late payment of tuition fees by local education authorities to universities.

Mr. Boswell: The Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations place local education authorities—LEAs—in England and Wales under a statutory duty to pay most tuition fees in three instalments on specified dates or within one month of the receipt by the LEA of a valid request for payment, whichever is the later. My right hon. Friend wrote last September to the chairmen of all LEAs to remind them of the problems caused by the late payment of fees. My Department is pursuing complaints about late payments against a number of LEAs, including complaints made by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom.

Environmental Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to increase the provision of initial and in-service education for teachers in environmental education.

Mr. Robin Squire: "Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan" and "Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy"

include suggestions for action by schools and institutions in support of environment education. My right hon. Friend's policies in respect of the initial and in-service education of teachers were set out in my reply of 16 December 1993, column 772.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much it costs his Department annually to publicise and administer the operation of the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Forth: Publicity for the scheme is undertaken chiefly by schools themselves and organisations such as the Independent Schools Information Service—ISIS. The Department produces each year a brief guide for parents and a list of schools participating in the scheme at a cost in 1993-94 of £3,200. The scheme is administered by some eight staff whose direct staff costs are some £134,000 per annum.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what safeguards are used by his Department to ensure that schools covered by the assisted places scheme meet recognised educational standards.

Mr. Forth: All 295 schools participating in the scheme satisfy stringent criteria relating to high academic achievement. They must offer a broad and balanced curriculum and must be able to demonstrate and maintain high academic standards. The Department monitors these standards through its annual examination results survey.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement indicating the level of fees charged by the institutions in England covered by the assisted places scheme in the current academic year.

Mr. Forth: Tuition fees charged by participating schools vary considerably and are dependent to a large degree on the type of institution and its location. In the current academic year 1993-94, the average fee charged is about £4,100 per year. The highest fee charged is £9,348 per year in respect of sixth-formers and the lowest fee charged is £2,283 per year.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment his Department has made of the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Forth: The scheme is a success and more popular with parents than ever. Virtually all new places on offer each year are being taken up with a significant proportion going to those children from families with incomes below the threshold, currently £9,225 per year, for full fee remission. To ensure that participating schools carry out assessments of income correctly, the Department also issues regular comprehensive guidance and carries out random audit surveys of income assessments. These surveys, together with the statistical information collected, show that schools are indeed administering the scheme properly and targeting the pupils for whom the scheme is intended.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the schools in England that have pupils under the assisted places scheme for the current academic year; how many pupils are supported at each institution; and how much it has cost his Department to provide this support.

Mr. Forth: The information requested has been placed in the Library. The estimated cost to the Department for the current academic year 1993-94 is £97·5 million.

SCOTLAND

Freight and Passenger Traffic

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the volume of freight traffic by *(a)* road and *(b)* rail between (i) Glasgow and Aberdeen, (ii) Aberdeen and Glasgow, (iii) Edinburgh and Aberdeen, (iv) Aberdeen and Edinburgh, (v) Glasgow and Inverness, (vi) Inverness and Glasgow, (vii) Edinburgh and Inverness and (viii) Inverness and Edinburgh in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what was the total number of passengers travelling by *(a)* road and *(b)* rail between (i) Glasgow and Aberdeen, (ii) Aberdeen and Glasgow, (iii) Edinburgh and Aberdeen, (iv) Aberdeen and Edinburgh, (v) Glasgow and Inverness, (vi) Inverness and Glasgow, (vii) Edinburgh and Inverness and (viii) Inverness and Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many visits abroad he made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 2 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *689-90*.

Roads

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his projected spending on roads in 1993-94 in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Grampian.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The projected spending on trunk roads and motorways in 1993-94 for Scotland and Grampian is as follows:

	£ million
Scotland	240·2
Grampian	9·3

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of organisations representing housing co-operatives to discuss funding and strategy; what is his policy regarding the development of housing co-operatives; what criteria he applies when determining financial assistance to housing co-operatives; what plans he has to encourage the development of housing co-operatives; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* In June last year I addressed the annual conference of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations which represents housing co-operatives, and

I expect to meet representatives of the federation soon to discuss a number of issues of concern to the housing association and co-operative movement. The Government continue to be committed to the support of housing co-operatives, through their substantial funding of Scottish Homes, which is responsible for the development and funding of housing associations and co-operatives. The hon. Member may wish to consult Scottish Homes direct about the criteria it applies when determining financial assistance to housing co-operatives.

Johnstone

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he, or any of his ministerial team, last made an official visit to the town of Johnstone; when he next plans to make a ministerial visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* I have not myself nor have any of my ministerial colleagues made an official visit to the town of Johnstone. There are at present no plans to make such a visit.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many parliamentary questions have not received a substantive answer by his Department due to disproportionate cost in each of the last five years; and if he will list those which could now be answered due to the effectiveness of computerisation.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* The information requested is shown:

Year	[1] *PQs answered in full/part with disproportionate cost* *Number*	*PQs that can now be answered due to effective computerisation* *Number*
1989	7	3
1990	14	9
1991	20	6
1992	8	1
1993	11	4

[1] *Source:* POLIS.

Geese

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions have taken place between officials of his Department and representatives of Scottish Natural Heritage regarding the impact on agriculture throughout Scotland of wintering barnacle geese and Greenland white-fronted geese; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* Officials from both the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department and the Environment Department are in regular contact with Scottish Natural Heritage on this matter. Their most recent meeting was on 26 January 1994.

Trains (Glasgow)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a list of all correspondence between his Department and *(a)* Strathclyde passenger transport executive and *(b)* Lombard Tricity Finance regarding operational leasing for new trains in the Glasgow commuter network area; what assessment he has made of the implications of local government organisation for the immediate future of such operational leasing deals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a list of all meetings held by Ministers or officials in his Department with Ministers or officials in any other Government Departments regarding operational leasing for new trains in the Glasgow commuter network area, giving *(a)* the dates of each meeting, *(b)* a full list of those attending and *(c)* the outcome of each meeting; whether any further such meetings are planned; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* There have been no exchanges of correspondence between the Scottish Office and *(a)* Strathclyde passenger transport executive and *(b)* Lombard North Central about the Strathclyde rolling stock leasing deal. I wrote to Councillor Waugh, chairman of Strathclyde regional council's roads and transportation committee, on 17 December 1993 saying that I saw nothing in our proposals for local government reform to prevent this deal proceeding.

My officials and I have attended meetings in November and December 1993 with Department of Transport Ministers and officials, and representatives of Strathclyde region and Strathclyde passenger transport executive. These meetings discussed a range of issues including the leasing deal and concluded that the issue was primarily a matter for the local authority to resolve. A further meeting is planned for later this month at which representatives of Lombard North Central will be present.

Local Government

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out his intentions for the future of the public analyst, agricultural analyst and regional chemist services under the proposed local government reorganisation in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* Each local authority requires a public analyst service for both statutory and non-statutory functions and under current arrangements this service is provided by four laboratories based in Strathclyde, Lothian, Tayside and Grampian regions. The remaining regions, districts and islands councils use the services of these laboratories. This arrangement illustrates the very effective co-operation which can exist between authorities, which I would expect to continue and develop under the proposed new single-tier structure.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has made to the document on "Local Government Reform and Planning", sent to him by Professor Brian Parnell of Stirling and the university of Strathclyde.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has not yet received this document.

Aberdeenshire Council

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what venues he has in mind outside the city of Aberdeen as headquarters of the proposed new Aberdeenshire council.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* The location of headquarters for the new Aberdeenshire council will be for the council itself to determine in the light of local circumstances.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

World Summit for Children

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has, and what resources have been allocated, within the overseas aid budget, for the implementation of commitments made by Her Majesty's Government at the 1990 world summit for children.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We remain committed to the goals for promoting child survival, development, and protection adopted by the 1990 World Summit for Children. The Government will continue to pursue these aims within their overall objective of reducing poverty and promoting sustainable economic and social development.

The overseas aid budget contains no specific allocation for children. However, in the financial year 1992-93, for example, over £180 million, or more than 31 per cent. of that part of our bilateral aid which can be allocated by sector, was spent in the social sectors which are particularly likely to benefit children. We also contribute to a wide range of multilateral organisations, including UNICEF, which play an important role in helping to achieve the goals of the world summit for children.

A copy of Command No. 1984 entitled "Report on the United Kingdom Implementation of the Goals agreed by the World Summit on Children", of July 1992 was placed in the Library of the House.

Jordan

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report,* column *71-2,* which United Kingdom water company is involved in a possible professional link with the water authority of Jordan; which United Kingdom company carried out the study and what was the value of the contract; and whether this study was funded under the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No United Kingdom water company has yet been invited to form the possible professional link. Thames Water carried out the study at a cost of £67,959. It was not funded from the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report,* columns *71-72,* which United Kingdom company is providing advice to the Jordan Industrial Consortium Engineering Company; what is its precise brief and what are the key functions of the Jordan Industrial Consortium Engineering Company.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1989-90, Price Waterhouse advised the Jordan Industrial Consortium Engineering Company on the methodology for conducting the economic and financial feasibility studies, and Environmental Resources Ltd. assisted with the preparation of an environmental impact study, in respect of the Dead sea chemicals project. The Jordan Industrial Consortium Engineering Company was founded in 1986 to develop the skills of Jordanian engineers and create a local consulting and engineering company.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report,* columns *71-72,* which United Kingdom company carried out the study of possible contamination of groundwater in the Amman Zarka basin, what was the value of the contract; and whether this study was funded under the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The study was undertaken by British Geological Survey at a cost of £15,374. It was not funded from the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report,* columns *71-72,* which United Kingdom company carried out the study of the aquifer at Qa Disi; what was the value of the contract; and whether this study was funded under the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Qa Disi study is being carried out by Haiste International. The value of the contract is £1,325,190. The study is not being funded from the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report,* columns *71-72,* which United Kingdom company carried out the feasibility study into centralising the water authority of Jordan's maintenance facilities on a single site; what was the value of the contract; and whether this study was funded under the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The feasibility study was carried out by the Crown Agents at a cost of £124,256. It was not funded from the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report,* column *71,* which United Kingdom company carried out the study into pollution at the King Talal dam; what was the value of the contract; and whether this study was funded under the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox Boyd: The study was carried out by Thames Water International with the Natural Resources Institute at a cost of £16,259. It was not funded from the aid and trade provision.

Nigeria

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report,* column *67,* regarding general balance of payments support provided by the Overseas Development Administration to Nigeria, when the commitments and the disbursements were made over the last five years; and what was the amount involved in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information is set out in the table:

Size of commitment	*Date of commitment*	*Date(s) of disbursement*
£43·6 million	8 May 1989	During financial year 1989-90
£10 million	8 May 1989	During financial years 1989-90 and 1990-91
£6 million	6 September 1989	During financial years 1989-90 and 1990-91
£20 million	1 October 1990	During financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92
£6·5 million	1 October 1990	During financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92

British Virgin Islands

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the purpose of each Overseas Development Administration-funded project or post in the British Virgin Islands in each of the past five years; and what was the cost to the Overseas Development Administration of each project or post.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A list of project funded by the ODA in British Virgin Islands, BVI, over the period 1988-89 to 1992-93 has been placed in the Library of the House.

The project cost figures include the cost of posts where these are also funded. The present average annual cost of an ODA-funded post in BVI, salary and allowances' is £70,000.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the professional discipline, *(b)* the duties and responsibilities and *(c)* the cost to the Overseas Development Administration, including the cost of offices and support staff, of each of the technical co-operation officers funded by his Department to work in the British Virgin Islands; and if he will place a copy of the job description and a letter of appointment of each of those officers in the Library.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are nine technical co-operation officers serving in the British Virgin Islands—BVI. Their disciplines cover financial services and taxation —three posts—engineering—two posts—police—two posts—Customs and Excise—one post—and computer development—one post.

The cost of offices and support staff are met by the BVI Government. The cost to the Overseas Development Administrtion of each officer depends on individual personal circumstances, but the average cost including accommodation and air fares is approximately £70,000 per annum.

We are unable to make publicly available the individual letters of appointment for each officer, but a note containing the terms of reference for each post has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Caribbean Islands

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much financial assistance is available to the territories of Guadeloupe and Martinique from the European Community under Lomé IV; and how much financial assistance is available to Belize, Dominica and Jamaica.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No financial assistance is available to Guadeloupe and Martinique under Lomé IV; financial assistance is available to Belize, Dominica and Jamaica as follows:

National indicative programme (1990-95)

	Million ecu
Belize	9
Dominica	6·5
Jamaica	46

Belize, Dominica and Jamaica are also eligible for structural adjustment support, export earnings stabilisation —STABEX—support for the mining sector—SYSMIN —emergency and refugee assistance and loans from the European investment bank.

Thailand

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which water projects the Overseas Development Administration has funded in Thailand over the last five years; which companies have won those contracts; what was the value of those contracts; and which of those projects were funded under the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The following water projects have been supported with bilateral aid for Thailand over the last five years:

Dam Panel for the Royal Irrigation Department. Company: Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners. Value: £0·2 million.

Sukhothai Groundwater Project (Phase 2). Company: Howard Humphreys and Partners. Value: £3·2 million—all but some £50,000 was spent prior to 1989.

Provincial Waterworks Training Project. Companies: Thames Water PLC, North West Water PLC and Applied Research and Project Management Services. Value: £400,000.

Production of a training video programme. Company: Hydraulics Research Station, Wallingford. Value: £45,000.

Two projects were jointly funded with non-governmental organisations at a total cost of £325,000. In addition, two other small water projects were funded at a total cost of £7,300. No companies were involved with these four projects as they were small, mainly village-based, schemes undertaken by local communities.

None of the projects mentioned was funded under the aid and trade provision.

Banana Producers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to offer support to Belize to implement a scheme of diversification for banana producers.

Mr. Lennox Boyd: The ODA's aid programme to Belize is already focused on agricultural development, but there are no plans for specific aid to banana producers. Funds for development of the banana industry in African,

Caribbean and Pacific countries have already been approved in the EC budget for 1994, to which the United Kingdom contributes. We are working with the European Commission to define how these can best be spent.

Balkans Customs Corridor

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Commission's initiative, under the PHARE programme, for a Balkan customs corridor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no current plans under the PHARE programme for a Balkan customs corridor. PHARE is currently helping a number of countries neighbouring Serbia and Montenegro to improve their transport infrastructure and customs administration, with special emphasis on relieving bottlenecks at border crossings. Any proposals for a customs corridor would need to be consistent with the UN Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro.

Some £43 million was committed to PHARE regional transport and customs programmes during 1992 and 1993. Around £25 million of this has been allocated specifically to assist border crossings. The United Kingdom's contribution to the PHARE programme is around 16 per cent.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Link steering group.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current membership of the Link steering group is as follows:

Dr. J. Parnaby—*Chairman*
Professor W. D. P. Steward FRS FRSE
Dr. R. C. Whelan
Dr. G. Robinson
Professor T. L. Blundell FRS
Dr. Peter Bunyan
Dr. G. Pope FEng
Professor J. S. Mason
Sir John Cadogan CBE FRS

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, for each of the non-departmental bodies sponsored by his Department, whether the public has a statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings and to inspect *(a)* minutes of meetings, *(b)* the annual reports and *(c)* the annual accounts.

Mr. Waldegrave: The non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Cabinet Office, the Office of Public Service and Science and the other Departments for which I am responsible are:

Executive Bodies

Agriculture and Food Research Council
Economic and Social Research Council
Medical Research Council
Natural Environment Research Council
Science and Engineering Research Council

Advisory Bodies

Advisory Committee on Advertising
Advisory Committee on Business Appointments
Advisory Committee on Human Genome Research
Council for Science and Technology
Citizen's Charter Panel of Advisers
Civil Service Appeal Board
Link Steering Group
Political Honours Scrutiny Committee
Security Commission

The public does not have a statutory right to attend meetings of any of these bodies, or to see minutes of meetings where they are produced.

There is a statutory requirement for research council annual reports and annual accounts to be laid before Parliament, under the provisions of schedule 1 of the Science and Technology Act 1965. They are published documents, and are freely available to the public.

The advisory bodies do not in general produce annual reports or accounts.

Exceptions are:

Council for Science and Technology

Information generated by the council will normally be made openly available, as stated in the White Paper "Realising our Potential".

Citizens Charter Panel of Advisers

The accounts of the panel of advisers are included in the accounts of the citizens charter unit, which are published in the OPSS annual report.

Civil Service Appeal Board

The CSAB publishes an annual report and transcripts of hearings are available to appellants, their representatives and departments.

Link Steering Group

The LSG produces reports but not on an annual basis. Its first report was published in February 1992.

Security Commission

Reports of the commission are, so far as it is consistent with the requirements of national security, made public.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Waldegrave: The executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department are the Agricultural and Food Research Council, AFRC, the Economic and Social Research Council, ESRC, the Medical Research Council, MRC, the Natural Environment Research Council, NERC and the Science and Engineering Research Council, SERC. With effect from 1 April the AFRC and the SERC will cease to exist and three new bodies will come into being, namely the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, BBSRC, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, EPSRC, and the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council, PPARC. The activities of the AFRC and SERC will be transferred to new and existing research councils.

Details of gross expenditure financed by grants in aid are as follows:

£ million at 1992-93 prices

	[1]1990-91	[1]1991-92	[1]1992-93	[2]1993-94	[3]1994-95
AFRC	98·5	100·6	105·4	107·5	—
BBSRC	—	—	—	—	160·7
EPSRC	—	—	—	0·4	339·0
ESRC	40·4	40·0	45·9	51·5	56·0
MRC	205·0	210·7	227·7	257·0	250·7
NERC	149·3	127·3	129·7	135·6	144·7
PPARC	—	—	—	0·2	172·2
SERC	489·4	473·9	523·0	564·6	—

[1] *Source:* Appropriation accounts, modified by appropriate GDP deflator.
[2] *Source:* Supply Estimates 1993-94, modified by appropriate GDP deflator.
[3] *Source:* Allocations of the Science Budget 1993-94 as announced to the House on 2 February 1994, modified by appropriate GDP deflator.

Allocations for 1995-96 to the research councils have not yet been announced.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: As Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, I am responsible for the appointment of the chairmen and all members of the Economic and Social Research Council, the Medical Research Council, the Natural Environment Research Council and the Science and Engineering Research Council. I am also responsible for the appointment of the chairman and 14 of 20 members of the Agricultural and Food Research Council—AFRC. Of the remaining six members of the AFRC, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food appoints four and the Secretary of State for Scotland appoints two.

Ministers (Travel)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* actual expenditure by his Department on (1) internal and (2) overseas travel by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1992-93 after 11 April 1992 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. David Davis: Budgeted and actual expenditure by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on internal and overseas travel and subsistence for official purposes in 1992-93 after the 11 April 1992, and in 1993-94, was as set out in the table:

	Budgeted provision		*Actual expenditure*	
	Internal (£)	*Overseas*[1] (£)	*Internal* (£)	*Overseas*[1] (£)
1992-93	1,600	1,000	5,700	16,600
1993-94[2]	5,600	27,300	4,600	25,100

[1] Includes, where appropriate, the costs of officials from the Chancellor's private office travelling with the Chancellor.
[2] Budgeted expenditure covers the full financial year 1993-94; actual expenditure covers the period April to December 1993.

Consultation Exercises

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those departments of state that currently publish details of responses received to consultation exercises.

Mr. Waldegrave: The code of practice on Government information commits Government Departments to publishing relevant facts and analysis underlying major policy proposals and decisions and this will include the details of consultation responses. It is already usual practice for comments to be sought in consultation exercises on the understanding that they can be made publicly available unless respondents have requested that their remarks be treated as confidential.

The code does not require provision of the responses themselves, although this will often be the most straightforward way of providing the information. Indeed, I will soon be placing responses to the "Open Government" White Paper in the Libraries of both Houses.

Market Testing

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what advice has been provided by the Government Actuary on the viability and comparability of the pension schemes of private contractors seeking to secure contracts in market testing exercises; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what has been the impact on the volume of market testing exercises of the decision to require contractors to offer a pension scheme comparable to Crown employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: A number of Departments have sought advice from the Government Actuary's Department on pensions arrangements offered by private sector bidders in market testing exercises. The details of this advice vary from case to case and have not been recorded centrally.

The purpose in seeking such advice is to assess the value of the pensions package, having taken into account any compensating changes in the value of other terms and conditions. This is necessary, because, as my right hon. and learned Friend, the then Solicitor-General, explained in 1990 to the Standing Committee on the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill, rights and obligations relating to civil servants' pension benefits, while not protected by the acquired rights directive and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, are protected by United Kingdom employment law. In the case of a person transferred under TUPE the transferor and the transferee must so arrange things that the pension rights enjoyed by staff after the transfer are broadly comparable with those enjoyed by staff before. Contractors are therefore asked to provide pensions arrangements of comparable value as otherwise employees

must be compensated for any detrimental change, either directly, or through offsetting changes in the value of other terms and conditions, such as pay.

I have no evidence that the advice on pensions arrangements has had any impact on the volume of market testing exercises.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Government will publish the second annual report on the citizens charter; and what were the reasons for the delay.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) on 10 February 1994, *Official Report*, columns *486-87*.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the United Kingdom are currently unemployed but are receiving *(a)* income support, *(b)* invalidity allowance, *(c)* attendance allowance or *(d)* other social security benefits.

Mr. Burt: The number of people in Great Britain who are registered as unemployed and also receiving income support is 2,003,000. Available information about other social security benefits received by this group can be found in "Income Support Statistics, Quarterly Enquiry, February 1993", a copy of which is in the Library.

Information on other benefits received by individuals registered as unemployed but who are not receiving income support is available only for those receiving unemployment benefit. Such information as is available is in the table. Invalidity benefit is not payable to people who are registered as unemployed.

Unemployment Benefit claimants receiving other benefits

Date	*Benefit*	*Unemployed claimants*
May 1992	Housing Benefit	156,000
May 1992	Community Charge Benefit	322,000
June 1993	Family Credit	16,000
August 1993	Disability Working Allowance	24
August 1993	Unemployment Benefit	532,000

Notes:
1. All figures are for Great Britain and are rounded to the nearest thousand except Disability Working Allowance which is an exact figure.
2. Benefit recipients may be in receipt of more than one benefit.
3. Disability Working Allowance and Family Credit figures relate to residual entitlement from claims made prior to unemployment.
4. Housing Benefit figure includes 49,000 cases receiving Income Support. Community Charge Benefit figure includes 116,000 cases receiving Income Support.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of working age adults claiming income support or unemployment, sickness or invalidity benefits as their main source of income for each year since 1989.

Mr. Scott: It is not possible to provide reliable estimates of the numbers whose main source of income is derived from income support or unemployment benefit, sickness benefit or invalidity benefit. Estimated average numbers of people receiving income support with and without other benefits can be found in table 7 of "Departmental Report, The Government's Expenditure Plans 1993-94 to 1995-96" (Cm 2213), a copy of which is in the Library.

Information on the number of recipients of unemployment benefit, sickness benefit and invalidity benefit is in the table.

Thousands

	Unemployment Benefit	*Sickness Benefit*	*Invalidity Benefit*
1989	378	108	952
1990	299	103	1,003
1991	555	109	1,068
1992	669	138	1,175
1993	659	[1]—	[1]—

[1] Figures not available.

Notes:
1. Working adults defined as males aged 16 to 64, females 16 to 59.
2. Recipients may be receiving more than one benefit.

Disablement Benefits

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people will lose the right to claim short-term incapacity benefit by virtue of the changes in contribution conditions; and what estimate he has made of the annual savings resulting from each change.

Mr. Scott: The contribution conditions for short-term incapacity benefit will be the same as those which currently apply to sickness benefit, but the exemption from satisfying these conditions in industrial injury and disease cases will not be carried forward. This change will affect around 3,000 claims a year, producing net savings of under £5 million in 1995-96; and around £5 million in 1996-97.

Note: Estimates expressed in constant 1993-94 prices, rounded to the nearest £5 million, and net of offsetting changes in income related benefit expenditure.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated savings to his Department arising from each clause of the Social Security (Incapacity For Work) Bill.

Mr. Scott: The estimated savings are in the table. Clauses 1 and 2 have been grouped because it is not feasible to apportion the savings further. The total savings shown differ from those specified in the explanatory and financial memorandum in two ways:

savings that arise from extending the qualifying period for the disability premium paid with income-related benefits to 52 weeks are excluded. This will be given effect in regulations and not the Bill;

the savings in the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum were given in cash terms.

Clause	*1995-96 £ million*	*1996-97 £ million*
1 and 2	−145	−325
3	n.a.	n.a.
4	−160	−475
5	−50	−180
6	n.a.	n.a.
7	Negligible	Negligible
8	n.a.	n.a.
9	+5	+5
10	n.a.	n.a.
11	−25	−90

Note:
Estimates are expressed in constant 1993-94 prices and are rounded to the nearest £5 million. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people found incapable of work under the new incapacity test would be excluded from receiving incapacity benefit by other changes included in the Social Security (Incapacity For Work) Bill; and how much each category of change is expected to save.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that as a result of the proposed upper age limits for incapacity benefit some 50,000 people in 1995-96, and 150,000 in 1996-97, will receive retirement pension instead of incapacity benefit. The estimated effect on benefit expenditure is negligible, as sickness benefit and invalidity benefit currently paid to people over pension age is based on their retirement pension entitlement. The exemption from the sickness benefit contribution conditions for people suffering from industrial injury or disease will not apply to incapacity benefit. This change will affect around 3,000 claims a year, producing net savings of under £5 million in 1995-96; and around £5 million in 1996-97.

Notes: Estimates expressed in constant 1993-94 prices, rounded to the nearest £5 million, and net of offsetting changes in income related benefit expenditure.

Take-up Rates

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the percentage take-up rate of social security benefits in each year since 1987.

Mr. Burt: For most of the main contributory benefits —for example, retirement pension, widows' benefits and unemployment benefit—and child benefit, take-up is thought to be close to 100 per cent.

Information on the take-up of income-related benefits can be found in "Income Related Benefits—Estimates of Take-up in 1987" published July 1991 and "Income Related Benefits—Estimates of Take-up in 1989" published January 1993, copies of which are in the Library.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what reasons the specific information requested about the Child Support Agency on 5 November, *Official Report,* column *580,* is largely unavailable, with particular reference to a breakdown of applications by region and of assessments by applicant type.

Mr. Burt: I understand that the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost because information on the performance of the Child Support Agency comes from computer-generated figures summarising work at the agency's six computer centres on a monthly basis, supported by clerical counts.

Where requests are made for data not produced either by the computer, or by existing clerical counts, the cost of arranging for collection of the information must be considered. In the case of the chief executive's reply of 5 November 1993, which was subsequently amended in her reply dated 23 November, figures were not available on the number of child applicants in Scotland, nor in the breakdown of assessments by applicant type. To provide these figures would, in both cases, have necessitated the individual investigation of a large number of cases, either in an individual centre in the case of the numbers of child applicants in Scotland or in all six centres in the case of the breakdown of assessments by type.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements have been made by the Child Support Agency to assess and collect maintenance on behalf of a parent who is resident in, and whose child or children is or are resident in, the United Kingdom from an absent parent who is resident abroad.

Mr. Burt: The jurisdiction of the Child Support Agency does not extend beyond the United Kingdom. The Lord Chancellor's Department administers reciprocal enforcement agreements with many foreign countries. These provisions allow for the enforcement of British court orders abroad and for the enforcement of foreign orders in Britain. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual cost to public funds of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The latest estimate of the cost of the Child Support Agency for 1993-94 is £117 million.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to extend the power of the Child Support Agency with regard to the division of any assets of divorcing partners after 1996.

Mr. Burt: We have no such plans. Division of assets will remain a matter for the courts.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what saving of public money is expected to be achieved by the Child Support Agency in the first 12 months of its operation.

Mr. Burt: Benefit savings were originally estimated at £530 million. The actual amount will be lower, but it is not possible to provide an accurate revised figure, since the full impact of the recent policy changes is not yet known.

Residential Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the total projected expenditure on income support claims towards the cost of residential or nursing home care inclusive of cases that have been and will be handled by local authorities under the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 for *(a)* the current financial year, *(b)* 1994-95 and *(c)* 1995-96; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The latest estimates are:

(a) £2,500 million
(b) £2,280 million, and
(c) £2,180 million.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

DSS Headquarters
1993-94 campaigns and promotions

	Objective	*Mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness*
1. Council Tax Benefit	Continuation of campaign which began in 1992-93, to maximise awareness of Council Tax Benefit	Telephone and coupon response for leaflets
2. Child Support —Changes in Regulations	To inform public of planned changes in child support maintenance regulations	Telephone and written response
3. Pension Law Review Committee	Publicise the report of the Pension Law Review Committee (Goode Report)	Telephone response
4. Personal Pension	Potential personal pension holders exercising informed choice	Telephone and coupon response
5. Disability awareness	Make information available to general public and to disabled people about antidiscriminatory practices, obstacles and opportunities	Telephone and coupon response
6. State Pension Age	Make information available on proposed legislative changes concerning State Retirement Pension age	Take up response of leaflets
7. Working with benefits	Make information available to unemployed people with families about Family Credit and other in-work benefits	Awareness of TV advertising. Telephone response for *Benefit News* on a daily and weekly basis. Interview respondents to see if they conform to desired profile
8. Family Credit	Provide information to Child Benefit recipients on their eligibility for Family Credit	Telephone and written response
	To provide advisers and intermediaries with up-to-date information on Family Credit	Medium to long-term take-up of benefit, maintenance of high awareness levels
9. Disability Working Allowance	To make disabled jobseekers aware of the help Disability Working Allowance could provide in facilitating their transition into work	Telephone response. Interview respondents to see if they conform to desired profile

Benefits Agency
1993-94 campaigns and promotions

	Objective	*Evaluation mechanisms*
1. Prescribed Industrial Injuries Disease 12 —Bronchitis and/or Emphysema in Coal Workers	To inform all coal workers who have worked underground for 20 years or more, and who suffer from bronchitis and/or emphysema, that they may now be able to claim Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit and to give them information and access to the claiming procedure	Coupon response on adverts, coupon coding to assess cost effectiveness of individual titles and qualitative research of the advert with the target group
2. Severe Cold Weather Payments	To inform people on Income Support who are disabled, retired or who have children that a period of cold weather has been forecast and that they will receive extra benefit for heating	Monitored calls on the Winter Warmth Line which is referred to on the advert
3. Year of the Elderly	To raise awareness of the benefits available to elderly people through the promotion of our new leaflet Help after Retirement	Monitored request for the leaflet and the campaign pack

Contributions Agency
1993-94 campaigns and promotions

	Objectives	*Mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness*
1. Phone Book Advertising	To publicise local Contributions Agency offices to general public	Customer satisfaction survey
2. Mailing to employers	To inform employers of changes in legislation	Customer satisfaction survey
3. Mailing to Class 2 and Class 3 contributors	Inform people paying by stamp card of new system of paying by quarterly billing and of direct debit	Return of stamp cards, and increase in payments by direct debit
4. Exhibitions	To promote the work of Contributions Agency to employers and key advisers	Customer satisfaction survey

Child Support Agency
1993-94 campaigns and promotions

	Objective	*Mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness*
Introduction of Child Support Agency	Continuation of the campaign which began in 1992-93 to introduce the Child Support Agency	Telephone and coupon response plus attitudinal research

1994-95 campaigns and promotions
Plans for promotion work in 1994-95 for DSS headquarters and the agencies have not yet been confirmed.

Incapacity for Work

Dr. Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what consultations are taking place with the British Medical Association on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests for each category of functional limitation as proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(2) what consultations are taking place with the Manic Depression Fellowship on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests in relation to the mental health impairment score proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(3) what consultations are taking place with the Royal College of Nursing on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests in relation to the mental health impairment score proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(4) what consultations are taking place with the Royal College of General Practitioners on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests for each category of functional limitation as proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(5) what consultations are taking place with the British Medical Association on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests in relation to the mental health impairment score proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(6) what consultations are taking place with the Royal College of Physicians on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests for each category of functional limitation as proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(7) what consultations are taking place with the Scottish Schizophrenic Fellowship on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests in relation to the mental health impairment score proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(8) what consultations are taking place with the Royal College of Psychiatrists on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests in relation to the mental health impairment score proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(9) what consultations are taking place with the Department of Health on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests for each category of functional limitation as proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(10) what consultations are taking place with the Royal College of Surgeons on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests for each category of functional limitation as proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(11) what consultations are taking place with the Institute of Psychiatry on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests in relation to the mental health impairment score proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(12) what consultations are taking place with the Royal College of General Practitioners on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests in relation to the mental health impairment score proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(13) what consultations are taking place with the Department of Health on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests in relation to the mental health impairment score proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(14) what consultations are taking place with the Royal College of Physicians on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests in relation to the mental health impairment score proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(15) what consultations are taking place with the Institute of Phychiatry on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests for each category of functional limitation as proposed in the "Consultation of the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(16) what consultations are taking place with the Royal College of Nursing on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests for each category of functional limitation as proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work;

(17) what consultations are taking place with the Manic Depression Fellowship (Scotland) on the development, field testing and evaluation of the objective medical tests in relation to the mental health impairment score proposed in the "Consultation on the Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"—annex 1—for use in the assessment of capacity for work.

Mr. Scott: Discussions about the proposed new medical incapacity test have been held with the joint consultants committee and with representatives of the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Royal College of Surgeons and the British Medical Association. Officials have also discussed the test with officials in the Department of Health. The consultation document on the proposed test is freely available and over 4,700 copies have been distributed. A panel of 80 experts has been formed to help us construct the incapacity scales to be used in the test. The members of the panel have been asked to give their individual expert opinions, not to act as representatives of any particular organisation. Separate and additional discussions are being held about the mental health impairment score with experts in psychiatry, psychology and occupational medicine who are members of the panel.

National Insurance

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will seek to bring the present eight-hour part-time employment penalty rule for national insurance contributions into line with the present 16-hour penalty rule applying to benefits and with the future limits he is proposing.

Mr. Hague: National insurance contributions are normally credited to individuals in respect of complete weeks of qualifying unemployment. As a concession, employment of up to eight hours a week may be disregarded for this purpose. The extent of the concession is currently under review.

Family Credit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people claiming family credit do not pay tax.

Mr. Burt: Two hundred and four thousand people who receive family credit do not pay tax.

Source: Five per cent. sample of Family Credit recipients as at 31 July 1993.

Benefits (Administration Costs)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) of 26 January, *Official Report*, columns *266-67*, what have been the administrative costs of each of the benefits for each of the last four years for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table:

Estimated administration costs of benefits:

	1988-89 (£ million)	*1989-90 (£ million)*	*1990-91 (£ million)*	*1991-92 (£ million)*
Child Benefit and One Parent Benefit[1]	105	111	107	118
Income Support	1,114	1,180	1,348	1,373
Sickness and Invalidity Benefit[1]	154	182	208	275
Family Credit	24	30	[1]46	[1]33
Social Fund	n/a	n/a	132	163

Note:
[1] Includes increased capital investment for information technology and publicity costs.

Sickness Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to undertake research into any correlation between the levels of sickness claims and the proportion of full-time employees working over 46 hours per week in England.

Mr. Scott: None.

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1988, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

Year	*Current prices £ million*	*1993-94 prices £ million*
1988-89	49·5	65·2
1989-90	43·3	53·4
1990-91	83·2	94·9
1991-92	69·7	74·7
1992-93	100·9	104·2

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, c. *215*, how many applicants for assistance from the independent living fund were turned down on the grounds that the value of the applicant's existing package totalled £500 or more; and how many of such applicants subsequently went into residential care.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the director of the independent living (1993) fund that the information requested is not available.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for each of the non-departmental bodies sponsored by his Department, whether the public has a statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings and to inspect *(a)* the minutes of meetings, *(b)* the annual reports and *(c)* the annual accounts.

Mr. Hague: There is no statutory right for members of the public to attend meetings or inspect the minutes of any of those bodies listed in "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is in the Library.

An annual report is published by the chief adjudication officer and by the disability living allowance advisory board. Reports are also published periodically by the Social Security Advisory Committee and the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council. Otherwise none of the bodies listed is required to produce annual reports or accounts.

Students

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the aims, scope and nature of the consultations taking place between his Department and the Department for Education regarding full-time students who temporarily suspend their studies yet under the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987 are precluded from claiming income support or housing benefit even though they are not attending an institution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Most full-time students are not eligible for income support or housing benefit because support is provided through the student support system. Those with mandatory awards who temporarily suspend their studies because of illness will not have their awards reduced for the first 28 days' absence, but beyond that the amount and duration of payments is at the discretion of the local education authority. When students are absent with the leave of their college for some other reasons, the amount and duration of payments is at the authorities' discretion from the start of their absence. Full-time students who suspend their studies because of ill-health for more than 28 weeks, and supply supporting medical evidence, are eligible to claim income support and housing benefit by virtue of having become one of the prescribed vulnerable groups. Our discussions with the Department for Education are about the extent and circumstances in which temporary suspension of studies occurs.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals there were against invalidity benefit being removed in Fife in 1993.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Gordon Brown, dated 14 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about appeals against the removal of Invalidity Benefit (IVB) in Fife in 1993.

The information is not available in the exact format requested. This is because Benefit Agency District boundaries do not correspond exactly with county or borough boundaries. Whilst the majority of Fife is dealt with by the Agency's Fife District, a small area of North Fife is dealt with by Dundee District Office (DO). However, because Dundee DO deals with a large area other than Fife, statistics for Dundee DO would include many people not living within Fife. I have therefore provided statistics for Fife District only.

The statistics have been obtained from the District's own record of appeals.

Fife District

	Number
Kirkaldy District Office	27
Cowdenbeath Benefits Office	75
Dunfermline Benefits Office	45
Leven Benefits Office	58
Total	205

I hope you find this reply helpful.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Indonesia (Visit)

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, columns *6-7*, regarding his visit to Indonesia, if he will name the Indonesian and expatriate business people whom he met; indicating what advantages to Britain will ensue; and whether the British-funded railway project which he visited was funded from the Overseas Development Administration funds.

Mr. Nelson: In addition to meetings with the President of Indonesia, senior Ministers and the Governor of the Bank of Indonesia, the Chancellor of the Exchequer met:

Cigading railway project—Ministry of Communication and PERUMKA representatives; BRI and Davy hosts.

PT Peni—Dr. J. M. Hay, President Director; Mr. Gregory Kosasie, Vice-President Director; Mr. Kevin Dunne, Associate President, British Petroleum companies in Indonesia.

Indonesia British Association—Lunch given for 55 guests from the banking, business and financial sectors hosted by Mr. R. M. Hajiwibowo, Chairman, Indonesia British Association.

World Bank—Mr. Nicholas Hope (Director) Indonesia and his staff.

Lippo Bank—Mr. Markus Parmadi, President, Director and senior colleagues.

The Chancellor also gave a reception for 150 senior Indonesian and British business people, and there were 95 guests at a dinner given by the ambassador.

The visit enabled my right hon. and learned Friend to raise the profile of the United Kingdom in Indonesian Government and business circles. This will help to improve investment and trade relations, and has provided valuable support for the efforts of the embassy to promote British business. It also provided the British business men who accompanied the Chancellor with access to key Indonesian decision makers which they might otherwise have found difficult to achieve.

The Cigading to Serpong railway project is being supported from an aid and trade provision.

VAT on Fuel

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made as to the effect of the imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel on residents of sheltered housing units with communal facilities.

Sir John Cope: No such estimate has been made. In cases where supplies of electricity or gas or unmetered by the landlord to individual tenants there will normally be no separate VAT charge since the VAT liability of the fuel will follow that of the accommodation. However, since in many cases the landlord will be unable to recover the VAT charged by the gas/electricity companies there is likely to be a commensurate increase in sheltered housing fees. Most tenants in such units will be eligible for the extra financial assistance being made available by the Government to help meet increased costs resulting from this VAT charge.

VAT-registered Businesses

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, columns *777-80*, if he will provide a comparable table showing the stock of VAT registered businesses at January 1991 and December 1993 by Customs area.

Sir John Cope: Numbers of VAT-registered traders are available only for calendar quarters. Those for quarters ended December 1990 and December 1993 were as follows:

Collection	*Total number of registered traders at December 1990*	*December 1993*
Belfast	53,886	54,684
Birmingham	122,255	112,776
Dover	55,294	47,515
East Anglia	71,755	79,986
East Midlands	96,938	90,118
Edinburgh	62,970	62,427
Glasgow	61,213	58,046
Leeds	94,593	88,741
Liverpool	92,493	84,314
London Central	38,423	37,432
London North and West	86,513	76,994
London Port	55,388	46,343
London South	109,917	99,078
Manchester	90,042	83,460
Northampton	121,350	98,129
Northern England	76,335	71,295
Southampton	89,255	78,890
South Wales and Borders	110,756	102,963
South West England	121,718	109,339
Thames Valley	131,872	125,313
TOTAL	1,742,966	1,607,843

Draft Budget

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to publish a draft Budget.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Health and Education Spending

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of public expenditure during (1) 1993-94 and (2) 1994-95 will be spent on *(a)* health and *(b)* education.

Mr. Portillo: The available information is in the table. Local authorities have not yet announced their detailed spending plans for 1994-95.

Spending on health and education
(Per cent. of general government expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds)

	[1]*1993-94*		[2]*1994-95*	
	Health	*Education*	*Health*	*Education*
Central Government	12·7	3·2	12·8	3·5
Local Authorities	2·5	8·6	N/a	N/a
General Government	15·2	11·8	N/a	N/a

[1] Latest estimates.
[2] Plans.

Life Assurance

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of individuals who have transferred their assets from one life insurance policy to another provided by a different company.

Mr. Nelson: Records of such transfers are not kept by the Treasury.

Forward: Civil Service Catering

Mr. Hunter: To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the terms of the sale of Forward: Civil Service Catering.

Mr. Nelson: Forward has been sold to the Sutcliffe Catering Group Ltd. for £4·6 million. The transfer of the business took place on 14 February. The staff of Forward have transferred to Sutcliffe on their existing terms and conditions in accordance with the TUPE regulations.

Labour Statistics

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide data for the period 1978-79 to 1994-95, showing *(a)* the size of the work force in employment, *(b)* the number of individuals in the employed work force paying income tax and the resulting percentage of the employed work force paying income tax and *(c)* the number of individuals in the employed work force paying national insurance and the resulting percentage of the employed work force paying national insurance.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The table gives the available information for the size of the work force in employment at a particular point in each year, the numbers paying income tax for the year and those paying national insurance contributions at any point during the year. The figures in columns *(b)* and *(c)* are therefore not directly comparable with the estimates in *(a)*.

	Workforce in employment[1] (thousands) (A)	Individuals with some income from employment or self-employment liable to income tax[2] (thousands) (B)	(B) divided by (A) expressed as a percentage	Individuals with some income from employment or self-employment paying national insurance contributions[2] (thousands) (C)	(C) divided by (A) expressed as a percentage
1978-79	24,765	24,100	97	25,500	103
1979-80	n/a	23,900	n/a	25,800	n/a
1980-81	24,153	22,900	95	25,000	104
1981-82	n/a	22,400	n/a	24,100	n/a
1982-83	23,490	22,000	94	23,600	100
1983-84	23,939	21,700	91	23,400	98
1984-85	24,282	21,200	87	23,500	97
1985-86	24,389	21,400	88	23,900	98
1986-87	24,806	21,400	86	24,200	98
1987-88	25,660	21,900	85	24,600	96
1988-89	26,558	22,700	85	25,300	95
1989-90	26,783	22,600	84	25,600	96
1990-91	26,207	23,000	88	25,500	97
1991-92	25,671	22,600	88	24,300	95
1992-93[3]	25,381	[3]22,000	87	n/a	n/a

[1] Estimates are derived from the Labour Force Survey and relate to Spring of each year.
[2] Estimates are of the numbers liable to income tax or national insurance contributions in the year.
[3] Provisional.

Top Rate Taxpayers

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the number of top rate taxpayers in *(a)* 1992-93, *(b)* 1993-94 and *(c)* 1994-95 giving estimates where necessary (i) in absolute terms and (ii) as a percentage of the total number of income taxpayers and also the change as between 1992-93 and 1994-95, (i) in absolute terms and (ii) as a percentage change.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

	Total number of taxpayers (Thousands)	Number of higher rate taxpayers (Thousands)	Higher rate taxpayers as a percentage of total taxpayers (Per cent.)
1992-93	25,100	1,800	7
1993-94	25,100	1,900	8
1994-95	25,400	2,300	9

Change in higher rate taxpers between 1992-93 and 1994-95 (Thousands)	(Per cent.)
500	28

Sports Clubs

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an announcement about the details of value-added tax concessions and rebates for amateur sports clubs.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 11 February 1994]:* Customs and Excise have issued an information paper setting out details of the scope of the proposed VAT exemption for sporting services supplied by non-profit making clubs and including a draft of the relevant Treasury order. Copies are available in the Libraries of both Houses.

Public Bodies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce arrangements to ensure that members of appointed public bodies and authorities may be subject to surcharge and disqualification or other similar sanctions in respect of any wilful misconduct in the expenditure of public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* Public bodies are already able to apply disciplinary sanctions, including seeking prosecutions where appropriate. The Government have no plans to seek new powers for surcharging or disqualification. The Government are considering whether the approach recommended in the Cadbury Committee's report on financial aspects of corporate governance could be adapted to meet the needs of public bodies.

European Investment Bank

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the present borrowing limits of the European Investment Bank; what sum has been borrowed to date; and if he will make a statement outlining the manner in which the bank raises its borrowing.

Mr. Nelson *[pursuant to his answer, 17 December 1993, column 977]:* The total figure given for the European Investment Bank's subscribed capital was 57·6 million ecu, while the limit on the banks total outstanding lending was given as 144 million ecu. These figures are incorrect, and should have read 57·6 billion ecu and 144 billion ecu respectively.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Members of the European Parliament

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what telephone calls are allowed free to Members of the European Parliament *(a)* within the EU and *(b)* within the rest of the world; whether Members of the European Parliament's travel allowances are calculated at first class rate even when such a service is not available; and whether the constituency travel allowance for Members of the European Parliament is calculated on the basis of actual mileage incurred.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Members of the European Parliament receive a general expenditure allowance of 2,732 ECU—£2,131—per month to cover office management costs including telephone calls.

Members of the European Parliament receive a flat-rate travel allowance of 0·73 ECU—57p—per kilometre for the first 800 km and 0·37 ECU—29p—for each additional kilometre for travel within the Community to attend official meetings. Members are reimbursed the actual cost of the return air fare by the most direct route for travel outside the EC to attend official meetings, and receive a travel allowance of up to 3,000 ECU—£2,340—per annum for travel on official business other than to attend official meetings.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the allowances payable to Members of the European Parliament.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The European Parliament's allowances for Members are as follows:

Subsistence

Subsistence allowance of 199 ECU, approximately £155, per day for attending official meetings within the European Community plus the cost of overnight accommodation, etc. for attending official meetings outside the Community.

Travel

Flat rate travel allowance of 0·73 ECU—57p—per kilometre for the first 800 km and 0·37 ECU—29p—for each additional kilometre of travel within the Community to attend official meetings. Reimbursement of the return air fare by the most direct route for travel outside the EC to attend official meetings. Travel allowance of up to 3,000 ECU—£2,340—per annum for travel on official business other than to attend official meetings.

Office and Secretarial Assistance

Secretarial Assistance Allowance of up to 7,468 ECU—£5,826—per month. General Expenditure Allowance of 2,732 ECU—£2,131—per month for office management costs, telephone, postage and travel within member states. Halved in respect of Members who, for no valid reason, have failed to attend at least half the number of plenary sittings.

Data Processing

Data Processing allowance of up to 1,000 ECU—£780—per annum for purchase or rent of equipment.

Malaysia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions were held with the Government of Malaysia on the question of arms sales during the visits of *(a)* the Minister of State, the former right hon. Member for Wallasey in August 1987, *(b)* the Secretary of State in April 1988, *(c)* the Minister of State, the Lord Glenarthur, in November 1988, *(d)* the Secretary of State in October 1989, *(e)* the Minister of State, the Lord Brabazon, in January 1990, *(f)* the Minister of State, the former hon. Member for Warwickshire, North, in February 1990, *(g)* the Minister of State, the Lord Caithness, in April 1991, *(h)* the Minister of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), in September 1991, *(i)* the Minister of State, the Lord Caithness, in September 1991, *(j)* the Secretary of State in July 1992 and *(k)* the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), in April 1993.

Mr. Goodlad: During their visits to Malaysia, FCO Ministers regularly discuss a wide range of issues, including trade, education, defence, regional, aid, economic and security matters.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions were held with the Government of Malaysia on the question of aid during the visits of *(a)* the Minister of State, the former right hon. Member for Wallasey in August 1987, *(b)* the Secretary of State in April 1988, *(c)* the Minister of State, the Lord Glenarthur, in November 1988, *(d)* the Secretary of State in October 1989, *(e)* the Minister of State, the Lord Brabazon, in January 1990, *(f)* the Minister of State, the former hon. Member for Warwickshire, North, in February 1990, *(g)* the Minister of State, the Lord Caithness, in April 1991, *(h)* the Minister of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), in September 1991, *(i)* the Minister of State, the Lord Caithness, in September 1991, *(j)* the Secretary of State in July 1992 and *(k)* the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), in April 1993.

Mr. Goodlad: During their visits to Malaysia, FCO Ministers regularly discuss a wide range of issues, including trade, education, defence, regional, aid, economic and security matters.

UN World Summit on Social Development

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to set up a United Kingdom national committee to prepare for the United Nations world summit on social development to be held in Copenhagan in March 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The first preparatory committees for the world summit for social development took place in New York from 31 January to 11 February. Her Majesty's Government were represented by officials from London and New York. We have no plans at present to establish a national committee.

UN (50th Anniversary)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for marking the 50th anniversary of the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Plans for marking the 50th anniversary of the United Nations are still in their early stages. Under the auspices of the United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a national committee has been set up to co-ordinate the national programme of events. The president is the right hon. the Lord Howe of Aberavon, QC. Commemorative events are envisaged on the three key dates: 26 June 1995—the anniversary of the signing of the United Nations charter—24 October 1995—the anniversary of the Charter coming into force—and 10 January 1996, the anniversary of the first session of the General Assembly.

Guatemala

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Guatemalan Government on the abuse of street children.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have made clear to the Guatemalan authorities the concern felt in this country about street children and the importance of upholding human rights, especially the rights of children.

Bosnia

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has to suggest that Serbian forces and Croatian forces have been fighting in Bosnia during the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Reports from various sources suggest that both regular Croatian army forces are active in Bosnia. Both Croatia and Serbia also appear to have given material support to their respective allies in Bosnia through the provision of equipment and by recruiting personnel. The European Union and the United Nations have made clear on a number of occasions the unacceptability of outside intervention in Bosnia. Serbia is already subject to wide-ranging economic sanctions. The European Union has put Croatia on notice of possible measures against it, if its involvement continues.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *122*, on arms sales to Indonesia, whether the principle that sovereign states have a right to defend themselves applies equally to Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Article 51 of the UN charter recognises the right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations, until the United Nations Security Council has taken measures necessary to monitor international peace and security. United Nations Security Council resolution 713 imposed a mandatory arms embargo on all the former Yugoslav republics. We share the view of the United Nations, the co-chairmen and the majority of members of the Security Council that to lift the arms embargo at this stage would be a mistake.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the military situation and condition of the civilian population in and around Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina; whether this was discussed at the NATO meeting on 8 February; and if the possibility of air-strikes against either Croat or Muslim forces in the area has been contemplated.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Eastern Mostar is a Bosnian Muslim enclave, which has come under continuous shelling by the Bosnian Croats. The humanitarian situation remains of profound concern. Aid convoys are getting through under escort from the Spanish battalion of UNPROFOR. After a long delay a mobile hospital donated by the South Africans was recently delivered.

Mostar was not discussed specifically at the NATO meeting on 8 February. But the NATO decisions of last August, reaffirmed at the 10-11 January summit, stated the alliance's readiness to conduct air strikes, with the approval of the UN Secretary-General, to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo and other areas. The situation in Mostar is under constant review.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultation took place with the Ukraine, and other non-NATO states, before the decision of NATO on 9 February to contemplate air strikes against Bosnian-Serb forces was taken; and whether such forces will be under NATO orders should such air strikes take place.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No consultation took place with Ukraine immediately before the 9 February NATO decision. However, the action contemplated is consistent with the existing UN mandate. The UN Secretary-General or his delegated representative must authorise the first use of air power, and UNPROFOR commanders must be closely consulted.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what were the contents of the UNPROFOR report concerning the artillery attack on the Sarajevo market on Saturday 5 February; what were the contents of subsequent reports on the incident; and what progress has been made to establish responsibility for the incident;

(2) whether the site or sites from which the artillery attack on Sarajevo market took place on Saturday 5 February was one which had previously been inspected by or monitored by United Nations observers; what was the position of the nearest United Nations observer team at the time of the incident; and what report was filed by observers on the ground.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Secretary-General has informed the Security Council that the massacre at Sarajevo market on 5 February resulted from the detonation of a single 120 mm mortar shell, and not an artillery attack. The site from which the mortar was fired has not been determined. UNPROFOR has been able to establish only a broad area straddling the line of confrontation.

Reports by United Nations military observers are not made available outside the UNPROFOR military chain of command. We do not have available information on the day-to-day deployments of United Nations military observers.

The special representative of the Secretary-General, Yasushi Akashi, announced on 11 February that he has decided to establish an investigative team to look into the details of the tragic incident. The five-member team will consist of military officers from UNPROFOR with

appropriate technical expertise. The team will be led by the UNPROFOR force engineer, Colonel Gauthier of Canada, and include officers from France, Spain, Pakistan and Russia. The investigative team will report its findings to the special representative as soon as possible.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has in respect of the present situation in the area in and around Bihac in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he is able to assess the state of relations between the Bosnian Muslim authorities there and *(a)* the Bosnian Government of President Izetbegovic, *(b)* the Bosnian Serbs and *(c)* the Bosnian Croats.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We remain concerned about the security situation in the Bihac pocket. It is clear from recent reports that intra-Muslim tension remains high, and that the Bosnian Serbs have resumed artillery attacks on Bosnian Muslim forces. We have seen nothing to suggest that there is any fighting involving the Bosnian Croats in this area.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any of the warring factions in Bosnia-Herzegovina have proposed any investigating commission being set up to establish responsibility for the artillery attack on the Sarajevo market on Saturday 5 February; and what offers of co-operation in such an investigation have been made by *(a)* the Bosnian Serbs and *(b)* the Bosnian Muslims.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Secretary General's special representative, Mr. Akashi, has now announced the establishment of such a commission. This will require the full co-operation of both the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Government.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will support any Russian request for a meeting of the United Nations Security Council to debate the continuing conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Security Council discussed the situation in Bosnia on 14 February.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what precautions were discussed at the NATO meeting on 8 February to ensure that Bosnian-Muslim forces do not enter demilitarised zones vacated by the Bosnian-Serb army; if the use of force to prevent this from happening was agreed; and what action would be taken in the event of Bosnian-Serbs repelling such advances by force.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The aim of the NATO decision of 9 February was to enforce, together with UNPROFOR, an end to the bombardment of Sarajevo. To this end, the alliance called on the Bosnian Government to place heavy weapons, located within the exclusion zone 20 km around Sarajevo, under United Nations control. NATO did not, however, demand full demilitarisation of the city. UNPROFOR monitors have been positioned at all key and sensitive points within both Muslim and Serb-held areas, and the ceasefire negotiated by UNPROFOR has been generally respected so far.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place a copy of each report from UNPROFOR on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Copies of the reports of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Security Council on the situation in the former Yugoslavia pursuant to Security Council resolutions are already placed in the Library of the House. The United Nations Secretary-General's reports take into account the views of his special representative who is head of mission for UNPROFOR.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Bosnian-Muslim forces have been put on notice of air strikes against their positions in the event of any use of artillery by Muslim forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The NATO decision of 9 February applies to all parties involved in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. Any heavy weapons identified by the United Nations as attacking civilians in Sarajevo, or, if within 20 km of the centre of Sarajevo, not under UN control by midnight on 20 February, will be subject to air strikes. We welcome the assurances given by the Bosnian Prime Minister, Mr Silajdzic, that his Government are ready to comply with the NATO decision.

British Virgin Islands

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the real gross domestic product per capita in the British Virgin Islands in 1990 in US dollars.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The gross domestic product per capita of the British Virgin Islands in 1990 was $9,500. The Caribbean development bank estimate GDP per capita in 1992 to be $10,479 per capita.

Armenia

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent talks with the President of Armenia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: President Ter-Petrossian of Armenia visited the United Kingdom as a guest of the Government from 8 to 11 February. My right honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs called on him on 8 February for talks which touched on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, economic reform, Russia and the CIS. In addition, during his visit President Ter-Petrossian had an audience of Her Majesty the Queen, lunch and talks with my right honourable Friend the Prime Minister and meetings with other members of the Government.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Goodlad: Appointments to non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Department are made as follows:

COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE:
(a) Chairman and vice-chairman: Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
(b) *Board members*
(i) All Commonwealth high commissioners in London (ex-officio)
(ii) Representatives of educational, Commonwealth, commercial and industrial interests—appointed by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
(iii) Representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Department for Education and the Scottish Office Education Department—appointed by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
(iv) Commonwealth Secretary-General—co-opted by the board.

COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION
(a) Chairman: Appointed by heads of commonwealth Governments
(b) Members of board: All high commissioners of member Commonwealth countries in London (ex-officio)

WILTON PARK ACADEMIC COUNCIL
(a) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
(b) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

WILTON PARK DEPARTMENTAL BOARD
(a) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
(b) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

ANGLO-IRISH ENCOUNTER
(a) British Co-chairman: the Prime Minister
(b) Secretary: the chairman

WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY
(a) The board
(b) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION
(a) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
(b) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

DIPLOMATIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD
(a) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
(b) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

THE BRITISH COUNCIL
(a) Elected by the Board of the Council with the previous approval of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
(b) The Secretary of State may nominate two board members. With these exceptions all board members are elected by the board from persons proposed in writing by two board members

THE GREAT BRITAIN-CHINA CENTRE
(a) Elected by the executive committee. His or her proposed election to be approved by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
(b) The following have the right to nominate one person each to the executive committee: the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the President of the Board of Trade, the Secretary of State for Education and the Director General of the British Council. Other members are elected by the executive committee of whom not less than five must be MPs

THE BRITAIN-RUSSIA CENTRE
(a) Elected by the members of the council.
(b) Elected by the members of the council, of whom not less than 10 and not more than 20 must be MPs.

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
(a) Elected by the governing body. His or her proposed election requires the approval of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.
(b) The following have the right to nominate one person each to the governing body: the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the President of the Board of Trade, the Secretary of State for Education and the Director General of the British Council. Other members are elected by the Government Council of whom not less than five must be MPs.

MARSHALL AID COMMEMORATION COMMISSION
(a) and (b) The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is responsible for making all appointments.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for each of the non-departmental bodies sponsored by his Department, whether the public has a statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings and to inspect *(a)* minutes of meetings, *(b)* the annual reports and *(c)* and annual accounts.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested is as follows:

THE BRITISH COUNCIL
The public has no statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings.
(a) No.
(b) and (c) The council is required to lodge basic information about itself with the Charities Commission to whom it sends its annual report and accounts.

THE GREAT BRITAIN-CHINA CENTRE
No statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings
(a) No
(b) Yes
(c) Yes

THE CHINA-RUSSIA CENTRE
No statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings
(a) No
(b) Yes
(c) Yes

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
No statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings
(a) No
(b) Yes
(c) Yes

MARSHALL AID COMMEMORATION COMMISSION
No statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings
(a) No, but those over 30 years old are available at the Public Record Office
(b) and (c) Published by HMSO and available at the Public Records Office

THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH
No statutory right to attend board or committee meetings
(a) No
(b) No
(c) No

INDIAN FAMILY PENSION FUNDS BODY OF COMMISSIONERS
No statutory right to attend board or committee meetings
(a) No
(b) No
(c) No

OVERSEAS SERVICE PENSIONS SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD
No statutory right to attend board or committee meetings
(a) No
(b) No
(c) No

DIPLOMATIC SERVICE APPEALS BOARD
No statutory right to attend board meetings, there are no committee meetings
(a) No
(b) There is no annual report
(c) There is no expenditure

ANGLO-IRISH ENCOUNTER
No statutory right to attend board or committee meetings
(a) No
(b) No
(c) No

WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY
No statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings
(a) No

(b) Yes
(c) Yes

WILTON PARK ACADEMIC COUNCIL
No statutory right to attend board or committee meetings
(a) No
(b) There are no annual accounts or reports
(c) There are no annual accounts or reports

WILTON PARK DEPARTMENTAL BOARD
No statutory right to attend board or committee meetings
(a) No
(b) There are no annual accounts or reports
(c) There are no annual accounts or reports

COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION
No statutory right to attend meetings
(a) No
(b) Yes
(c) Yes

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Goodlad: Gross public spending since 1990-91 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, including the Overseas Development Administration, was as follows, in 1992-93 prices:

£ million

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94 (forecast)*
Britain-Russia Centre	0·232	0·208	[1]0·270	0·211
British Association for Central and Eastern Europe[1]	0·202	0·206	[2]0·231	0·226
British Council[3]	329·000	301·000	[2]292·000	254·000
Commonwealth Institutes, London and Edinburgh	3·046	2·820	3·092	3·558
Great Britain-China Centre	0·167	0·192	0·210	0·208
Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission	0·984	1·143	1·271	1·321
Westminster Foundation for Democracy	0	0·200	[2]1·000	1·937
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission	0·04	0·07	0·05	0·05

Note: Figures for 1994-95 and 1995-96 are not shown. The former are subject to parliamentary approval of the supply estimates. It is too early to predict future years' expenditure on individual non-departmental public bodies.

[1] Includes grants-in-aid and project funding.
[2] Corrected figures: those published in "Public Bodies 1993" were erroneous.
[3] Includes an element for reimbursements by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—Diplomatic Wing/Overseas Development Administration—for agency expenditure, transfers to third parties. This is broken down as follows, in 1992-93 prices:

	£ million
1990-91	158
1991-92	148
1992-93	141
1993-94[4]	118

[4] Forecast.

Committee of the Regions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with his opposite numbers in the European Union, concerning the democratic accountability of members of the Committee of the Regions to their respective regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under the arrangements agreed by all member states in the Maastricht treaty—article 198—members of the Committee of the Regions "shall be completely independent in the performance of their duties, in the general interest of the European Community". The committee consists of representatives of regional and local bodies, and each British representative must be an elected member of a local authority, but

"The members of the Committee may not be bound by any mandatory instructions."

Korean Peninsula

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Goodlad: The situation on the Korean peninsula still gives cause for concern. We continue to urge North Korea to reach rapid agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency on resumption of nuclear safeguards inspections.

International Labour Organisation

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to remain in membership of the International Labour Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to withdraw from the International Labour Organisation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Loyalist Paramilitaries

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to reassure the nationalist population of Northern Ireland that links between the security forces in Northern Ireland and loyalist paramilitaries do not exist.

Sir John Wheeler: Allegations of collusion between members of the security forces in Northern Ireland and loyalist paramilitaries were thoroughly investigated in 1989 by Mr. John Stevens, then deputy chief constable of Cambridgeshire. As a result of his investigation, a number of persons were charged with criminal offences and convicted.

The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Sir Hugh Annesley, published a summary of Mr. Stevens' report in 1990. The report concluded that collusion was neither widespread nor institutionalised.

The security forces in Northern Ireland carry out their duties in protecting the whole community with absolute impartiality. This is well illustrated by the figures relating to charges for terrorist-type offences. Last year alone 230 persons affiliated to loyalist paramilitary groups were charged with terrorist-type offences. The figure for republican terrorism was 137. This very fact alone should serve to reassure the Catholic community of the impartiality of the security forces in Northern Ireland.

TRANSPORT

Railtrack

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made by Railtrack in producing charges for access to the railway network.

Mr. MacGregor: From 1 April, Railtrack will assume responsibility for the provision of railway infrastructure and will need to charge operators for access to the network. Railtrack has produced estimates of access charges for all the train-operating units that will be formed in April and will now be discussing these with local managers. Discussions will also be held with passenger transport executives and others who sponsor passenger services. The charges announced today will establish charges for the first year of Railtrack's operation. any further changes for 1994-95 will be fine tuning only, after consultation with the train operators.

The charges will reflect the true economic costs of providing rail infrastructure. They will allow Railtrack to recover its capital costs—depreciation and a return on assets—like any other business. Thus, for the first time, charges being made for track will be set in a transparent and commercially realistic manner.

The access charges are consistent with the provision for railways expenditure already announced in the unified Budget, without any adverse effects on the level of fares, services or investment. The franchising director will have sufficient grant to enable the BR train operating units which he supports to pay the new access charges. Special arrangements will apply to enable the PTEs to meet the track charges on the new basis.

Over the past 12 months, Railtrack has engaged in a detailed exercise to identify the full economic cost of running trains on the rail network. Charges take into account the costs of particular parts of the network. Railtrack's charges have been set at a level that will generate sufficient revenue to ensure that the company can cover all its costs, which include the costs of maintaining and renewing the network, plus the cost of the capital employed in the business—the rate of return. Railtrack will therefore be able to invest in and maintain the railway to meet the demands being placed on it.

Charges cover two broad elements of cost. First, are direct costs, which are the costs that operators' services impose on Railtrack. They include the cost of wear and tear, day-to-day maintenance and, where appropriate, the cost of the electricity used by electric trains. Where Railtrack is providing a section of track or other infrastructure solely for a particular operator, the full costs of renewing this element will be charged directly to that user. Secondly, there are "common costs", which are the costs that cannot be attributed to individual users—for example sections of track shared by two or more users. These costs are to be recovered from the train operating units and franchisees operating over the lines concerned according to an agreed formula which takes account of a range of factors including revenue from fares.

Charges to non-franchised operators—principally freight operators—will be subject to commercial negotiation, but must at least cover direct costs.

In common with other public sector undertakings, Railtrack's assets will be valued on a "modern equivalent asset value" basis, MEAV. The valuation will reflect the existing condition of assets and the cost of continuing to provide capacity broadly equivalent to that provided now.

The rail regulator will consider and approve all access agreements entered into after 1 April 1994.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who are the members currently appointed to the Landscape advisory committee.

Mr. Key: The current members of the committee are listed below:

Professor David K. C. Jones BSc FRGS—appointed chairman 1993
Sir Henry E. Aubrey-Fletcher
Professor Mary Benwell B.A., PH.D., F.C.I.T.
Dr. John A Bergg BSc phD C.ENG FICE
Professor Gordon E. Cherry BA DSc (Hon) FRICS
Mr. Len J. Clark CBE
Mr. Geoffrey P. Crow BSc DipTE CEng FIHT MICE
Ms E. Evans AA Dipl (Hons) SADG RIBA TP
Mr. John V. S. Evans Dip.Arch DipLA RIBA ALI
Mr. C. Richard Ferens MA (CANTAB) FRICS
Professor Peter J. Fowler MA PHd FSA FRHistS MIFA
Mr. Hugh J. R. Geddes MA RIBA MLA (USA)
Mr. Arthur D. Gill
Mrs. Janet Jack AA Dipl RIBA TP ALI
Mrs. Patricia E. Lunn CGLI FRSA
Ms Wendy M. Lutley MSc Adel (Econ Geol), BSc Lond (Geol)
Mr. Jim M. McCluskey BSc (CIVIL ENG) MICE MISTRUCT MINT ALI
Mr. Michael R. Porter OBE DIPLA FLI

Miss Wendy E. Powell MLA FLI
Mrs. Valerie Russell BA (Hons)
Mr. Martin O. Slocock BA
Mr. Michael E. G. Taylor FCIT
Mrs. Victoria R. Wakefield
Mr. Roy W. Winter RIBA ALI DipArch DipLD

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who are the members currently appointed to the Street Works Advisory Committee.

Mr. Key: The members of the Street Works Advisory Committee are:

S. N. Mustow—*(Chairman)*
J. L. Aston
R. F. V. Aylott
Mrs. M. J. Bloom
D. G. Clow
K. J. Crawley
W. J. Dickens
Mrs. J. Gaffin
J. E. Holdsworth
E. Jamieson
F. D. J. Johnson
Mrs. S. May
D. L. Sabey
J. P. Smith
Miss P. A. Steel
Mrs. J. Venables

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Norris: The information in respect of the traffic director for London is as follows:

1992-93 prices (to nearest million)

	Year	£ million
	1990-91	0
Outturn	1991-92	1
Outturn	1992-93	2
Estimated outturn	1993-94	10
Plans	1994-95	10

Trinity house and the Northern Lighthouse Board are not Exchequer funded. Their operating costs are met from the general lighthouse fund which receives its income from the levy of light dues at United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland ports.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Norris: The traffic director for London is a corporation sole and has no board. The director is appointed by my right hon. Friend.

The chairman of Trinity House Lighthouse Service, THLS, is the deputy master of Trinity House and subject to annual re-election by the court of Trinity House. My right hon. Friend nominates three board members; three board members are elder brethren of Trinity House who are officers of THLS; and there are three non-voting board members who are employees of THLS.

The chairman of the Northern Lighthouse Board is elected by the board. The board of the Northern Lighthouse Board consists of the six sheriffs-principal of Scotland, two Ministers of the Crown—the Lord Advocate and the Solicitor-General for Scotland—two district council chairmen, the Lords Provost of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, a nominee of the Manx Government, and five members co-opted by the board. My right hon. Friend appoints the member proposed by the Manx Government representative as a constitutional convenience.

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what are the present salary costs for the chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency; and if he will give details of special bonus schemes in place for the incumbent and the tenure of appointment for the post holder;

(2) if he will list the special bonus payments made to the previous chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency.

Mr. Key: The chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency is employed at a salary of £47,900 per annum. In addition, he is eligible for annual performance-related bonuses of up to 15 per cent., which will depend on his meeting or exceeding specific targets. The chief executive was appointed following an open competition on 1 September 1993 for a fixed term until 22 August 1996, which may be extended.

Driver Safety Document

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the situation regarding the new driver safety consultation document; and what provisional conclusion he has reached.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend, the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 9 February 1994, *Official Report*, columns *270-71*.

Motorway Extensions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the economic and social cost of land safeguarded for possible future extensions to the motorway network.

Mr. Key: The purpose of safeguarding is to prevent development which would prove abortive if the scheme goes ahead, thus avoiding waste of resource and cost to the taxpayer. In so far as this in itself imposes economic and social costs, the statutory provisions on blight are aimed at compensating those who are affected.

Motorway Cleaning

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *97*, when the central reservation of the M1 in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire was last cleaned; when it will be cleaned; and what is the programme for cleaning.

Mr. Key: In Bedfordshire, the section between junctions 11 and 13 was cleaned during September and October 1993. South of junction 11, the motorway widening works have prevented the normal cleaning operations, but there will be a litter pick on Saturday 12 February and a full clean of the central reserve in the following week.

In Northamptonshire, daily inspections are carried out and any debris causing a safety hazard to road users is removed straightaway.

On the short intervening section of M1 in Buckinghamshire, junctions 13 to 15, the drainage channel was last cleaned in December 1993 and scavenging was undertaken on 18 to 21 January 1994.

The frequency of future cleaning will be in accordance with the code of practice on litter and refuse under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Motorway central reservations are a special case in the code because of the difficulties of access. In practice, the frequency of cleaning is likely to be about twice a year.

Driving Theory Test

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the timetable for the introduction of the driving theory test; and which bodies will be prevented from bidding for the work associated with administering the test.

Mr. Key: The driving theory test will be introduced by 1st July 1996. We intend to contract out the operation of this test, but decisions have not yet been taken about the conditions of tendering for the contract.

A6(M)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the time scale for completing the planning process and building the A6(M) bypass for Hazel Grove to Birmingham.

Mr. Key: Proposed changes to the scheme will require the published draft orders to be withdrawn. We are hoping to re-publish the orders later this year with a view to holding a public inquiry early next year. The time for completion will depend upon the outcome of the inquiry.

Drinking and Driving

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has commissioned in order to assess the extent to which drivers aged 50 years and over have received the message that drinking and driving is not advisable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The reduction in drink driving by different groups of drivers is estimated by analysis of police breath test statistics and data supplied by coroners. This shows that drinking and driving among drivers aged 50 years and over has been falling at much the same rate as for drivers under the age of 50.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department first and last received representations from the British Medical Association for random breath testing as a major means of reducing drunk driving; and if he will estimate the reduction in drink drive deaths *(a)* during that period and *(b)* from the peak to the present day.

Mr. Key: Records are not available to show the date when the British Medical Association first made a representation to the Department of Transport on random breath testing.

Estimates are made annually of the number of fatal casualties in accidents where at least one driver exceeded the legal alcohol limit. In 1978, the earliest year for which reliable data are available, the number was 1,650 and numbers in each subsequent year have been below this. In 1992, the most recent year available, the provisional estimate is 610, a reduction of 63 per cent. compared with 1978.

Vehicles (Catalytic Converters)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what is the estimated number of vehicles in the United Kingdom; and what proportion of those vehicles have catalytic converters.

Mr. Key: About 25 million vehicles are currently licensed to use United Kingdom roads. Estimates based on industry sources and Department of Transport data on new vehicle registrations indicate roughly 11 per cent., or about 2·75 million vehicles are fitted with catalytic converters. Exact figures are not available.

Accident Records

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has undertaken into the effectiveness of computerised accident records in improved road safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Department keeps computerised records of all road injury accidents recorded by the police. These are extensively used in developing and monitoring road safety policy. These records are enhanced by linking them to coroners' records of road accident fatalities and research is under way to explore the possibility of developing a link with hospital casualty data.

Abandoned Vehicles

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who is responsible for taking action against untaxed motor vehicles and motor vehicles that have been abandoned and are on the public highway.

Mr. Key: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, DVLA, administers and enforces the vehicle licensing regime. A pre-requisite to successful enforcement action is a formal sighting of the vehicle on a public road without a valid tax disc. The police and traffic wardens play a vital role in this process. They detect apparently unlicensed vehicles as part of their normal duties and report them to the DVLA for appropriate enforcement action.

Local authorities, together with the police, have powers under the Removal and Disposal of Vehicles Regulations 1986 to deal with vehicles that are illegally, obstructively or dangerously parked, abandoned or broken down. Their powers do not extend to vehicles simply because they are unlicensed. Where abandoned vehicles are also unlicensed, DVLA works with local authorities in identifying those persons responsible and in bringing them to book.

Truck Drivers

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport is he will delay the implementation of the EU directive on disbarring insulin-dependent truck drivers until he has analysed the report on the three-year study of the subject currently being carried out by the USA's Federal Highway Administration.

Mr. Key: The second EC directive on driver licensing has been agreed and is to be implemented by July 1996. The present advice from the honorary advisory panel on driving and diabetes is that to allow insulin-treated diabetics to drive large vehicles would constitute an unnecessary risk to road safety. The panel will reconsider this advice in the light of the USA's Federal Highway Administration's report as soon as it becomes available.

Vehicles (Rear Impact Tests)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what data his Department collects on passenger injuries resulting from impacts to the rear of vehicles;

(2) what plans he has to introduce rear impact safety tests for vehicles;

(3) what representations he has received about the safety of rear-facing children's seats in cars.

Mr. Key: The Department has two main sources for the collection of accident and injury data—the "STATS 19 Road Accident Report" which forms the basis of the Department's annual publication "Road Accidents Great Britain" and an ongoing co-operative crash injury study sponsored jointly by the Department and certain vehicle manufacturers. Details of injuries resulting from rear impacts are included as a matter of course in both. In addition the Department has recently set up a two-year study to investigate the long-term effect of whiplash injuries.

The Department is currently carrying out research into the possibility of developing a test procedure to simulate rear-end accidents which offers the prospect of a reduction in casualties.

We have not received any representations specifically about the safety of rear-facing child seats. Such restraints are the safest way of transporting very young children although their use on the front seat of a vehicle fitted with a passenger air bag is inadvisable.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many visits abroad the Minister for Roads and Traffic made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Key: My predecessor made one trip abroad in 1993.

Place	*Purpose*	*Cost*
Amsterdam	To attend the European Conference of Ministers for Transport	£341·52

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many visits abroad the Minister of State for Aviation and Shipping made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Norris: The Minister of State for Aviation and Shipping made the following visits abroad last year:

Place	*Purpose*	*Cost (£)*
Brussels	To attend EC Transport Council	567·82
Dublin	To attend meeting on shipping developments with Irish Ministers	254·00
Brussels	To attend EC Transport Council	560·00
Paris	To attend Paris air show	242·10
Paris, Amsterdam and Frankfurt	To visit European airports	874·30
Brussels	To attend EC Transport Council and various aviation visits in Brussels and Maastricht	434·38
Hong Kong	To attend conference on aviation security and various aviation and shipping visits	3,733·27
Brussels	To attend EC Transport Council	390·28

Child Accidents

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents children have had on the roads in each year since 1987.

Mr. Key: The number of injury road accidents involving children since 1987 are as follows:

	Number
1987	40,657
1988	41,430
1989	43,147
1990	43,620
1991	39,987
1992	39,340

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money his Department has spent on measures designed to prevent road accidents to children for each year since 1987.

Mr. Key: Many aspects of our road safety programme contribute to improving child road safety as well as that of other road users. In addition to measures such as cycle training or road safety education directed specifically at children, they also benefit from the construction of safer roads and vehicles and from improved driver behaviour. It is not, therefore, possible to calculate what proportion of the expenditure should be attributed to the prevention of road accidents to children.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the grounds for compassionate compensation due to the channel tunnel rail link; and what arrangements are available for appeals against decisions to refuse such claims.

Mr. Freeman: Purchase will be considered by Union Railways for homes that are likely to experience operational noise above the proposed threshold for noise insulation. There needs to be proven financial hardship in buying another property necessitated by a job move beyond commuting distance, medical problems, or family dissolution. There can be other hardship grounds and cases are looked at individually. The scheme is not a statutory requirement and decisions are entirely at the discretion of Union Railways.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to announce safeguarding arrangements for properties affected by the proposed high-speed channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: In the next few weeks.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether decisions about safeguarding and compensation for properties affected by the proposed high-speed channel tunnel rail link will be made by Union Railways, or by his Department.

Mr. Freeman: The safeguarding directions will be made by the Secretary of State with the benefit of advice from Union Railways on the land to be included in the safeguarded zone. Union Railways has said that it will accept applications for voluntary purchase of owner-occupied homes within the safeguarded zone. Outside the zone it will consider in cases of hardship the purchase of homes likely to experience operational noise above the proposed threshold for noise insulation.

Stratford

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of Union Railways to discuss the case for an international station at Stratford.

Mr. Freeman: I met representatives of Union Railways to discuss a number of matters related to the channel tunnel rail link on 2 February. At that meeting, I asked Union Railways to discuss further with the Stratford promoter group the assumptions underlying its case, and to report back to me.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated monthly loss of revenue to Eurotunnel as a result of the delay in operating services.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for Eurotunnel.

Road Repairs

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of what sums have been allocated in each of the last five years to highway authorities for the repair of principal roads; and what that amount represented as an overall proportion of money allocated to local highway authorities.

Mr. Key: As explained in my answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *756*, transport supplementary grant and credit approvals were first allocated for structural maintenance of principal roads forming part of the primary route network in 1992-93 and were extended to cover all principal roads in 1993-94. Allocations for structural maintenance, and the proportion they represent of the total resources allocated under the TSG system, are as follows:

	1992-93		*1993-94*		*1994-95*	
	£000	*Per cent.*	*£000*	*Per cent.*	*£000*	*Per cent.*
City of London	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Barking	0	0·0	867	30·9	399	35·2
Barnet	0	0·0	140	9·5	175	6·7
Bexley	0	0·0	847	12·5	1,103	13·7
Brent	0	0·0	287	12·0	828	30·2
Bromley	212	3·6	420	7·2	432	22·8
Camden	1,617	33·1	1,566	35·8	1,139	28·0
Croydon	0	0·0	1,480	22·5	1,144	22·7
Ealing	0	0·0	285	7·1	386	11·8
Enfield	0	0·0	270	4·0	309	5·6
Greenwich	379	35·6	510	26·2	477	18·3
Hackney	185	5·9	385	13·2	600	17·9
Hammersmith	0	0·0	420	13·1	761	13·8
Haringey	255	6·5	1,270	36·3	1,012	32·0
Harrow	0	0·0	0	0·0	318	3·7
Havering	0	0·0	90	6·5	69	7·9
Hillingdon	0	0·0	170	1·3	278	5·4
Hounslow	0	0·0	215	3·8	414	7·4
Islington	900	36·0	730	28·1	935	29·9
Kensington	0	0·0	0	0·0	142	12·3
Kingston	820	30·7	563	20·3	472	13·5
Lambeth	145	17·6	255	19·7	537	31·1
Lewisham	100	0·8	50	0·6	231	2·3
Merton	250	11·6	140	4·9	189	10·9
Newham	30	0·4	140	1·4	204	1·8
Redbridge	0	0·0	765	34·0	535	31·7
Richmond	41	4·3	111	8·6	200	10·3
Southwark	0	0·0	0	0·0	381	9·9
Sutton	150	9·4	170	6·2	180	7·8
Tower Hamlets	1,847	62·4	6,995	77·3	3,440	64·0
Waltham Forest	170	8·1	415	14·4	251	10·0
Wandsworth	275	4·8	503	8·7	664	10·4
Westminster	570	8·9	480	8·9	336	9·1
Bolton	550	15·1	1,015	26·1	722	19·6
Bury	300	23·7	630	31·7	688	30·4
Manchester	779	4·1	1,330	4·9	1,363	5·5
Oldham	200	1·6	775	8·7	779	15·2
Rochdale	500	30·8	315	15·3	686	28·3
Salford	970	23·2	940	26·2	964	32·7
Stockport	222	5·9	350	7·5	955	19·8
Tameside	431	15·0	1,285	38·4	938	48·6
Trafford	140	2·6	290	5·5	251	2·2
Wigan	435	10·0	370	20·6	536	37·9
Knowsley	456	3·2	860	3·8	953	4·9

	1992-93		1993-94		1994-95	
	£000	Per cent.	£000	Per cent.	£000	Per cent.
Liverpool	1,400	54·2	1,500	31·4	2,200	36·6
St. Helens	95	0·7	160	3·2	142	19·7
Sefton	378	25·3	550	26·5	185	16·5
Wirral	190	4·9	360	7·4	259	8·4
Barnsley	536	6·3	565	11·2	750	11·3
Doncaster	1,445	19·1	1,421	19·6	1,129	18·1
Rotherham	219	5·2	522	15·3	478	10·0
Sheffield	1,000	4·8	2,711	10·1	2,773	13·8
Gateshead	185	3·0	275	10·4	300	22·2
Newcastle	541	12·1	736	10·1	1,300	14·0
North Tyneside	200	21·5	840	49·9	650	38·4
South Tyneside	93	7·2	385	20·4	560	42·5
Sunderland	1,044	16·5	2,006	37·9	1,482	39·7
Birmingham	2,000	7·2	4,392	11·4	3,196	8·9
Coventry	854	8·1	825	5·9	406	2·8
Dudley	670	8·8	1,400	13·2	1,256	12·8
Sandwell	1,555	28·6	1,740	30·4	1,644	32·4
Solihull	125	4·9	120	3·2	151	4·7
Walsall	110	0·6	770	3·4	755	4·4
Wolverhampton	460	4·8	880	4·8	791	4·2
Bradford	1,000	18·4	2,100	31·4	1,454	20·2
Calderdale	352	31·7	1,277	44·2	2,262	66·3
Kirklees	1,795	35·8	3,510	39·3	2,609	36·9
Leeds	1,000	9·7	6,086	26·8	3,271	17·7
Wakefield	827	25·2	1,686	39·0	1,300	38·0
Avon	2,530	9·3	2,470	11·2	1,660	8·9
Bedfordshire	777	16·4	1,210	15·8	1,041	20·7
Berkshire	1,370	11·3	2,150	16·9	1,346	13·2
Buckinghamshire	1,350	26·1	2,190	31·6	1,412	43·4
Cambridgeshire	1,410	22·2	2,555	24·1	1,801	26·8
Cheshire	4,480	19·0	7,520	29·0	5,429	24·7
Cleveland	856	8·0	1,940	12·8	1,715	13·5
Cornwall	1,490	12·9	2,340	20·0	2,008	17·8
Cumbria	1,916	37·9	2,100	24·6	1,426	28·9
Derbyshire	1,592	26·8	1,810	21·6	1,394	26·9
Devon	2,570	26·7	4,040	30·7	3,893	39·2
Dorset	400	5·1	1,295	16·4	926	15·5
Durham	1,106	10·9	1,255	9·5	1,252	11·2
East Sussex	890	9·2	1,963	18·7	1,913	23·2
Essex	1,652	12·0	2,588	15·6	2,949	15·3
Gloucestershire	1,054	11·4	1,500	16·5	1,409	17·0
Hampshire	1,200	4·0	4,985	11·7	4,183	14·8
Hereford and Worcester	1,332	16·1	2,030	38·1	1,744	47·8
Hertfordshire	500	3·7	2,870	16·0	1,954	16·3
Humberside	2,342	13·4	3,856	18·3	3,035	17·5
Isle of Wight	0	0·0	600	18·4	594	19·9
Kent	4,340	5·9	7,879	10·5	7,273	7·7
Lancashire	2,004	6·7	2,160	9·8	3,381	12·8
Leicestershire	2,240	13·5	1,915	15·5	2,011	26·5
Lincolnshire	1,360	17·2	2,027	18·9	2,146	28·9
Norfolk	2,616	16·6	3,542	19·0	2,730	19·1
Northamptonshire	3,431	29·3	3,800	36·1	2,076	33·8
Northumberland	1,007	14·8	2,210	19·2	1,998	25·7
North Yorkshire	2,332	14·2	4,575	19·7	3,752	24·0
Nottinghamshire	1,733	17·0	3,530	27·4	2,990	27·9
Oxfordshire	1,789	15·2	1,833	15·5	1,791	34·7
Shropshire	1,109	13·4	1,750	25·2	1,680	37·5
Somerset	710	8·2	1,733	12·2	1,390	13·3
Staffordshire	4,000	46·2	5,420	35·7	4,323	30·0
Suffolk	2,411	19·3	3,050	25·4	3,075	32·9
Surrey	443	1·8	2,712	8·0	3,484	13·4
Warwickshire	560	14·3	1,050	19·0	1,710	38·0
West Sussex	1,375	16·0	1,738	19·3	1,859	26·5
Wiltshire	0	0·0	1,292	30·0	1,348	33·7

Stansted Airport

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will visit businesses in Cambridge to discuss the need for transatlantic air services from London Stansted airport.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has no plans at present to visit Cambridge.

Chemicals (Labelling)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in negotiations relating to acceptance by the EU of the hazchem label; and if he will make a detailed statement.

Mr. Key: The European Commission's published proposal—COM(93) 548—for a Council directive to apply the provisions of the European agreement concerning the

international carriage of dangerous goods by road, ADR, to domestic transport includes a provision which would allow the continued use of existing emergency acton codes for domestic journeys until an internationally agreed code is developed. This would allow the continued use of the hazchem placard in the United Kingdom and the Commission is known to favour this as the basis for a new international code.

Consideration of the proposed directive has begun under the Greek Presidency. We shall seek to ensure that the proposed derogation is retained in the final agreed text.

Transatlantic Air Travel

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to conclude the present round of negotiations with the United States of America regarding a new liberalised air service agreement.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the current negotiations with the United States of America on the transatlantic air travel bilateral restrictions started; and when he expects them to be concluded.

Mr. Norris: United States Transportation Secretary Pena and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met on 19 April last year and agreed to try to reach a new, more liberal agreement within a year. That is still the time scale we are working to.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate his Department has made of the effect on revenue to United Kingdom airlines of granting United States airlines free access to United Kingdom regional airports and the effect on the economies of the regions.

Mr. Norris: The CAA has estimated that the revenue loss to United Kingdom airlines of granting United States airlines free access to United Kingdom regional airports is in the region of £23 million per annum. There are benefits to consumers and local economies in the regions although these are difficult to quantify.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what survey has been carried out by his Department or the Civil Aviation Authority on how many passengers per year from the Stansted airport catchment area fly to the United States of America from *(a)* Stansted and *(b)* other British airports.

Mr. Norris: The Civil Aviation Authority conducted an origin and destination survey at five London airports—Gatwick, Heathrow, London City, Luton and Stansted—between January and December 1991. Its findings were published in January 1993 in CAP 610, "Passengers at London Airports in 1991".

The catchment area of an airport is impossible to define with precision; this is particularly so when a number of airports serve the same locality. Of the 1·3 million passengers using Stansted to make international journeys in 1991, 18 per cent. travelled to or from points in Essex, 8 per cent. Hertfordshire, 23 per cent. East Anglia with the largest proportion, 34 per cent. travelled from or to Greater London. Comparable figures for Gatwick's 16·2 million passengers making international journeys were 4 per cent. Essex, 2 per cent. Hertfordshire, 3 per cent. East Anglia and 42 per cent. Greater London. For Heathrow's 25 million passengers making international journeys the figures were 1·8 per cent. Essex, 2·7 per cent. Hertfordshire, 2·4 per cent. East Anglia and 54·9 per cent. Greater London.

During the London survey period there were no scheduled services to the United States from Stansted. A route to Chicago by American Airlines began in June 1992 but ceased in May 1993 having carried 65,000 passengers. Some 29,000 passengers travelled on charter services between Stansted and Orlando in 1991 and 20,000 in 1992.

No specific analysis has been carried out on the proportion of passengers from the Stansted Airport catchment area flying to or from the United States.

British Rail

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has now reflected on the legal opinion quoted by the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling during the debate on the Adjournment on 13 January, *Official Report,* columns 425-29; and if British Rail will revise its leaflet on the subject of compensation for noise and vibration.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and to Tonbridge and Malling borough council for making available a copy of the counsel's opinion.

The passages quoted from the opinion were concerned with the interpretation of section 9 of the Land Compensation Act 1973. Among other issues, that section provides in appropriate circumstances for claims to be payable in respect of compensation for depreciation in the value of properties arising as a consequence of certain railway works. These works fall into two categories: works which have been reconstructed, extended or otherwise altered after they have been first used—dealt with in subsection (1)(b) of the section—and works in respect of which there has been a change of use—dealt with in subsection (1)(c). Subsection (7) of the section goes on to state that references in the section to a change of use do not include references to the intensification of an existing use.

Counsel made the point that it follows from these provisions that changes of use which are limited to intensification of the use of existing lines do not give rise to compensation, whereas reconstructions, extensions and other alterations may do so. The Government see no reason to dissent from this interpretation. In the debate, my right hon. Friend sought to suggest that a contrary view had been taken by Ministers in previous debates in Parliament. More specifically, he referred to what I said in the debate on 19 June 1991 about provisions in the 1973 Act not applying if the amount of the traffic on a road or railway were to increase. Those comments need to be read in the context of my statement as a whole. This related to a proposal to introduce a discretionary power for the Secretary of State to pay compensation in cases of injurious affection arising from the intensification of operations by the British Railways Board. I went on to stress the clear distinction between

"the construction or alteration of public works and the intensification of use of existing works".—[*Official Report,* 19 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. *345-46.*]

As reflected in that statement, I fully recognise that compensation may be payable where existing railway lines are reconstructed, extended or otherwise altered after they have first been used and where it can be shown that

depreciation has resulted from physical factors, such as noise and vibration, caused by their use. It is for individuals to make claims where they consider that such depreciation has occurred and for the responsible authority, currently British Rail, to address those claims. In the event of a dispute, there is provision for reference to the Lands Tribunal, and the possibility thereafter of appeal to the courts.

On the question of the British Rail leaflet, the board is studying the issues which have been raised so as to determine whether to amend the leaflet. Department of Transport officials will keep in close touch with BR on this and I will make a further statement on this matter shortly.

Seat Belts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date his review of the technical and cost implications of seat belts in coaches and minibuses was announced; what is the timescale for its completion; and if he will publish the full results of this review.

Mr. Key: Work began on reviewing the full technical and cost implications of the compulsory fitment of seat belts in minibuses and coaches during November 1993. I expect to receive a report within the next few weeks. I cannot anticipate when decisions will be taken; but we shall be publishing our conclusions.

European Aviation

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the report on European aviation by the Comité des Sages; and what steps he is taking to ensure the recommendations are implemented by all members of the European Union.

Mr. Norris: I warmly welcome the publication of the report of the Commité des Sages and, in particular, its commitment to the implementation of the single market. It offers a useful assessment of the position of European air transport and emphasises a number of key areas where improvements need to be made. Specifically, I endorse whole-heartedly the report's conclusions on reducing Government intervention in airlines' commercial decisions. I also support the report's general views on state aids and have urged the Commission to ensure that these are reflected in the revision of its own guidelines on state aids in this sector. However, there are a number of other recommendations on which the United Kingdom has reservations, including the need for a new European body for air traffic control.

It will, of course, be for the Commission to take forward implementation of the report's recommendations and put forward proposals to the Council of Ministers where appropriate. I shall, however, be pressing the Commission to take action on the report's key recommendations on the implementation of the single market.

Malaysian Airways

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what compensation was paid to British Airways for giving up landing rights at Heathrow in favour of Malaysian Airways; what was the Government's role in the negotiations leading to this concession; and from what funds compensation was provided.

Mr. Norris: The United Kingdom has liberal air services arrangements with Malaysia which permit the airlines of either side to operate up to a maximum proportion of the total air services operated by United Kingdom and Malaysia airlines. Following airline discussions in 1989, as commercial agreement was made between British Airways and MAS concerning the operation of a further service by the Malaysian airline. The two Governments then agreed to vary the arrangements to enable that airline to operate the further service. The Government are not privy to the details of the commercial agreement between the two airlines. No public funding formed part of the air services arrangements.

Vehicle Excise Offences

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by DVLA local office for the last five years how many excise offence reports have been received during the last year; how many have resulted in (i) out of court settlement, or (ii) a successful prosecution; and what were the amounts raised by out of court settlements and prosecutions.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Air Quantity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many copies of the second report of the quality of urban air review group on diesel vehicle emissions and urban air quality were printed; at what cost; and to whom they were distributed.

Mr. Atkins: Two thousand copies of the second report of the quality of urban air review group on diesel emissions and urban air quality were printed at a cost of £11,412. The report has been distributed to:

the Environment Select Committee,
the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution,
Chief Environment Health Officers in England, Wales Scotland and Northern Ireland,
Industry,
Environmental Interest Groups,
Respiratory Health Interest Groups,
National and motoring press,
Government Research Institutes,
Universities,
and a number of interested individuals.

Copies were also placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he or his officials have had with his counterpart in the Irish Republic over the past year in regard to the quantity and type of toxic waste imported into the United Kingdom from the Republic.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend the then Minister for the Environment and Countryside met the Irish Environmental Protection Minister on 15 July last year, when a number of issues were discussed including the Irish Republic's plans for disposing of its hazardous waste.

Wind Farms

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications for wind farms have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected since 1984.

Mr. Baldry: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Groundwork Foundation

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of spending for 1993-94 of the grant-in-aid given to the Groundwork Foundation, showing how much money was forwarded by the foundation to Groundwork trusts and how much was used by the Groundwork Foundation.

Mr. Atkins: The Groundwork Foundation's grant allocation for 1993-94 is £5,516,000, of which the foundation expects to pay £3,792,014 in total to Groundwork Trusts. The foundation estimates that it will pay £1,994,318 as contributions towards the running costs of the trusts, £1,472,696 as grants for specific projects and £325,000 towards the purchase of computer systems. In addition, the foundation will spend £205,000 on training costs for the benefit of trust personnel. The foundation estimates that its own staffing and support costs will be £1,518,986.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the staff employed by the Groundwork Foundation in the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93 with their annual salaries; and if he will list the dates at which new staff were taken on.

Mr. Atkins: The Groundwork Foundation employed 17 staff in 1991-92 and the total cost of salaries was £663,693. In 1992-93 it employed 33 staff and salaries totalled £888,355. I am obtaining the more detailed breakdown the hon. Member has requested and shall write to him.

Urban Development Corporation

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table indicating the number of jobs created by *(a)* Teesside urban development corporation and *(b)* Tyne and Wear urban development corporation in each year since 1987.

Mr. Baldry: The number of gross jobs, direct and indirect, created by the Teesside and Tyne and Wear development corporations is as follows:

	TDC	*TWDC*
1987-88	N/a	1,485
1988-89	600	7,670
1989-90	2,600	[1]387
1990-91	2,800	1,500
1991-92	3,000	4,452
1992-93	3,123	3,814

[1] The 1989-90 figure does not include shipyard and other related job losses.

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will supply for each financial year since 1987 the amount of grant aid given by his Department to *(a)* Teesside urban development corporation and *(b)* Tyne and Wear urban development corporation.

Mr. Baldry: Grant in aid paid to the Teesside and Tyne and Wear urban development corporations is as follows:

£ million

	TDC	*TWDC*
1987-88	5·0	4·0
1988-89	20·7	24·0
1989-90	36·0	35·8
1990-91	42·1	37·8
1991-92	56·2	40·5
1992-93	40·3	44·1

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of private sector investments was attracted by *(a)* Teesside urban development corporation and *(b)* Tyne and Wear urban development corporation broken down to show (i) United Kingdom investment and (ii) overseas inward investment.

Mr. Baldry: The amount of private secrtor investment in the Tyne and Wear and Teesside urban development corporation areas during the lifetime of the corporations up to 31 December 1993 was as follows:

£ million

	TDC	*TWDC*
United Kingdom investment	591	559
Overseas inward investment	77	25

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for asssessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Baldry: In the current financial year my Department has conducted two advertising campaigns with budgeted costs in excess of £10,000. These campaigns are:

Helping the Earth Begins at Home

The objective of this campaign was to create a link between domestic energy consumption and global warming, and to reduce energy use. The campaign focused on raising awareness of energy efficiency methods and encouraging energy efficient behaviour among householders.

Rent to Mortgage

The objective of the campaign was to inform qualifying tenants of the new rent-to-mortgage scheme.

The effectiveness of these campaigns was assessed by market research and coupon/telephone responses.

At the present time the only campaign planned for 1994-95 with a budget exceeding £10,000 is:

Helping the Earth Begins at Home

The Department's agencies have not run any advertising campaigns with a budget in excess of £10,000 in the current financial year and there are currently no plans for campaigns in 1994-95.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will itemise the costs of setting up each of the new regional offices under the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: The new Government offices for the regions will come into existence in April and, although detailed arrangements are still being worked out, our intention is that there should be no resultant increase in the cost of central Government.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the senior regional directors who will be running the offices which administer the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 8 February column *145*.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff are to be employed in each of the new single regeneration budget regional offices.

Mr. Baldry: Some 2,752 staff are currently employed in the existing regional offices of the Departments of the Environment, Employment, Trade and Industry and Transport. This figure excludes Department of Transport staff who will transfer to the Highways Agency from 1 April. No final decision on the complement of each new regional office has yet been taken.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the salary of each regional director of the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: Each senior regional director, with the exception of the London appointee, is to be paid at the appropriate personal point on the grade 3 national pay range (currently £51,360—£59,599). An announcement about the appointment of a senior regional director for London will be made in due course.

City Challenge

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on City Challenge.

Mr. Baldry: Thirty-one city challenge partnerships are currently implementing their five-year programmes for regeneration. At the end of the first full year of operation the key achievements of the 11 pacemaker partnerships were:

3,154 dwellings completed/improved,
2,712 jobs created/preserved,
114 hectares of land improved,
78,254 sq.m of new/improved business and commercial floorspace,
269 new business start-ups.

It is estimated that, over the five years, £1,162 million of City Challenge funding will attract private sector investment of £3,100 million.

Environmental Audits

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify the outstanding problems relating to the details of the EC directive on environmental audits, mentioned in his speech of 7 February, *Official Report*, column 78.

Mr. Baldry: There are no problems with the EC regulation on eco-management and audit. We are making good progress in setting up the arrangements to implement the eco-management and audit scheme in the United Kingdom and aim to have it fully operational by April/May 1995. My right hon. Friend's comments were made in response to a question on the EIA directive (85/337/EEC).

The Government are committed to the principle of environment impact assessment, but we are concerned about inconsistent application within the Community, as described in the Commission's five-year report on the implementation of the EIA directive. Explanatory memoranda were submitted to the House of Commons Select Committee on European Legislation on 19 May 1993 and 10 January 1994. The Government will therefore be urging the Commission to concentrate on securing fuller implementation of the directive before introducing substantial new requirements.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will provide details of the contents and date of dispatch of the United Kingdom report to the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will shortly be placing a copy of the report in the Library at the time it is submitted to the United Nations Commission.

Biodiversity Action Plan

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to ensure that the review of the Countryside Commission and English Nature does not delay the implementation of measures to conserve biodiversity in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: The Government published the first United Kingdom biodiversity action plan on 25 January. The study into bringing together English Nature and the Countryside Commission is being conducted in the light of our commitments to biodiversity and sustainable development, on which we are determined to make early and sustained progress. Bringing together these two bodies will ensure that institutional arrangements assist with the delivery of those objectives. It will be important to ensure that the study does not cause a loss of momentum in carrying forward the policies and programmes of either of the two agencies concerned. It is for that reason that I aim to complete it within six months.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *6*, regarding the carbon dioxide emission implications of the latest GATT, if he will publish the outline of the calculations which led to his conclusions.

Mr. Atkins: As my hon. Friend the then Minister for the Environment and Countryside indicated in his answer of 11 January at column *6*, the interngovernmental panel on climate change will be evaluating projections of world greenhouse gas emissions including the impact of the GATT agreement, for its second assessment report due to be published in 1995.

Council Tax

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make interest payable on overpayments of council tax where appeals have not been settled within six months.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Shredders

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria used for shredding documents in departmental shredders; and how many documents a day typically are shredded.

Mr. Baldry: There are no departmental criteria: shredding provides one way of disposing of certain categories of classified documents. Information as to the numbers of documents shredded in a typical day could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next meet the local authority associations to discuss local government finance.

Mr. Baldry: The Secretary of State expects to meet representatives of the local authority associations before the summer to discuss the local government finance settlement for 1995-96.

Deregulation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that any deregulation proposals concerning the environment and land use will be subject to an environmental assessment as part of the scrutiny procedure.

Mr. Baldry: The deregulation initiative is intended to minimise the burden of regulatory controls on business, while nevertheless maintaining necessary environmental standards.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to respond to the fourth report from the Environment Select Committee of 1992-93, on energy efficiency in buildings, HC 648.

Mr. Gummer: I have today arranged for copies of the Government's response to the environment Select Committee's report to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Toxic Emissions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his most recent discussions with ReChem about sources of toxic emissions.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have had discussions with ReChem about sources of toxic emissions. However, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) has, and continues to be in regular contact with ReChem regarding the authorisation and operation of its incinerators.

Banana Producers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will press for the immediate implementation of the aid regime promised as a concomitant arrangement to the change in the banana regime for the Windward Islands, Dominica and Belize.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

There are funds for assistance in the European Community 1994 Budget, which has already been approved. We are working closely with the Commission to assess how these can best be used to assist the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

PRIME MINISTER

Manchester Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *414*, who will be signing the reply to the chief executive of Manchester Airport plc in regard to liberalising access to regional airports; and if he will place a copy of his reply in the Library.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's private secretary replied on 11 February. It is not my right hon. Friend's normal practice to place copies of such letters in the Library.

Pan Am 103

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has had from the Government of Malta about the feasibility of staging a trial under Scottish rules of evidence of the two Libyan nationals alleged to have been involved in the destruction of Pan Am 103; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received no such representations.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 February.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 February.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in Moscow for a series of meetings including meetings with President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committees on Telecommunications for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. McLoughlin: The members of the Advisory Committees on Telecommuncations for Scotland (SACOT), Wales (WACOT) and Northern Ireland (NIACT) as at 21 January 1994 are as follows:

Members of the Scottish Advisory Committee on Telecommunications as at 21 January 1994

Mr. William K. Begg, OBE *(Chairman)*
Mrs. Joan M. Dickson
Mr. David A. Gardner
Mrs. Christine J. Jones
Mr. Peter Michie
Mr. John Purvis, CBE
Dr. Eleanor M. Steiner
Professor Howard Williams
Mr. Peter Wilson, JP
Mr. Edward Young

Members of the Welsh Advisory Committee on Telecommunications as at 21 January 1994

Professor Michael D. Tedd *(Chairman)*
Mr. John Bannon
Mrs. Pamela J. Blackwell
Mr. Donald R. Dutton JP
Mr. Graham S. Hall
Mr. Gwynfor Jones
Mr. Dennis T. Jones
Mr. John Lloyd-Jones
Mr. Jeffrey C. Maynard
Mr. Lawrence Murphy
Professor John J. O'Reilly
Miss Gwyneth M. Williams

Members of the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Telecommunications as at 21 January 1994

Mr. Joseph L. C. Thomson *(Chairman)*
Mr. Walter Carruthers OBE
Mrs. Susan C. Hogg
Mr. James A. Kerr
Mr. James O. Mcdonald MBE
Mr. William J. H. McPherson
Mr. Gary E. Mills
Mrs. May Noble
Mr. John D. Thompson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Post Office Users National Council.

Mr. McLoughlin: The members of the Post Office Users National Council as at 21 January 1994 are:

Mr. Thomas S. Corrigan *(Chairman)*
Mr. Frederick C. Bell
Mr. Eric R. Distin
Mr. Roger E. Gooding
Mr. John P. Hackney
Mr. Gary R. Hepburn
Mrs. Jacqueline Highe
Mr. Keith Hitchings
Mr. Peter J. Middleton
Mr. David B. Morris
Councillor Julia E. Price
Dr. Stephanie Stray
Mr. Edward T. Vidler
Mr. Dennis S. Wilson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the persons hearing consumer credit licensing appeals.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following is the list of people from which panels are appointed to hear appeals from determinations by the Director General of Fair Trading revoking a consumer credit licence or refusing an application for a consumer credit licence.

G. B. L. Brown, BA
Professor G. Hornsey, LLM
D. J. W. Browne
M. G. Clarke, MA, LLB
E. C. Lowson, MBE, MSc
Professor M. Gaskin
Dr. R. A. McCreadie, LLB, PhD
Mrs. H. P. Scott, OBE, JP, BA, LLB
O. Edwards, MBE, JP
Dr. B. E. Marsh
Professor B. W. Harvey MA, LLM
Professor D. L. Foulkes, JP, BA, LLM
R. Davies, DPA
G. G. Hibbert
J. D. Montgomery, LLB, LCM
J. M. Bowers, OBE
P. M. Leonard
Mrs. L. A. Service, JP, MA
P. Simmonds
Professor R. M. Goode, CBE, OBE
D. Caruth
A. W. Bradley
C. J. Messer
D. W. Hay
Ms S. K. Ward, BA
Mrs. J. Stone
M. R. Bone
Professor E. J. Griew, MA, LLB
Professor D. Thompson, LLB, PhD
F. D. Pattison
R. Brazier, JP, LLB
G. G. Buckley
D. B. Williams
Professor J. Farrand, LLB, LLM

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the National Consumer Council.

Mr. McLoughlin: Details of the membership of the National Consumer Council and each of its Associate Councils, the Scottish and Welsh Consumer Councils, are as follows:

Members of the National Consumer Council as at 21 January 1994

Lady Wilcox—*Chairman*
Mrs. Ann Scully—*Vice Chairman*
Sir Geoffrey Allen
Mr. Thomas Arculus
Miss Beata Brookes
Mr. Antony Burton
Mrs. Anne Daltrop
Professor Paul Fairest
Miss Jennifer Francis
Mr. David Gilchrist
Mr. John Hughes
Mr. Noel Hunter
Mrs. Deirdre Hutton
Professor George Jones
Ms Ruth Lea
Mrs. Mary McAnally
Mr. John Mitchell
Mrs. Jean Varnam

Members of the Scottish Consumer Council as at 21 January 1994

Mrs. Deirdre Hutton—*Chairman*
Mrs. Margaret Agbemetsi-Sika
Mrs. Joan Aitken
Mrs. Gillian Campbell
Mrs. Kim Donald
Mr. Peter Edmondson
Mr. Bernard Forteath
Mrs. Mary Kidd
Mr. Thomas O'Malley
Ms Yvonne Osman
Mr. Ralph Palmer
Mrs. Winifred Sherry
Mr. Gordon Smith

Members of the Welsh Consumer Council as at 21 January 1994

Miss Beata Brookes—*Chairman*
Mr. Alan Barnish
Mrs. Nerys Biddulph
Mr. Ian Edge
Dr. Arwel Edwards
Mr. William Evans
Miss Jane Lloyd Hughes

Mr. Michael McEvoy
Mrs. Elinor Patchell
Mr. Roderick Thurman
Mr. Roger Warren Evans
Mrs. Lydia Stephens
Miss Charlotte Watkins

Engineering Industry

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he intends to strengthen the United Kingdom's engineering industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: The engineering industry in the United Kingdom has a vital part to play in our industrial performance. Its success depends on a partnership between firms and Government. For their part, the Government are delivering low inflation, low interest rates, significantly enhanced help for exporters and a lifting of regulatory burdens. Firms in the sector are taking advantage of this positive climate by winning business both in the United Kingdom and in our overseas markets. Recent successes for the north-west include North West Water, which has just won a very large contract to help upgrade Malaysia's sewage system over the next 25 years, and the Manchester firm Crown House Engineering, which has recently won business in the United Kingdom worth £5 million.

Motor Vehicle Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was *(a)* the output of motor cars and *(b)* the balance of trade in total in motor vehicles of (i) France, (ii) Italy, (iii) Germany and (iv) the United Kingdom in (1) 1978 and (2) 1993.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested concerning the output of motor cars is available in "Motor Industry of Great Britain 1993: World Automotive Statistics" (Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders), a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. The balances of trade in motor vehicles are shown in the table and relates to 1992 since 1993 data are not currently available.

Balance of trade in motor vehicles 1978 and 1992
($US million, current prices and market exchange rates)

	1978	*1992*
France	3,590	192
Italy	630	−11,627
Germany	9,994	21,946
United Kingdom	−1,050	−3,644

Note: For 1978 Germany refers to the Federal Republic of Germany. Motor Vehicles comprise Standard International Trade Classification 781 (cars), 782 (commercial vehicles) and 783 (miscellaneous vehicles).
Source: United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics.

Industry (Foreign Takeovers)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the Government welcome the takeover of British industry by foreign firms.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government welcome foreign investment in United Kingdom industry. Mergers between United Kingdom and overseas companies can be expected to increase as markets become increasingly international. Historically the number and value of United Kingdom acquisitions abroad has exceeded that of foreign takeovers of United Kingdom companies.

Common Voltage

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *588*, whether, and at what stage in the decision-making process, he opposed or demurred from the proposal to standardise on a common voltage; at what stage he consulted British manufacturers and interested parties; and what proportion of them was opposed to the proposal.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade had reservations on the proposal to standardise on a common voltage until considering the returns of the consultation exercise. Consultations with British manufacturers and interested parties were carried out between October and December 1992. Of those who responded fewer than 10 per cent. of the manufacturers were opposed to the proposal and many of the interested parties did not express any firm views.

Distance Selling

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the EC directive on distance selling is expected to come into force; and whether the Government have accepted the terms of article 11B of that directive.

Mr. McLoughlin: A European Commission proposal for a Council directive on distance selling is under negotiation in Brussels. It is too early to say when agreement might be reached on this proposal. The proposal does not contain an article 11B.

Research Establishments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the laboratories and research establishments of his Department are being reviewed by the efficiency unit of the Office of Public Service and Science which is reporting to Sir Peter Levene; and whether his own consultant's advice on his research establishments will be passed on to this review.

Mr. Heseltine: The answer to both questions posed by the hon. Member is yes.

Enterprise Agencies

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the enterprise agencies.

Mr. McLoughlin: Local enterprise agencies are independent local companies, limited by guarantee. They operate in close partnership with training and enterprise councils, chambers of commerce and local authorities to provide local business support services. They are key partners in developing the national network of business links.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Eggar: The responsibility for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to the executive non-departmental public bodies of the DTI as listed in "Public Bodies 1993" is as follows:

Public Bodies 1993	
British Hallmarking Council	Lord Strathclyde
Advisory Committees on Telecommunications for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	Lord Strathclyde
Area Transport Users' Consultative Committees	Lord Strathclyde
Central Transport Consultative Committee	Lord Strathclyde
Domestic coal Consumers' Council	Lord Strathclyde
Gas Consumers' Council	Lord Strathclyde
London Regional Passengers' Committee	Lord Strathclyde
National Consumer Council	Lord Strathclyde
Post Office Users' National Council	Lord Strathclyde
Post Office Users' Councils for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	Lord Strathclyde
Design Council	Lord Strathclyde
English Industrial Estates Corporation	Mr. Sainsbury
Hearing Aid Council	Lord Strathclyde
Monopolies and Mergers Commission	Mr. Hamilton
National Enterprise Board	Mr. McLoughlin
National Research Development Corporation	Mr. McLoughlin
Policyholders' Protection Board	Mr. Hamilton
The Simpler Trade Procedures Board	Mr. Needham
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority	Mr. Eggar

Objective 2 Status

Mr. Ashton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what considerations led to the revoking of objective 2 status for the travel-to-work areas of Bassetlaw, Nottingham, covering the Retford and Fairborough areas; and what alternative assistance from Community institutions is available to these areas.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 31 January 1994]:* From Nottinghamshire, the Government proposed to the Commission that the whole of Retford, Alfreton and Ashfield, Gainsborough, Mansfield and Worksop travel-to-work areas should retain their eligibility for objective 2 grants from the European structural funds. In addition, the Government proposed that most of the Nottingham travel-to-work area, some of which had previously been eligible, should be eligible. As a result of the final decision on eligibility, taken by the European Commission on 20 January, only Mansfield and Worksop travel-to-work areas have retained eligibility.

Within the structural funds, the areas to which the hon. Gentleman refers remain eligible for objective 3 grants. They may also be able to benefit from future community initiatives, although decisions on these have yet to be taken by the Commission.

European Regional Fund

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what instructions have been issued to relevant regional offices of Government to indicate reductions in the population coverage of European objective 5b in their areas when compared to recommendations issued by the European Commission; what is his assessment of the reduction in grant, both for each area and for all affected areas, if the population coverage is reduced by 12 per cent.; and when he expects to make a statement on the reallocation of surplus grant resulting from the reduction in population coverage; and under what provisions of the structural fund regulations this can be achieved.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 18 January 1994]:* In an announcement of 21 December the European Commission proposed an objective 5b population total for the United Kingdom of 2·816 million. It did not recommend precise areas for designation but invited the Government to define in detail areas within this population total.

In order to accommodate a small number of additional areas originally proposed by the Government for objective 2, and in order to express the population of all the areas concerned on a different statistical basis requested by the Commission, it was necessary to propose a marginal adjustment to many of the areas originally proposed for objective 5b.

Since at the time of these adjustments no areas had yet been designated other parts of the hon. Gentleman's question do not arise. The overall population coverage was not reduced and there were no implications for the United Kingdom's financial allocation under objective 5b.

Hearing Aid Council

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date he expects to announce his decision on the future of the Hearing Aid Council; and if he will place all submissions he has received on the future of the Council in the Library.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* The Hearing Aid Council is established under the Hearing Aid Council Act 1968. As part of the deregulation initiative we asked over 700 individuals and organisations whether they considered this legislation is still needed in its present form and whether it should be changed. I am considering the responses received, but am not yet able to say when an announcement will be made. The replies to the consultation were made in confidence to the Department.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Co-operation

12. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage more co-operation and partnership within industry and between industry and Government.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's statement, "Prosperity through Skills", emphasised the importance of key partners working together to secure our economic prosperity.

Integrated regional offices and the new single regeneration budget will add significantly to co-operation and partnership between industry and Government.

Parental Leave

13. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which European Union member states provide parental leave within the terms of the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. Where parental leave exists, it predates the coming into effect of the Maastricht treaty.

Maternity Leave

15. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to improve the employment rights to time off for maternity and paternity leave.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under provisions introduced by the Government in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act, all women will shortly have a new right to 14 weeks maternity leave, regardless of length of service or hours of work.

Paternity leave is, like most other terms and conditions of employment, a matter for agreement between employers and employees, without Government intervention.

Part-time Workers

16. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of part-time workers are women.

Mr. David Hunt: In September 1993, 76 per cent. of part-time workers in Great Britain were women.

17. **Sir Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will report on the first six months of the North Norfolk Action pilot scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the first six months, 125 people have taken part in work experience projects of whom 27 have found employment or gone on to further training. During the same period 385 have received help through a series of weekly caseload interviews. Of these, 226 have achieved a positive outcome by gaining a job or joining other employment programmes.

Labour Statistics

18. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many men and how many women, in each standard planning region, were in full-time employment in June 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: Male full-time employment is not available before 1984. Total male civilian employment and full-time female civilian employment for each of the standard regions is as follows:

Civilian work force in employment[1]

Thousands

Standard regions	*Male all*		*Female full time*	
	June 1979	*September 1993*	*June 1979*	*September 1993*
South East	4,839	4,342	2,006	2,224
Greater London[2]	n/a	1,932	—	1,064
East Anglia	481	498	178	218
South West	1,032	1,094	417	496
West Midlands	1,462	1,197	550	546
East Midlands	1,013	919	393	446
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,302	1,114	480	487
North West	1,700	1,402	719	661
North	802	645	314	284
Wales	716	613	276	275
Scotland	1,333	1,193	597	610
Great Britain	14,677	13,015	5,934	6,246

[1] The civilian work force in employment comprises employees in employment, the self employed and participants on work related government training programmes.
[2] Included in South East.

25. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give his estimate of the number of unemployed young people under 21 years.

Miss Widdecombe: Age and duration figures from the claimant unemployment count are only available in standard age bands. The nearest approximation to the figures requested are for those under 20 years of age. There were 227,208 unemployed claimants aged under 20 in October 1993, 16,720 less than 12 months ago.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the average weekly earnings of (i) full-time males, (ii) full-time females and (iii) part-time females in 1978-79 and in the latest year for which data are available in *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* England, *(c)* Yorkshire and Humberside and *(d)* north Yorkshire; and what were *(c)* and *(d)* as a percentage of (b) in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested on average weekly earnings can be found in tables 110 and 113 of part E and table 180 of part F of the New Earnings Survey for each of the years requested with the exception of that for part-time women in North Yorkshire which is provided in the following table. Copies of the reports can be found in the Library.

Average gross weekly earnings of part-time women in North Yorkshire at April

	£
1978	21·9
1979	25·5
1993	90·7

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Redundancies

19. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he proposes to mitigate the effect of redundancies announced in the north west so far in the current year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the north west region, as elsewhere, the Employment Service and the 14 north-west training and enterprise councils will continue to deliver a

wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help people find the best and quickest route back to employment.

20. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to create jobs in the west midlands.

Miss Widecombe: The Department's aim is to promote a free and flexible labour market to encourage employment in the west midlands region as elsewhere. The Employment Service and 10 west midlands training and enterprise councils deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help people find the best and quickest route to employment.

Wages

21. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department makes of wages offered by employers advertising at job centres.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: When employers notify vacancies to jobcentres, an assessment is made of the prospects of filling them. Where the wage offered appears to be below the local market rate for the occupation in question, the employer will be advised if this may cause difficulties in filling the post. However, the decision on what wage is offered is left to the employer.

Working Hours

22. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate his Department has made of the numbers of workers whose working hours would be reduced by a statutory maximum 48 hour week.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Some 2·4 million workers would be affected. The Government have no intention of introducing any such statutory controls.

Apprenticeships

23. **Mr. Dover:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding his proposals for a modern apprenticeship.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received many messages of support for modern apprenticeships, from a wide range of organisations and individuals.

Deregulation

24. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what resources have been used by his Department in responding to task force proposals on deregulation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Department and the Health and Safety Executive have small deregulation units which have dealt with task force proposals on deregulation in the normal course of their duties, consulting other officials when necessary.

Unemployment, Buckinghamshire

26. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures his Department is taking to assist the unemployed in Buckinghamshire.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has a wide range of employment, training and enterprise measures to help unemployed people including jobclubs, training for work, community action, and jobsearch seminars. These are available in Buckinghamshire, as elsewhere, and are designed to take account of local circumstances to help people find the best and quickest route back to employment.

Training and Productivity

27. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the link between training and productivity.

Miss Widdecombe: I have received no formal representations on this issue.

Youth Unemployment

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new initiatives he plans to reduce youth unemployment in Nottinghamshire.

Miss Widdecombe: Unemployment among young people in Nottinghamshire is at the lowest level since October 1991. Currently almost 7,000 young people are undertaking training in Nottinghamshire under the youth training scheme. There are a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes available to young people in Nottinghamshire. The Government intend to improve the range of opportunities available to school leavers still further in Nottinghamshire and elsewhere by introducing modern apprenticeships in 1995.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve training facilities and training schemes for older unemployed people; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: As I announced at the time of the Budget, the upper age limit for unemployed adults entering training for work will be raised from 59 to 63 from 1 April this year.

Full Employment, London

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives he is taking to ensure a return to full employment in London.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 14 December at column *562*.

Manual Workers (Earnings)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish a table showing for the latest available date figures for average quarterly earnings of manual workers corresponding to table 3.38 of the 27th edition of "Eurostat Basic Statistics" of the Community.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available information, showing earnings at October 1991, is contained in the 30th edition of "Eurostat Basic Statistics of the Community". A copy of the publication can be found in the Library.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration his Department has given to employment structures as a result of local government reorganisation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has been aware of developments at all stages of local government reorganisation. Local government staff commissions will be considering the implications of the reorganisation for all existing local government employees.

Statutory Works Councils

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to establish statutory works councils.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government support voluntary employee involvement. It will not establish statutory works councils or any other form of compulsion. In the Government's view legislation is not the way to promote effective employee involvement in the United Kingdom. Our voluntary approach has proved most successful. It has allowed companies flexibility to involve employees in ways which suit their particular needs and circumstances. Compulsion would stifle this flexibility. It would add to costs and administrative burdens, reduce competitiveness and jeopardise jobs.

School Leavers

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers of people of all ages who are registered unemployed and who have never had a job since leaving school; and if he will give a breakdown of this data on those having left school over a year, over five years and over 10 years ago.

Miss Widdecombe: The monthly claimant count is a by-product of the administrative system which handles the payment of unemployment-related benefits. This system does not record the previous employment history of unemployment claimants.

DEFENCE

Spent Fuel (Reprocessing)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reprocessing plant his Department uses to reprocess spent fuel discharged from pressurised water reactors powering Royal Navy submarines; and what facilities he plans to use in the future.

Mr. Aitken: Used nuclear fuel from Royal Navy submarines is not reprocessed at present. No reprocessing facilities exist for naval fuel, and we have no plans to establish any.

UNPROFOR

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will give a detailed breakdown of the salary and allowances, including additional United Nations allowances, paid to each rank of British service men serving with UNPROFOR;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, columns *112-13*, if he will set out in detail the information he has received from or concerning all other countries participating in UNPROFOR giving the scale of additional United Nations allowances for their service men in pound sterling terms;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, columns *112-13*, if he will set out in detail the nformation he has received from or concerning all other countries participating in the UNPROFOR mission giving the pay scales for their service men in pound sterling terms.

Mr. Hanley: The current United Kingdom rates of salary for all ranks up to and including brigadier are set out in appendix 4 to the 22nd report of the Review Body on Armed Forces Pay—HMSO Cm 2150—a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

The current annual salary of a lieutenant general, who is the only officer above the rank of brigadier serving with UNPROFOR, is £60,600 per year.

Allowances paid to United Kingdom service personnel serving overseas, including the former Yugoslavia, are largely determined by rank and marital status. Married personnel involuntarily separated for more than 30 days receive a separation allowance of £3·50 per day. In addition, both married and single personnel serving in the former Yugoslavia are exempt from local food and accommodation charges. Single personnel are also exempt from the contribution in lieu of council tax. Although the cost of living in the former Yugoslavia does not justify the payment of a local overseas allowance, personnel posted from areas such as Germany where such payments are made retain a residual allowance in recognition of their continuing financial commitments at their permanent duty station. Married personnel retain 70 per cent. and single personnel 40 per cent. All personnel also receive a telephone allowance of £13·50 per month which is designed to contribute to the cost of one three-minute phone call each week.

All service personnel, irrespective of rank and nationality, serving under United Nations auspices in the former Yugoslavia receive exactly the same United Nations allowance of $1·28 per day plus a lump sum of $73·50 towards rest and recreation leave. This equates currently to £0·82 per day and £46·90 respectively. Other national contingents serving in the former Yugoslavia do not receive any additional United Nations allowances. It would not be appropriate for me to give details of information provided on a confidential basis concerning the pay arrangements for the contingents of other countries serving in the former Yugoslavia.

Sarajevo

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British military personnel will be stationed in the demilitarised zone around Sarajevo following the handing over of control of heavy artillery; and if he will make it his policy that British troops will fulfil only the role of controlling the heavy weaponry.

Mr. Hanley: Deployment of troops on the ground in the former Yugoslavia and their precise roles in fulfilment of the United Nations mandate are a matter for the United Nations. There is already a small RAF detachment of 34 personnel in Sarajevo participating in the British humanitarian airlift operation.

Office Space

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the amount of office space owned, leased or rented by his Department and its agencies in London on 1 January in each year since 1989.

Mr. Hanley: The amount of office space on the civil estate-common user estate occupied in London by my Department and its agencies on 1 January in each year since 1989 was:

1 January	*Square metres*
1989	306,694·80
1990	304,716·80
1991	308,880·10
1992	304,197·80
1993	334,461·30
1994	323,712·70

This figure is due to reduce by more than half by 1 January 1997. In addition, the London weather centre occupied 652 sq m of office space in Clerkenwell road from September 1992, following relocation from its previous site in High Holborn.

Details of office space in the defence estate in London are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Front Line First

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what areas of his Department's business the front line first study is examining; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The defence costs study is examining all aspects of support to the front line. Individual studies have been established to look in detail at the following areas:

MOD head office—organisation and function
HQs/service command and top-level budget structure
MOD police
Research and development
Procurement Executive—projects and practices
Procurement Executive—organisation and function
Market-testing programme and contracting out
Financial management
Estate and property
Repairs/spares/storage/distribution and infrastructure
Naval infrastructure
Training
Recruiting/manning
Medical
Non-operational information systems and information technology
Security
Defence intelligence
RAF management structure and manning
Army management structure and manning
Navy management structure and manning
Music
Animals and vets
Catering/messes
Chaplaincy services
MOD fire services
Terminal air traffic control services
Legal services
Travel and subsistence
Costs of regulations
Meteorological Office
Radiological protection policy, advice and audit
Forms and publications
Uniforms

The studies are making good progress. Decisions taken as a result of them will be announced in due course.

Arms Sales

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will update to 1993 the figures given in his answer to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) of 19 June 1989, *Official Report*, column *61*, regarding arms sales to Malaysia.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 11 February 1994]:* Detailed information on defence sales covered by the memorandum of understanding signed with Malaysia is confidential to the two Governments, but in the circumstances I can tell the hon. Member that contracts worth in excess of £1 billion were negotiated between 1989 and 1993.

The Enemy Within

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his definition of the enemy within; what departmental activities are related to this; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* As far as I am aware, this is not a term that has been, or is being used in connection with any specific departmental activity.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food.

Mr. Jack: There are no members currently appointed to the Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food. Following completion of its report the board was dissolved on 31 December 1993 pending a review now being undertaken by officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department and the Agricultural and Food Research Council.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Meat and Livestock Commission.

Mr. Jack: D. T. Y. Curry, J. Baker, M. Rees, P. S. Redshaw, J. F. Royan, C. Jay, A. R. Manson, Mrs. E. Hodder, Miss B. Bloom, R. Green, C. Smith are currently appointed as members of the Meat and Livestock Commission. The post of chairman is vacant and Mr. Curry is the acting chairman.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Agricultural Training Board.

Mr. Jack: Membership of the Agricultural Training Board currently numbers 11 persons, as follows:

Chairman:
Mr. A. S. Stewart

Deputy Chairman:
Mr. M. J. Curtis

Members:
Mrs. R. Berry
Mrs. J. Buchanan-Smith
Dr. J. Harries
Mr. V. H. Hughes
Mr. T. Jones
Mr. N. J. Mallet
Mr. I. Monkton
Mr. M. D. Pollard
Professor P. Thomas

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee.

Mr. Jack: The members currently appointed to the Sugar Beet and Education Committee are:

Mr. J. H. Proctor *(chairman)*
Dr. M. J. Armstrong
Mr. M. F. Askew
Dr. D. J. Carmichael
Mr. C. R. A. Carter
Mr. H. R. Dyas
Mr. J. H. Hoyles
Professor R. T. Plumb

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Food from Britain committee.

Mr. Jack: The members of the Council of Food from Britain are:

Mr. Geoffrey John *(chairman)*
Mrs. Mary Berry
Mr. Trefor Campbell
Mr. Tito Chiandetti
Mr. Alun Evans
Mr. Richard George
Mr. John Irish
Mr. Howard Mann
Mr. David Naish
Mr. Brian Nelson
Professor Susan Shaw
Mrs. Caroline Spelman
Mr. Robert Steven
Mr. John Whitehead

Dr. Wright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by her Department.

Mr. Jack: Details of those responsible for making appointments of chairmen and members of executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by this Ministry, as listed in "Public Bodies 1993", are as follows:

Agricultural Training Board
Horticultural Development Council
Meat and Livestock Commission
All appointments are made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, jointly with the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales.

Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales
Chairman and independent members appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, jointly with the Secretary of State for Wales. Representative members appointed by the National Farmers Union and by the Agricultural and Allied Workers National Trade Group of the Transport and General Workers Union.

Agricultural Wages Committees (England)
Chairmen and independent members appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Representative members appointed by the National Farmers Union and by the Agricultural and Allied Workers National Trade Group of the Transport and General Workers Union.

Apple and Pear Research Council
Wine Standards Board of the Vintners Company
All appointments made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Food From Britain
Home-Grown Cereals Authority
Sea Fish Industry Authority
All appointments made by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, jointly with the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Horticulture Research International
Chairman and six members appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Three members appointed by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Regional Flood Defence Committees
The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food appoints the Chairman and a number of members to each of the nine executive regional flood defence committees of the National Rivers Authority (NRA) in England. In addition, the NRA is responsible for appointing two members to each committee and the local authorities are responsible for appointing the remaining members (one more than the total number of ministerial and NRA appointees on each committee).

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Chairman and 10 members appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. One member appointed by Her Majesty The Queen.

French Fishermen

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food what will be the cost to United Kingdom public funds and the effect on prices of the proposed additional European Community's support for French fishermen.

Mr. Jack: The European Commission's response to the difficulties on the French white fish market has been to introduce minimum import prices for certain species. As these aim to do no more than put a floor in the market at the level of the Community withdrawal price, they should work to reduce Community expenditure on market support.

Agricultural Expenditure

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate she has made of the legal limit on agricultural spending by the EC in 1994.

Mr. Jack: The limit on agricultural spending is laid down in Council decision 88/377 concerning budgetary discipline. The agricultural guideline for 1994 is 36,465 mecu. The monetary reserve is 1,000 mecu.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the legal restrictions on agricultural spending by the EC in 1993; and what was the actual sum expended by the EC in this year.

Mr. Jack: The legal restrictions on agricultural spending by the EC in 1993 were contained in Council decision 88/377 concerning budgetary discipline. The level of the agricultural guideline was 36,657 mecu. The monetary reserve was 1,000 mecu. The provisional out-turn of expenditure is 35,095 mecu.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent the agricultural policies of the EC are designed to ensure that legal limits of spending are maintained; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Expenditure on the CAP is constrained by the requirements of Council Decision 88/377 concerning budgetary discipline. Article 5 of this decision requires the Commission's price proposals to be consistent with the limits laid down by the agricultural guideline.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many units of livestock have gone through British slaughterhouses in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: The number of cattle, including calves, sheep and pigs slaughtered for meat in the United Kingdom over the period 1985 to 1993 are given in the table. The equivalent number of livestock units slaughtered in each year is also given. This is based on one livestock unit equalling one adult bovine or calf, seven sheep or three pigs.

Cattle, sheep and pigs slaughtered for meat in the United Kingdom

	Total cattle (including calves) '000 head	*Total sheep '000 head*	*Total pigs '000 head*	*Total livestock '000 units*[1]
1985	4,286	15,893	15,305	11,658
1986	3,943	15,473	15,609	11,357
[2]1987	4,114	15,762	15,807	11,634
1988	3,380	17,128	15,784	11,088
1989	3,442	19,618	14,514	11,083
1990	3,524	20,012	14,203	11,117
1991	3,617	20,918	14,457	11,424
[2]1992	3,384	19,377	14,508	10,988
[3]1993	2,953	18,018	14,739	10,440

[1]One livestock unit=1 adult bovine or calf, or 7 sheep, or 3 pigs.
[2]1987 and 1992 were 53 week statistical years, the rest were based on 52 weeks.
[3]Provisional.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many cases of BSE were *(a)* confirmed, *(b)* reported and *(c)* slaughtered in the United Kingdom for each month of 1992 and 1993;

(2) how many cases of BSE were confirmed in the United Kingdom for each month of 1992 and 1993 in cattle that were *(a)* under two years of age, *(b)* aged two to three years, *(c)* aged three to four years, *(d)* aged four to five years, *(e)* aged five to six years, *(f)* aged six to seven years and *(g)* aged seven or more years;

(3) how many cases of BSE were confirmed in the United Kingdom for each year from 1985 in cattle that were *(a)* under two years of age, *(b)* aged two to three years, *(c)* aged three to four years; *(d)* aged four to five years, *(e)* aged five to six years, *(f)* aged six to seven years and *(g)* aged seven or more years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[pursuant to her answer, 17 January 1994, col. 428]:* The information is given in the tables.

Numbers of cases of BSE (a) confirmed, (b) reported and (c) slaughtered in the United Kingdom for each month of 1992 and 1993 as at 14 January 1994

Month	*Confirmed*	*Reported*	*Slaughtered*
January 1992	2,710	4,143	3,925
February 1992	2,594	3,629	3,521
March 1992	2,493	4,074	3,906
April 1992	2,732	3,868	3,699
May 1992	3,295	3,124	2,977
June 1992	4,098	3,264	3,086
July 1992	3,082	3,303	3,176
August 1992	2,456	3,552	3,384
September 1992	3,046	4,069	3,894
October 1992	2,824	4,254	4,085
November 1992	3,009	3,971	3,870
December 1992	2,706	4,019	3,937
January 1993	3,955	4,237	4,066
February 1993	3,559	3,997	3,829
March 1993	3,597	4,429	4,220
April 1993	2,964	3,689	3,518
May 1993	2,882	3,256	3,078
June 1993	3,341	3,147	2,993
July 1993	2,302	3,420	3,246
August 1993	2,787	3,352	3,191
September 1993	2,636	3,658	3,483
October 1993	2,758	3,408	3,266
November 1993	3,413	3,654	3,408
December 1993	2,561	3,304	1,980

Numbers of BSE cases confirmed in the United Kingdom by age and month for each month of 1992 and 1993 as at 14 January 1994

Year	*Age*								*Total*
	<2	*2-3*	*3-4*	*4-5*	*5-6*	*6-7*	*7 and over*	*Unknown*	
January 1992	0	3	252	1,117	756	339	168	75	2,710
February 1992	0	4	212	1,102	741	312	162	61	2,594
March 1992	0	1	166	1,135	720	263	146	62	2,493
April 1992	0	2	144	1,289	748	277	136	136	2,732
May 1992	0	1	144	1,572	966	368	154	90	3,295
June 1992	0	9	197	2,030	1,191	408	175	88	4,098
July 1992	0	3	84	1,582	930	255	165	63	3,082
August 1992	0	3	139	1,234	682	237	119	42	2,456
September 1992	0	4	147	1,471	832	323	177	92	3,046
October 1992	0	3	75	1,220	937	358	151	80	2,824
November 1992	0	2	231	1,043	1,090	415	178	50	3,009
December 1992	1	4	173	836	1,037	414	189	52	2,706
January 1993	0	4	171	1,151	1,628	636	262	103	3,955
February 1993	0	1	68	835	1,590	691	270	104	3,559

Year	Age								Total
	<2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7 and over	Unknown	
March 1993	0	1	61	732	1,757	684	265	97	3,597
April 1993	0	2	42	573	1,453	594	220	80	2,964
May 1993	1	1	85	642	1,411	488	188	66	2,882
June 1993	0	2	68	507	1,798	647	212	107	3,341
July 1993	0	1	70	304	1,270	420	162	75	2,302
August 1993	0	2	164	706	1,208	451	175	81	2,787
September 1993	0	1	108	366	1,323	544	202	92	2,636
October 1993	0	5	97	434	1,159	671	293	99	2,758
November 1993	0	1	158	614	1,277	870	353	140	3,413
December 1993	0	1	61	291	959	811	17	107	2,247

This shows the age of cattle by date of confirmation of BSE for the months concerned. It should be noted that the four-year-old group will still include cattle with potential dates of birth before 18 July 1988 when the ruminant feed ban was introduced. Although the table shows a declining number of confirmed cases in the groups less than four years old, and to a degree the four to five-year-old group, it is not a table of age-specific incidence which sorts age groups by age at onset of the disease. Furthermore the 1993 data set is incomplete.

Numbers of BSE cases confirmed in the United Kingdom by age and year for each year since 1985 as at 14 January 1994

Year	Age								Total
	<2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7 and over	Unknown	
1985-June 1988[1]	0	4	112	293	143	29	29	137	747
June to December 1988	0	6	237	502	337	92	52	92	1,318
1989	1	47	747	2,444	2,175	840	284	301	6,839
1990	0	70	1,664	4,198	3,880	1,831	697	589	12,929
1991	0	81	4,038	8,448	5,482	2,446	1,260	1,027	22,782
1992	1	39	1,964	15,631	10,630	3,969	1,920	891	35,045
1993	1	22	1,153	7,155	16,833	7,507	2,933	1,151	36,755

[1] The disease was not notifiable until June 1988 so these figures cannot be further broken down as specific dates of confirmation are not available. It should be noted that the four year old group will still include cattle with potential dates of birth before 18 July 1988 when the ruminant feed ban was introduced. Although the table shows a declining number of confirmed cases in the groups less than four years old, and to a degree the four to five year old group, it is not a table of age specific incidence which sorts cases by age at onset of the disease. Furthermore the 1993 data set is incomplete.

WALES

Sustainable Development

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intends to hold discussions with the Wales Confederation of British Industry and other representatives of Welsh industry to promote the need for the concept of sustainability to characterise future industrial developments.

Mr. Redwood: The need to involve industry in action to promote sustainable development is fully recognised in the recently published United Kingdom strategy and related reports. It is expected that Wales CBI will be among those to be consulted on the membership and mode of operation of the national round table. Meanwhile copies of the sustainable development strategy have been sent to them and other business interests in Wales.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he has given to his non-departmental executive bodies to ensure that they take full account of the United Kingdom strategy for sustainable development, the United Kingdom programme on climate change, the United Kingdom action plan for biodiversity and the United Kingdom programme for sustainable forestry.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The preparation of the sustainable development strategy, the programme for climate change and the biodiversity action plan involved extensive consultation, which includes the main non-departmental public bodies in Wales. They have been sent copies of the reports of most relevance to their operations and will be appropriately involved in the follow-up action planned by the Government.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for an advisory panel on sustainable development in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by me on 7 February 1994, column 94.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure that public and private bodies in Wales play their full part in delivering more sustainable forms of development.

Mr. Redwood: The Government's plans for involving the public and private sectors in progress towards sustainable development are described in the recently published United Kingdom strategy. This has already been circulated to key Welsh interests; and the Welsh Office will be seeking to ensure that organisations and individuals in Wales play an appropriate part in the follow-up action planned on the strategy, for example, via the round table and citizen's environment initiatives.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further guidance will be given on schools' environmental management practices as indicated in the sustainable development strategy.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As indicated in the United Kingdom strategy on sustainable development, work is in hand to develop a simple environmental audit scheme which schools can carry out themselves to evaluate and improve the environmental impact of their school buildings and grounds.

The scheme is to cover issues such as energy usage, water economies and landscaping. It is based very much on work done by the Building Research Establishment.

It is planned to publish this scheme later this year and I hope that as many schools as possible in Wales will participate.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to promote the active participation of people in Wales in sustainable development strategies to reduce the burden placed on the environment by human activities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government's plans for promoting the concept of sustainable development among the public are described in the recently published United Kingdom strategy for sustainable development. As part of this, the citizen's environment initiative will extend to Wales.

Environmental Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish guidance to advise schools of good practice in teaching about the care of the environment;

(2) if he will encourage all schools to appoint a co-ordinator for environmental education;

(3) what plans he has for schools to have a policy for environmental education guaranteeing provision and continuity between different subject areas of the curriculum;

(4) what plans he has for providing guidance to schools on delivering environmental education on biodiversity and sustainable development.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Every maintained school is responsible for providing a curriculum which must satisfy the statutory requirements of the national curriculum. Guidance on environmental education as part of the national curriculum has been provided to schools in Wales by the Curriculum Council for Wales. The council has also published an advisory paper and in-service training materials to support schools' delivery of environmental education.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase the provision of initial and in-service education for teachers in environmental education.

Sir Win Roberts: We have no plans to increase such provision. Schools are free to include reference to the importance of developing pupils' awareness of the environment in the statement of the school's ethos and values included in their prospectuses, if they so wish. Environmental education is addressed through the statutory subjects of the national curriculum: schools themselves are responsible for how environmental education is delivered.

The Government already provide specific grant to support expenditure on the national curriculum which is devolved mainly to schools to spend on books and equipment or training. It is for schools and LEAs to decide what priority to give to particular subject areas and to make detailed plans in the light of their own staff development needs.

We seek to ensure, through our criteria for the approval of initial teacher training, that courses give a thorough preparation for teaching the national curriculum. The detailed content of courses is a matter for ITT providers and not Government.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to implement the recommendations for environmental education in further and higher education of the report of the Toyne committee.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Toyne report contained a specific recommendation that each further and higher education institution should adopt a policy for the development of environmental education. A copy of the report was sent to all FHE institutions in Wales in February 1993. It is for individual institutions to judge how to take this recommendation forward.

Agenda 21 Programmes

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to hold discussions with local authorities on the drawing up of local agenda 21 programmes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Progress on the local agenda 21 initiative has been, and is being, discussed within the central and local government environment forum, which brings together Environment Ministers and the leaders of the local authority associations. The Welsh Office is also planning to sponsor a seminar on "green" purchasing as part of the local agenda 21 programme.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sites exist in Wales licensed for the disposal of low-level nuclear waste; and if he will place in the Library a list of the location of each.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Apart from some very low-level nuclear waste which is incinerated at the Wylfa and Trawsfynydd sites no nuclear waste is disposed of in Wales.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year from 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each of the national health service bodies (Wales) as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows:

Health authority	Gross expenditure (at 1992-93 prices)			Projected expenditure
	1990-91 £ million	1991-92 £ million	1992-93 £ million	1993-94 £ million
Health authorities	1,156	1,271	1,308	1,341
Family health service authorities Wales	418	454	454	471
Health promotion authority for Wales	3	3	4	4
National health service trusts	—	—	38	661
Welsh health common services authority	33	35	50	54

Source:
Health authorities and Pembrokeshire NHS Trust Annual Accounts.
Notes:
(i) Gross expenditure relates to actual outturn figures, whereas the figures that appear in Public Bodies 1993 are provisional due to the timing of the publication.
(ii) Figures in respect of Family Health Service Authorities exclude GP fundholders.
(iii) Pembrokeshire NHS Trust established 1 April 1992.
A further 13 NHS Trusts were formally established on 1 April 1993.

GDP

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current gross domestic product per head by county in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The latest available figures, for 1991, are published in the December 1993 edition of "Economic Trends (CSO)", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mink Farm, Llanybdder

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *190-1*, for how long the mink farm at Llanybdder, Dyfed, was allowed to operate pending a decision on the licence application after the mink farm had withdrawn its licence application; and for how long the mink farm had been allowed to operate pending a decision on the licence application.

Mr. Redwood: The mink farm ceased to operate at about the same time as the licence application was withdrawn. The farm had been operating for about 11 months pending a decision on the licence application.

Assisted Places

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what level of fee is charged by each institution in Wales covered by the assisted places scheme in the current academic year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

School	APS fee[1] £
Christ College, Brecon	5,484
Howell's, Denbigh	5,556
Howell's, Cardiff	3,309
Rydal School, Colwyn Bay	5,531 (preparatory) 6,396 (senior)
Penrhos College, Colwyn Bay	5,280 (mid) 5,655 (upper)
Monmouth Boys	4,419
Monmouth Girls	3,594 3,900 (VI)
Llandovery College	4,696 (junior) 5,129 (mid) 5,259 (VI)

[1] As at September 1993.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of state for Wales what safeguards are used by the Welsh Office to ensure that schools covered by the assisted places scheme meet recognised educational standards.

Sir Wyn Roberts: All schools participating in the assisted places scheme have had to satisfy stringent criteria before being accepted. Ongoing monitoring of standards is carried out by members of the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales. The Department also collects the examination results of pupils at the individual schools.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment the Welsh Office has made of the assisted places scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Some 700 pupils are currently receiving education at one of the participating schools in Wales whose parents would not otherwise have been able to afford it. Almost all available places for 1993-94 have been taken up and the examination results of APS pupils are consistently good.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the schools in Wales which have pupils under the assisted places scheme in the current academic year; how many pupils are supported at each institution; and how much it has cost the Welsh Office to provide this support.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

School	Number of APS pupils in scheme September 1993	Expenditure Financial year 1992-93 £
Christ College, Brecon	87	359,755
Howell's, Denbigh	72	310,222
Howell's, Cardiff	165	399,642
Rydal School, Colwyn Bay	46	228,082
Penrhos College, Colwyn Bay	61	273,711
Monmouth Boys	137	434,415
Monmouth Girls	71	200,728
Llandovery	52	250,671
Total	691	2,457,226

Estimated expenditure for the financial year 1993-94 is £2,616,000.

Mostyn Dock

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make an announcement with regard to his decision on the future progress of the planning application at Mostyn dock, Mostyn, Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The procedure to be adopted for the determination of the planning application at Mostyn dock, Clwyd, will be reached as quickly as possible. I will write to the hon. Member when a decision has been made.

Quangos

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the guidelines that apply to quangos in respect of the participation of board members in the decisions on the authorisation of foreign travel and participation in overseas conferences by senior management; what representations he has received on this issue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The standard guidance to board members of non-departmental public bodies is that they have an overall responsibility for supervising the direction and management of the body and need to ensure that judgments are exercised in the public interest; and that they are guardians of the public interest in the body's activities and in the discharge of its statutory duties. The chief executive is usually the accounting officer responsible for ensuring compliance with policies and rules.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 16 February 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Court of Appeal

Ms Hoey: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) whether either or both of the parties in the case Martin *v.* Watson in the Court of Appeal on 21 January were in receipt of legal aid;

(2) how much time was taken in the Court of Appeal on 21 January by the Martin *v.* Watson case.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In the Martin *v.* Watson case in the Court of Appeal on 21 January, neither party was in receipt of legal aid. The judgment, which counsel had already seen, was handed down and the question of costs was dealt with. This occupied 10 minutes of court time.

Ms Hoey: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average cost per hour of a case in the Court of Appeal.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The average cost per hour of a case in the Court of Appeal is not known. However, the average hourly cost of a bench in 1993 consisting of three Lord Justices of Appeal and necessary supporting court staff is estimated at £694 per hour. It does not include the costs of accommodation and other overheads.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Insolvency Rules Advisory Committee.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The current membership of the Insolvency Rules Committee is: the hon. Mr. Justice Chadwick (Chairman), His Honour Judge Mosely QC, the Chief Bankruptcy Registrar (Mr. Registrar Pimm), M. Crystal QC, G. C. Stewart and C. G. Bird.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Family Proceedings Rules Committee.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The current membership of the Family Proceedings Rules Committee is: Mr. Justice Thorpe, Senior District Judge Angel, Her Honour Judge Norrie, Her Honour Judge Downey, District Judge Andrew, J. Holman QC, J. M. Appleby and D. A. Salter.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the County Court Rule Committee.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The current membership of the County Court Rule Committee is: His Honour Judge Frank White (Chairman), His Honour Judge Neil Butter, QC, Her Honour Judge Paling, District Judge Wilby, District Judge Vincent, Peter Birts, QC, Henrietta Manners, Edward Gee and R. J. Winstanley.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Land Registration Rule Committee.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The current membership of the Land Registration Rule Committee is: the honourable Mr. Justice Knox, J. R. Thomas, W. R. Stewart-Smith and P. Marsh.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Supreme Court Rule Committee.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The current membership of the Supreme Court Rule Committee is: Lord Justice Leggatt, Mr. Justice Phillips, Mr. Justice Morritt, S. J. Sher, QC, Miss J. Ritchie, QC, J. A. Wall and K. Gibson.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Crown Court Rule Committee.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The current membership of the Crown Court Rule Committee is: Lord Justice Russell, Mr. Justice Rougier, His Honour Judge Henham, His Honour Judge Geoffrey Rivlin, QC, P. F. Guggenheim, JP, M. Kalisher, QC, D. A. Jeffreys, QC, Miss V. Garner.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EU Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the matters discussed and decisions taken at the EU Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 7 February.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 7 February.

The Foreign Affairs Council began with an open session on Presidency priorities. A copy of the intervention by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will be placed in the Library of the House as part of the new procedure of depositing video recordings of Presidency open sessions.

The Commission introduced the draft work programme of follow up action on the growth White Paper. The Council noted that the group of personal representatives of Heads of Government, established to review work on trans-European networks, would decide on priority projects and discuss financial requirements, and would submit an interim report to ECOFIN on 8-9 April. The Council agreed the Commission's 19 nominations to the high level group on information infrastructures; the United Kingdom representatives are Peter Bonfield (ICL) and Peter Davis (Reed Elsevier). It was agreed that ECOFIN, and other Councils which have a role to play, would monitor progress of follow up activity.

The Council approved the nominations of six members of the Court of Auditors.

A ministerial meeting of the accession negotiations with Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden took place on 8

February. In preparation for this meeting, member states agreed a common position on agriculture and regional policy aspects of the negotiation.

The Council agreed to a decision on the ombudsman, together with the text of a letter to the President of the European Parliament outlining the Council's concerns that the EP's rules of procedure on the ombudsman go further than the treaty. The Council also agreed a short statement on the Commission's legislative programme.

In order to inform the Council's review in Janaury 1995 of the application from Cyprus to join the European Union, the Council agreed to appoint a Commission official, Mr. Serge Abou, as the Union's observer on Cyprus. He will report periodically to the Council on the implications of political developments in Cyprus for this 1995 review.

Following a discussion of the latest events in the former Yugoslavia, the Council issued the following statement:

"The European Union expresses its revulsion at the renewed brutal shelling of civilians in Sarajevo which has taken place in recent days.

Bearing in mind the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the decisions of the North Atlantic Alliance most recently reiterated at the NATO Summit of 11 January and the recent request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, it supports a very early meeting of the North Atlantic Council. In concert with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the aim should be to bring about the immediate lifting of the siege of Sarajevo, using all means necessary including the use of airpower.

The measures taken would be the first step in the implementation of the action plan of the European Union. The Council of the European Union reiterates its support for the efforts of the co-chairmen to place the administration of Sarajevo under the authority of the United Nations."

A co-operation council with Algeria was held in the margins.

The Council agreed the EC's negotiating mandate for the mid-term review of the fourth Lomé convention. The mandate contains provisions to strengthen the human rights elements of the convention, and to make the convention work more effectively. It includes a commitment to help the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries benefit more from the trading advantages available to them under the convention. Negotiations with the ACP countries will begin in May and must be finished by March of next year.

The Council agreed by qualified majority a package of measures to implement parts of its 15 December decision on trade policy instruments. The United Kingdom voted against the package, as our concerns on imports of toys and shoes from China, and on changes to certain decision-making procedures were not met. But the package included some welcome features, notably the lifting of some 6,000 member state national quantitative restrictions on imports from third countries.

The Council adopted a declaration reaffirming its desire to see Russia admitted to the Council of Europe as soon as the criteria for membership have been met.

The Council adopted a statement welcoming the Ukrainian Parliament's approval of the tripartite agreement on nuclear weapons.

The Council announced the European Union's willingness to facilitate an observer mission to the forthcoming elections in Ukraine on 27 March.

The Council approved negotiating directives for EC free trade agreements with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Visits Abroad

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visits abroad each Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), made 20 official visits abroad to 33 countries during 1993 at a total cost of £27,667. Ten visits were for bilateral discussions, five for international conferences and five for European Community meetings.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones) made 11 official visits abroad to 17 countries during 1993 at a total cost of £20,550. Five visits were for bilateral discussions, three for European Community meetings, two for international conferences and one to the European Parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) made 19 official visits abroad to 23 countries during 1993 at a total cost of £21,504. Ten visits were for European Community meetings, eight for bilateral discussions and one to the European Parliament.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), made eight official visits abroad to 14 countries during 1993 at a total cost of £46,090. These visits were primarily for bilateral discussions but included attendance at one international conference.

I made eight official visits abroad to 11 countries during 1993 at a total cost of £29,147. Six visits were for bilateral discussions and two for international conferences.

FCO Ministers are always accompanied by an official or officials whose costs are not included in these figures. Details of the overseas visits made in 1993 by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will be given in answer to the hon. Member's separate question on that subject.

Paedophiles

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *123*, when was the last occasion that Ministers or officials of his Department discussed with members or officials of the appropriate foreign Government the problem of British paedophiles visiting *(a)* Sri Lanka, *(b)* Thailand and *(c)* the Philippines to abuse children.

Mr. Goodlad: We have a regular dialogue with Thailand and the Philippines on the problem of the sexual abuse of children.

Most recently, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health discussed the problem when she visited Thailand in September 1993. Her Majesty's chargé d'affaires in the Philippines raised the issue with the Department of Social Welfare and Development in Manila on 21 January 1994.

We last discussed the issue with the Sri Lankan authorities in 1987—the year in which the latest known case involving a British citizen occurred.

British Virgin Islands

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many companies were registered in the British Virgin Islands at 31 December 1993; and how many companies were registered there for the first time between 1 January and 31 December 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 31 December 1993 there were approximately 110,000 companies registered in the British Virgin Islands, of which 30,000 were first registered between 1 January and 31 December 1993.

External Relations Budget

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the main heads and amounts of the other external relations budget of his Department; from which heads in this budget he is proposing to reduce expenditure in each of the next three years; and what criteria he has adopted in deciding to reduce expenditure in that budget.

Mr. Goodlad: The main heads and amounts of class II, vote 2 (Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Other External Relations) for 1993-94 (total provision, including supplementary estimates) are as follows:

	£ thousand
Section A	
Grants and subscriptions, etc. to international organisations	303,690
Section B	
General expenses and grants, etc. to non-governmental and statutory organisations	7,274
Section C	
General expenses	37,409
Section D	
Military assistance	13,800
Section E	
Unallocated	0
Other expenditure not included in the control total:	
Section F	
Reimbursement of certain duties, taxes and licence fees	39,884
TOTAL	402,057

Against the background of increased subscriptions to international organisations and higher priority claims on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's resources, I decided that the grant-in-aid to the Commonwealth Institute should cease after 1995-96.

Kashmir

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's current policy on Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our current policy on Kashmir, reiterated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs during his visit to India in November, consists of three points on which we believe there should be simultaneous progress—a dialogue between India and Pakistan as provided for under the Simla agreements; an improvement in human rights in Kashmir and a genuine political process there; and a clear cessation of external support for violence in Kashmir.

Bananas

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what considerations underlie the differences between the treatment of Martinique and Guadeloupe as compared with Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean in respect of imports of bananas into the EC.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Martinique and Guadeloupe are Overseas Departments of France and are therefore part of the European Community. The Commonwealth countries of the Caribbean are not.

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Goodlad: The following items of equipment have been reported stolen from the FCO and ODA in the past three years:

Items	*£*
2 keyboxes (£245 each)	490
2 answering machines (£60)	120
1 mobile telephone	200
1 lap top computer	3,500
4 standard telephones (£22 each)	88
1 Superset telephone	322
TOTAL	4,720

Liberia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring of the activities of the Economic Community of West African States ceasefire monitoring group have been undertaken by Her Majesty's Government in partnership with the United Nations, the European Commission or directly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: ECOMOG is deployed in Liberia on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and is working in cooperation with the UN observer mission (UNOMIL). The UN Secretary General's special envoy for Liberia provides regular reports to the UN Security Council on the progress of the peace process. We support strongly all the efforts to achieve a peace settlement in Liberia.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation Her Majesty's Government have in Liberia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We closed our embassy in Monrovia in 1991 and we therefore have no resident representation. Non-resident coverage is provided by our embassy in Abidjan.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to hasten a ceasefire in Liberia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have given strong political support to the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations (UN) to achieve a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Liberia.

We have contributed US$1 million, earmarked for humanitarian purposes, to the trust fund which the UN has established to support the peace process. Since 1990 we have separately given some £8·8 million of humanitarian assistance to help mitigate the effects of the conflict.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings have been held with representatives of Charles Taylor's forces in Liberia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We wish to see a settlement of the appalling conflict in Liberia, and have listened to views from a number of those most concerned. The last meeting with one of Mr. Taylor's representatives was in May 1993, when his then spokesman for Defence met FCO officials in London.

PRIME MINISTER

Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister which advisers to his office since 28 November 1990 have been seconded from other organisations; and what were the organisations and the lengths of the secondments.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister on 4 February at column *970*. In addition, Alan Rosling served on secondment in the policy unit, from Hanson plc, for the period 1991-93.

European Funds

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will list the representations he has made to the European Union for funds and support in each of the last four years and state *(a)* how much was claimed for each project, *(b)* the programme under which the claim was being made and *(c)* the amount of funds received by the business;

(2) if he will list the names of the chairman and directors of each company on behalf of which he has made representations for funds from the European Union, in each of the last four years;

(3) how many representations he has made to the European Union for funds *(a)* for England as a whole and *(b)* for specific projects in the past four years.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

So far as I am aware, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made no representations to the European Union in relation to the structural funds.

Cabinet Ministers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister which Cabinet Ministers have served in the armed forces.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Five Cabinet Ministers have served in the armed forces.

Upper Limb Deformities

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column 736, concerning children born with upper limb deformities, what discussions he has held with the Secretary of State for Health about a national study of these defects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's private secretary has written separately to the hon. Member on this subject, following my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's oral answer on 1 February at col. 736.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) gave to the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) on 11 February, *Official Report*, columns *537-38*.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits (Administration)

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the impact on the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration of the privatisation of the assessment of benefits, Giro order book issue and national insurance contribution recording.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 8 February at column *212*.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many visits abroad the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Scott: I made two journeys abroad.

The details are in the table:

Place	*Purpose*	*Date*	*Cost (£)*
China Hong Kong	Visit counterpart Minister of State for Disabled. Meeting with Mr. Patten. Visit to Rehabilitation Services for Disabled. Meeting with Secretary of State for Health and Welfare of Hong Kong.	27 May to 6 June 1993	13,926·30
Brussels	Informal meeting of Social Affairs Council.	9 to 10 November 1993	550·62

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *215*, about applications to the Independent Living Fund turned down, in which local authority each of the applicants who were refused assistance reside.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the director of the Independent Living (1993) Fund that the 11 individuals whose applications to the fund were unsuccessful on the grounds that their existing or proposed care package was valued in excess of £500, are resident in the following local authority areas (one person resident in each).

Norfolk	Essex
Lambeth	Brent
Clwyd	Tameside
Hammersmith	East Sussex
Devon	Barnet
Bolton	

Incapacity Assessment

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had from the Terrence Higgins Trust in regard to the Consultation Panel of 80 (Incapacity Benefit); what reply he is sending; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Terrence Higgins Trust has written to me asking why no member of the assessment panel has experience of medical incapacity for work in relation to people with AIDS or symptomatic HIV infection. I have explained that the new medical incapacity test will assess the effects of all medical conditions. It is not based on particular diagnoses. The members of the panel have been selected for their individual expertise, not as representatives of particular organisations.

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Hague: This Department does not separately maintain centralised records of individual items stolen. Losses due to theft, fraud, arson or sabotage are recorded in a single category. The number of individual losses within this category, and the total value for each of the last three years for which information is available, is as follows:

Financial year	*Number of individual cases*	*Total value*
		£
1990-91	364	89,799
1991-92	411	72,315
1992-93	94	84,500

Correspondence

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Caerphilly may expect a reply to his letter of 23 August 1992 in respect of Mr. A. J. Silcox, of 3 Bryn Huelog, Penyrheol, Caerphilly.

Mr. Hague: I have no trace of this outstanding correspondence. If the hon. Member will provide me with further details I will look into the matter.

Child Maintenance Deductions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many absent parents in receipt of income support are currently having deductions made from their benefit in respect of child maintenance.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) by the Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency on 9 February at columns *377-80*.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how many people the Child Support Agency has recently increased its staffing level; and for what reasons.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the Chief Executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 16 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about staffing levels in the Child Support Agency.

Recruitment of staff to the Agency has continued during 1993/94 in order to meet a projected staffing level of 5,220 by the end of March 1994. At 31 December 1993, there were 4,982·5 whole time equivalent staff in post.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Indonesia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *68*, regarding the water projects funded by the Overseas Development Administration in Indonesia, which companies have won the contracts for work on the water projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The company which is implementing the general research programme into canal system maintenance in a number of countries, including Indonesia, is Hydraulics Research Limited, Wallingford. No companies are involved with village-based water schemes as they are being undertaken by local communities.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which water projects the Overseas Development Administration has funded in Indonesia over the last five years; which companies have won those contracts; what was the value of those contracts; and which of those projects were funded under the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The following water projects in Indonesia have been supported with bilateral aid over the last five years:

— Project management of the Madura Groundwater project. Company: Groundwater Development Consultants (International) Ltd. Value: £2·99 million (all but some £500,000 of this expenditure occurred before 1989).

— Water Quality Improvement Planning Study for the Kali-Sunter River. Company: Binnie and Parners Ltd. Value: £0·60 million.

— Lake Toba Water Level study. Company: Institute of Hydrology. Value: £0·10 million.

— Research into canal system maintenance (part of a wider project involving a number of countries). Company: Hydraulics Research Ltd. Wallingford (covering all the countries involved). Value: £0·46 million.

Eighteen projects were jointly funded with non-governmental organisations during this period at a total cost of £137,000. In addition, 11 small water projects were funded during this period at a total cost of £42,000. No companies were involved with these 29 projects as they were small, mainly village-based, schemes undertaken by local communities.

None of the projects mentioned was funded under the aid and trade provision.

Malaysia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the eligibility of the proposed construction of a second airport at Kuala Lumpur for support under *(a)* the aid and trade provision and *(b)* the United Kingdom aid programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government are still considering the request from the Malaysian Government for grant finance from the aid and trade provision budget to develop a new airport at Sepang.

Aid Targeting

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consider targeting aid to countries which renounce the arms trade.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We target aid on countries which need it and can use it effectively in support of sound policies for economic and social development and the reduction of poverty. Most of our bilateral aid goes to countries with which we have close historical ties. It is for each country to assess and provide for its own legitimate defence needs.

The United Kingdom actively supports the increased emphasis placed by the International Monetary Fund and the World bank on analysing the implications for economic and social development of the composition of public expenditure. We consider the setting of an appropriate level of military expenditure to be an important part of good government. It is one of the factors we take into account when deciding our allocations of bilateral aid.

Russian Federation

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out details of the disbursements from the sum of £11,201,000 which was allocated to the Russian Federation during 1992-93.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A list of all know-how fund projects to date, including disbursements under the 1992-93 programme for Russia, was recently placed in the Libraries of the House. Details of know-how fund activities are placed in the Libraries on a regular basis.

Madagascar

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will allocate emergency relief for the people of Madagascar, following the cyclone resulting in deaths and homelessness.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In addition to a donation of 500,000 ECU by the EC, we have provided the non-governmental organisation CARE with a grant of £31,267 in support of its emergency programme of agricultural rehabilitation in Brickaville. We are ready to consider any further requests.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Cloisters (Allocation of Areas)

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what is the policy and intention of the Committee on the allocation of areas in the Cloisters for *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* secretaries.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Accommodation and Works Committee has yet to reach firm decisions on the use of accommodation released by recent additions to the parliamentary estate. Proposals for the future of the Cloisters and other areas will be included in that consideration.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Newton: There is no record of any equipment having been stolen from the Privy Council Office in the last three years.

TRANSPORT

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who are the members currently appointed to Trinity house.

Mr. Norris: The current membership of the board of the Trinity House Lighthouse Service is as follows:

Captain P. M. Edge—*Chairman, and Deputy Master of Trinity House*
Captain D. J. Orr—*Chief Executive*
Captain N. MacD Turner RD
Captain P. H. King
Mr. W. A. C. Thomson
Captain M. J. F. Rawlinson OBE, RN
Mr. M. J. Faulkner
Mr. K. W. Clark FCA
Mr. D. A. S. Vennings BSc (Eng), C Eng, MICE

A further appointment is pending, following the retirement of Sir Michael Colman Bt.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Lighthouse Board.

Mr. Norris: The current membership of the Northern Lighthouse Board is as follows:

Mr. J. Hann CBE (Chairman)
Sheriff-Principal R. C. Hay CBE, WS
Mr. T. Macgill
Captain A. F. Dickson, OBE, RD, FRIN
Mr. A J. Struthers
Sheriff-Principal N. D. MacLeod QC
The Rt. Hon. Lord Rodger of Earlsferry QC, Lord Advocate
Mr. W. F. Hay CBE
Sheriff-Principal C. G. B. Nicholson QC (Vice-Chairman)
Sheriff-Principal J. J. Maquire QC
Sheriff-Principal D. J. Risk QC
Sheriff-Principal G. L. Cox QC
Captain D. N. Cowell (Isle of Man)
Mr. T. Dawson QC, Solicitor General
The Rt. Hon. Norman Irons, Lord Provost of Edinburgh
Mr. W. A. E. Fraser, Provost of Inverness
The Rt. Hon. Robert Innes, Lord Provost of Glasgow
Mr. J. Wyness MA, Lord Provost of Aberdeen
Mr. G. McMillan, Chairman of Argyll and Bute District Council

Air Misses

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many air misses there have been in each of the last five years involving aircraft taking off from or landing at each of *(a)* Heathrow, *(b)* Gatwick, *(c)* London City and *(d)* Birmingham airports.

Mr. Norris: According to the records of the Civil Aviation Authority, reports of air miss type incidents submitted by pilots and air traffic controllers over the past five years, involving aircraft taking off from or landing at the airports in question, are given in the table. These figures include all reports, including those which were subsequently judged to involve no risk of collision:

	Year				
Airport	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Heathrow	3	5	8	7	4
Gatwick	3	3	4	5	1
London City	0	0	0	1	0
Birmingham	1	2	1	0	2

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Norris: The following publicity campaigns costing more than £10,000 have been or are being carried out in the current financial year by the Department and its agencies.

TV Advertising	*Radio Advertising*	*Newspaper Advertising*	*Other Promotional Campaigns*
Department of Transport			
Road Safety Campaigns			
Drink Drive	None	None	Coastal Safety
Kill Your Speed			Marine Safety
Rear Seat Belts			
			Other Road Safety Topics
			Booklet to complement the BBC 'Drive' programme
Department Agencies—DVLA			
Road Tax Evasion	Road Tax Evasion	Road Tax Evasion	None
Vehicle Registration Numbers	Vehicle Registration Numbers	Vehicle Registration Numbers	None

The objectives for road safety campaigns are to reduce road casualties by a third by the year 2000. Coastal and marine safety campaigns are designed to promote sea safety messages and awareness of coastguard services. The road tax and sale of vehicle registration numbers scheme campaigns are intended to encourage people to re-license their vehicles and to increase the sale of personalised numbers. The Department commissions independent research on all major campaigns to establish the effectiveness of its advertising.

For 1994-95 the Department plans to run television advertising on Drink Drive and Kill Your Speed and promotional campaigns on other road safety topics.

The Department's agencies plan to run television, newspaper and radio advertising on road tax evasion and sale of vehicle registration numbers and promotional campaigns on coastal and marine safety.

London Transport Projects

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the Government's principal proposals for new *(a)* rail, *(b)* underground, *(c)* road and *(d)* river projects in London; and on which of them progress is expected in 1994.

Mr. Norris: On Network SouthEast, work continues on the Kent link route modernisation at a total cost of £800 million, involving infrastructure upgrading and rolling stock replacement. On the London, Tilbury and Southend line, an £83 million contract for the major physical works on the line was signed with GEC Alsthom Signalling Ltd. in January last year. An £85 million re-signalling scheme on the Great Eastern is steadily being extended on lines out of Liverpool Street. We expect good progress to be made on all of these schemes in 1994, including the completion of the Kent link and much of the London, Tilbury and Southend work.

On the existing London Underground network, further progress is being made on a range of schemes in 1994 including the £750 million modernisation of the Central line and the train refurbishment programme. Construction of the Jubilee line extension is under way, and we expect the Crossrail Bill to continue its passage through Parliament, with a view to the project proceeding as a joint venture with a substantial private sector contribution. The DLR extension to Beckton is expected to open by the end of March, and the Lewisham extension is being taken forward as a private finance initiative.

Progress with implementing the London trunk road schemes in "Trunk Roads, England: Into the 1990s" is continuing. The A406 Harrow road and A40 Long lane trunk road schemes will be completed this year. The Department has also let contracts for the advance and main works on the A13 Thames avenue to Wennington scheme, two of the three main contracts have also been let for the A406 Silver street to Hall lane scheme and the main works contract has been let for the A406 east of Falloden way to east of Finchley road scheme. Implementation of the 315-mile red route network will begin later this year. We are conducting a review of the trunk road programme, and we shall make an announcement when the results of the review are known.

The River Thames working group, which I chair, is examining the benefits and potential of maximising transport on the Thames. I hope to publish a report of the group's findings in the summer. The Thames festival is now being planned for 1995 by the London Arts Board and the London Council for Sport and Recreation, with Government support towards the planning stage. This will be a major cultural and recreational celebration embracing many events on the River Thames and its banks.

A303 (Stonehenge)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he is giving to the proposal advanced by English Heritage, the National Trust and the Council for British Archaeology to tunnel the A303 trunk road under the Stonehenge world heritage site.

Mr. Norris: I am considering the proposal for a tunnel very carefully and the implications of its construction and future maintenance for the world heritage site. At more than 4 km, it would be the longest road tunnel in the United Kingdom by a substantial margin.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what objections he has received to his proposals to upgrade the A303 road at Stonehenge in respect of *(a)* the yellow route and *(b)* the grey route; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Our public consultation in 1993 has attracted many helpful comments which are now being analysed. The question of objections does not arise since no draft orders under the Highways and Acquisition of Land Acts have yet been published. The next step is the announcement of the preferred option on which further development work can take place.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many metres of tunnel there are on the channel tunnel rail link in Kent; what percentage of the channel tunnel rail link route length in Kent this represents; and if he will list, with their lengths, the channel tunnel rail link tunnels in Kent.

Mr. Freeman: The route of the channel tunnel rail link to be safeguarded very shortly has the following tunnels in Kent:

	Metres
Thames tunnel (portion in Kent)	1,505
North Downs tunnel	3,175
Park Wood West tunnel (Boxley)	330
Hollingbourne tunnel (Eyhorne Street)	240
Sandway tunnel (under Headcorn road)	170
Tunn : Church Road, Mersham	160
Sandling Park tunnel	90

Decisions will follow on the route at Pepper Hill and Ashford which may involve further tunnels. The route for consultation issued last year had the following tunnels at these two locations:

	Metres
Pepper Hill tunnel	910
Tunnel at Ashford Junction (Leacon Lane)	205
Tunnel at Ashford Junction (A20)	450
Sandyhurst Lane tunnel	135
Willesborough Lees tunnel	1,150

The total length of tunnels on the route in Kent, including the 1993 route for consultation at Pepper Hill and Ashford, is approximately 8,520 metres. This is 11.3 per cent. of the total length of the route in Kent.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the minimum length of a tunnel on the channel tunnel rail link is for it to be defined as a tunnel, rather than a bridge.

Mr. Freeman: The terminology chosen by Union Railways defines a tunnel as any structure over the railway longer than 50 metres. Shorter structures are defined as bridges.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations which made representations to his Department in support of the Boxley long tunnel on the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: The organisations which in response to an invitation for formal comments made representations to the Department in favour of a long tunnel in mid-Kent were as follows:

Kent County Council
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
Maidstone Borough Council
Kent Association of Parish Councils
Aylesford Parish Council
Boxley Parish Council
Detling Parish Council
Thrunham Parish Council
Bearsted Parish Council
Bluebells Action Group
Kits Coty Action Group
North Aylesford Action Group
Boxley and Penenden Heath Rail Concern
Detling Rail Action Group
Thurnhan Action Group
Sandling Residents' Association
Cuxton and North Halling Rail Action Group
Association of Men of Kent and Kentish Men

Kent Action Group
Council for the Protection of Rural England (Kent Branch)
Kent Trust for Nature Conservation
Mid-Ken Long Tunnel Joint Committee
Weald of Kent Preservation Society

Public Transport (Financial Inducements)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to give travellers financial inducements to use public transport in line with Her Majesty's Government's policy.

Mr. Freeman: It is not Government policy to offer travellers direct financial inducements to use public transport. The Government believe that the prices people pay for transport should reflect the costs and benefits of their use. However, local authorities have discretion to provide concessionary fares for pensioners and some other groups of people, which are funded with central Government assistance.

There are also substantial grants and subsidies available to public transport operators. In 1992-93, British Rail received £1·15 billion in PSO grant, representing an increase of 40 per cent. in real terms on 1991-92. The 1993 autumn Budget settlement will provide nearly £3 billion in support to London Transport over the next three years. This includes funds for the Jubilee line extension.

The bus industry will also benefit from fuel duty rebate. In 1993-94 this will total around £200 million. Bus operators can also reclaim all VAT paid on the pump price of fuel provided they are VAT registered. VAT on passenger transport is zero rated. The Government are also working with the bus industry and local authorities on ways to make bus travel more attractive, for example through traffic management measures to speed up journey times.

The Government have also introduced other measures which should indirectly encourage the use of public transport services. These include the commitment in the 1993 autumn Budget to increase road fuel duties in future Budgets by at least 5 per cent. in real terms which should act as an incentive to road users to minimise their transport costs through the use of more fuel efficient vehicles and, where appropriate, the use of public transport alternatives.

In addition, central Government and local authorities are carrying out research on the feasibility of city congestion charging. If implemented this could significantly improve the viability and attractiveness of public transport.

London Underground

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he has had discussions with the chairman of London Underground on improving the service on the Central line.

Mr. Norris: I regularly discuss a wide range of issues with the Chairman of London Underground.

Blackwall Third Crossing

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement about the Blackwall third crossing.

Mr. Norris: I will make an announcement once I have considered all the views put to me.

East London Line

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further work he expects to be undertaken in the next year on plans for the extension of the east London line.

Mr. Norris: London Underground Ltd submitted an application to the Secretary of State for an order under the Transport and Works Act 1992 to grant it powers to construct the proposed northern extension to the East London line on 30 November 1993. If powers are granted, it is envisaged that the scheme would be taken forward as a joint venture with the private sector.

Traffic Growth

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will specify the range of measures to reduce environmental impacts of transport and influence traffic growth that the Government are pursuing.

Mr. Key: In the November Budget speech, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an 8-10 per cent. increase in road fuel duties. He also announced that in future Budgets he will increase duty on all road fuels by at least 5 per cent. in real terms. This will encourage all motorists to use fuel more wisely.

Tight new EC emission standards for both cars and lorries are coming in over the next few years. Most new cars have needed catalytic converters since the beginning of 1993. These reduce harmful emissions by about 80 per cent.

The MOT emissions check introduced for cars in November 1991 is helping to reduce emissions of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons. Since 1 September 1993 there has been a metered smoke test in the annual test for heavy diesels. Since 1 February 1994 there has also been a metered smoke test for diesel cars.

Measures to reduce congestion in urban areas will also help—these involve a mix of traffic management, parking controls and better public transport. The Department is undertaking a programme of research on congestion, which includes an assessment of the possible role of road pricing.

In London, for example, the Department is introducing a network of red routes designed to improve the movement of traffic. Journeys on these routes will be smoother with less stopping and starting. This will mean less pollution. Associated traffic management and parking guidance includes proposals for moderating traffic growth and the opportunities for parking in London which have a part to play in containing pollution.

The introduction of the "package approach" encourages local authorities to develop a coherent strategy for dealing with urban traffic problems and provides more flexibility for funding between modes.

Carbon Dioxide Emmissions

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives he is taking in the transport sector which, although primarily designed to achieve other ends including reducing traffic congestion or improving road safety, will have a beneficial effect on carbon dioxide emmissions.

Mr. Key: The most important measure to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from the transport sector is the commitment to raise fuel duties by at least 5 per cent. in real terms. This will save some 2·5MtC in the year 2000.

Other measures which will have a beneficial effect on carbon dioxide emissions include the introduction of an emissions check into the MOT test which encourages people to keep their engines in tune.

We have required speed limiters for new heavy lorries since August 1992 and for many of the heaviest existing lorries from August 1993.

We are also discussing with our partners in the European Union how best to encourage manufacturers to produce more fuel efficient cars.

The Government are supporting high investment in rail and it is working with the bus industry and local authorities on ways to make bus travel more attractive eg through traffic management measures to speed up journey times.

Together with the Department of the Environment, we are together looking at how planning controls can encourage new development to be located where it can reduce the need for car travel and increase transport choice.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who are the members currently appointed to the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Norris: The current members of the board of the Civil Aviation Authority are:

Executive members

The right hon. Christopher Chataway *(Chairman)*
Mr. Thomas Murphy, CBE
Mr. Michael Willett
Mr. Cliff Paice
Mr. Derek McLauchlan

Non-executive members

Mr. Raymond Birdseye
Mr. Leslie Priestley
Mr. Richard Sturt
Mr. Peter Grant
Captain Gilbert Gray
Ms Ann Burdus
Mr. Anthony Blackman, OBE
Air Vice-Marshal Bertrand Brownlow, CB, OBE, AFC
Mr. Frank Vibert
Mr. Roderick Lynch

London Underground

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing, separately for men and women and as an overall total, the number of incidents of *(a)* violent crime and *(b)* sexual assault on London Underground for 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Norris *[pursuant to his answer, 31 January 1994, col. 505]:* There were some errors in the figures quoted for violent crimes and sexual offences on London Underground in 1992 and 1993. The correct figures are shown in the table.

	Violent crimes		*Sexual offences*		*Overall*
Year	*Robbery*	*[1]Assault*	*Male*	*Female*	*total*
1992	479	636	11	251	1,377
1993	495	628	7	248	1,378

Source: British Transport Police figures supplied to London Underground.

[1] Figure includes all assaults on passengers, staff and the police (not all of which in the latter category being necessarily of a violent nature).

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

West Midlands Serious Crime Squad

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the cases still pending before the Court of Appeal involving members of the West Midlands serious crimes squad.

The Attorney-General: Currently, there are five cases before the Court of Appeal. They are as follows:

Martin P. Foran
Roy Meads
Anthony M. Jones
Trevor McCalla
Abdul Rasheed

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, column 833, if he will list the cases involving members of the West Midlands serious crimes squad where convictions have been quashed on appeal.

The Attorney-General: The 23 appellants whose appeals have been allowed by the Court of Appeal are as follows:

Defendant/Appellant	*Offence*	*Date*
Khan Hassan	Robbery	23 February 1990
Edwards John	Robbery	2 November 1990
Wellington Constantine	Robbery	25 March 1990
Cheetham Geoffrey	Conspiracy to rob	30 July 1992
Gall Ronald T.	Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	14 January 1992
Gall Gerard	Robbery	14 January 1992
Lynch Daniel	Robbery	14 January 1992
Cooke Valentine P.	Robbery	14 January 1992
Haughton Robert	Conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm	14 May 1992
Hare Delroy	Robbery	19 May 1992
Bromell Michael T.	Unlawful wounding	22 June 1992
Binham Gary M.	Theft	28 January 1993
Horobin Leslie B.	Robbery	1 April 1993
Wilcox Kevin	Robbery	1 April 1993
Fryer Raymond	Robbery	1 April 1993
Francis Adolphus	Robbery	27 April 1993
Jeffers Elvis	Robbery	27 April 1993
Lindo Paul R.	Grievous bodily harm	12 October 1993
Hinds George A.	Theft	2 December 1993
Smith Patrick	Robbery	20 January 1994
Williams Seymour	Robbery	20 January 1994

Defendant/Appellant	Offence	Date
Lewis George G. Tanochan	Robbery Murder	4 February 1994 27 January 1994

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Attorney-General how many documents, and how many pages, have now been submitted to the Scott inquiry by the legal secretariat to the Law Officers.

The Attorney-General: A total of 288 documents, amounting to 1,697 pages, have been submitted by the legal secretariat to the Law Officers.

Combat 18

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General if he will refer to the Director of Public Prosecutions publications issued by Combat 18 which urge the public to make nuisance telephone calls to named individuals, with a view to prosecuting those responsible for publishing and printing such publications.

The Attorney-General: I understand that the police service, which is responsible for the investigation of alleged criminal offences, is aware of the activities of Combat 18, including the publications to which the hon. Member refers. The role of the Crown Prosecution Service, when involved at the investigation stage, is to provide legal advice to the police relevant to their inquiries, and thereafter to conduct any criminal proceedings which may be appropriate.

Equipment Theft

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from the Law Officers' Departments in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

The Attorney-General: No equipment has been stolen from my own office during the last three years. Equipment stolen from the Treasury Solicitor's department, the Serious Fraud Office and the Crown Prosecution Service is listed in the table.

Date	Items	Approximate value of items (£)
July 1991	1 Video recorder	400
October 1991	1 Personal computer and 5 Printers	8,300
January 1992	4 Personal computers	7,250
February 1992	4 PC system boxes	4,700
March 1992	1 Personal computer	1,000
May 1992	1 Facsimile machine	1,400
July 1992	2 Dictaphones	100
August 1992	3 Printers and 1 Dictaphone machine	3,009
September 1992	1 Laptop computer	300
December 1992	11 Personal computers and 1 Printer	17,250
January 1993	1 Personal computer, 1 Printer and 1 Telephone handset	2,130
February 1993	1 Personal computer and 1 Printer	2,000
March 1993	1 Personal computer, 2 Printers and 1 Video recorder	3,45
April 1993	1 Computer monitor	200
May 1993	1 PC system box	600
June 1993	6 Dictaphones	600
August 1993	3 Calculators	12
December 1993	4 Personal computers, 4 Printers and 1 Facsimile	9,000
January 1994	4 PC system boxes	2,400
	Total	64,101

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Appointments

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Agriculture and Food Research Council.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current members of the Agricultural and Food Research Council are as follows:

Sir Alistair Grant *(Chairman)*
Professor T. L. Blundell, FRS
(Secretary and Deputy Chairman)
Dr. P. J. Bunyan
Mr. C. R. Cann
Professor E. C. D. Cocking, FRS
Professor J. R. Coggins, FRSE
Professor P. James, CBE
Sir Sam Edwards, FRS
Mr. D. F. R. George, OBE
Mr. A. B. N. Gill
Professor R. M. Hicks, OBE
Professor G. Horn, FRS
Mr. R. M. Knapman, MP
Professor J. R. Krebs, FRS
Professor C. J. Leaver, FRS
Professor R. Leech
Dr. T. Little
Professor T. A. Mansfield, FRS
Mr. K. MacKenzie
Mr. J. L. C. Provan
Mr. G. T. Pryce
Dr. D. W. F. Shannon
Professor W. V. Shaw

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the various sources used to compile the public appointments unit central list, what categories are used by the public appointments unit to sort these names and if he will list them by percentage; and what per cent. of the names on the public appointments unit central list are self-nominated.

Mr. David Davis: The public appointments unit receives names of suitable candidates for registration on the central list in a number of ways including nominations from other Government Departments, professional and representative organisations, and recommendations from individuals including Members of Parliament from all parties, who know of the work of the unit. Self-nominations are also welcome and account for 38 per cent. of the names on the list. The categories used to sort the names are as follows:

Source of nomination	Percentage of names on the central list (February 1994)
Self-nomination	38·3
Departmental	32·6
Professional/representative organisations	16·1
Personal recommendation	11·6
Ministerial, MPs and political groups	1·4

Executive Agency Chief Executives

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all executive agency chief executives, their age on appointment, their current salaries, including bonuses, and the salaries of analogous civil service grades.

Mr. David Davis: A list of all agency chief executives is reproduced in the table. The national salary ranges of grades 1A to 6 are as follows:

Grade 1A	£82,925
Grade 2	£64,307-75,328
Grade 3	£51,360-59,599
Grade 4	£44,390-53,740
Grade 5	£36,019-53,740
Grade 6	£27,660-46,122

Information on the age of chief executives on appointment and their current salaries is not held centrally.

Agency Chief Executives

EXISTING AGENCIES

1. *Accounts Services Agency:* Michael Hoddinott
2. *ADAS:* Dr. Julia Walsh
3. *Army Base Repair Organisation:* Brigadier Jim Drew
4. *Building Research Establishment:* Roger Courtney
5. *CADW:* John Carr
6. *Central Office of Information:* Mike Devereau
7. *Central Science Laboratory:* Dr. Peter Stanley
8. *Central Statistical Office:* Bill McLennan
9. *Central Veterinary Laboratory:* Dr. Tony Little
10. *Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment:* Dr. Graham Pearson CB
11. *Chessington Computer Centre:* Bob Edwards
12. *Civil Service College:* Miss Marianne Neville-Rolfe
13. *Companies House:* David Durham
14. *Compensation Agency (N. Ireland):* John Robinson
15. *Defence Accounts Agency:* Mike Dymond
16. *Defence Analytical Services Agency:* Paul Altobell
17. *Defence Animal Centre:* Colonel Paul Jepson
18. *Defence Operational Analysis Centre:* Dr. David Leadbeater
19. *Defence Postal and Courier Services Agency:* Brigadier Michael Browne
20. *Defence Research Agency:* John Chisholm
21. *Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency:* Stephen Curtis
22. *Driver and Vehicle Licensing (N. Ireland):* Brendan Magee
23. *Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency:* Brian Watson
24. *Driving Standards Agency:* Dr. John Ford
25. *Duke of York's Royal Military School:* Colonel Gordon Wilson
26. *Employment Service:* Mike Fogden
27. *Fire Service College:* Brian Fuller CBE
28. *Forensic Science Service:* Dr. Janet Thompson
29. *Government Property Lawyers:* Tony Osborne
30. *Her Majesty's Prison Service:* Derek Lewis
31. *Historic Royal Palaces:* David Beeton
32. *Historic Scotland:* Graeme Munro
33. *HMSO:* Dr. Paul Freeman CB
34. *Hydrographic Office:* Rear Admiral John Myres
35. *Insolvency Service:* Peter Joyce
36. *Intervention Board:* Guy Stapleton
37. *Laboratory of the Government Chemist:* Dr. Richard Worswick
38. *Land Registry:* John Manthorpe
39. *Medicines Control Agency:* Dr. Keith Jones
40. *Meteorological Office:* Professor Julian Hunt
41. *Military Survey:* Major General Mike Wilson
42. *National Physical Laboratory:* Dr. Peter Clapham CB
43. *National Weights and Measures Laboratory:* Dr. Seton Bennett
44. *Natural Resources Institute:* Anthony Beattie
45. *Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation:* Captain David Symonds
46. *NEL:* William Edgar
47. *NHS Estates:* John Locke FRICS
48. *NHS Pensions Agency:* Alec Cowan
49. *Northern Ireland Child Support Agency:* Pat Devlin
50. *Occupational Health Service:* Dr. Elizabeth McCloy
51. *Ordnance Survey:* Professor David Rhind
52. *Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland:* Michael Brand
53. *Patent Office:* Paul Hartnack
54. *Paymaster:* Keith Sullens
55. *Pesticide Safety Directorate:* Geoff Bruce
56. *Planning Inspectorate:* Stephen Crow
57. *Public Record Office:* Mrs. Sarah Tyacke
58. *Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre:* Marcus Buck
59. *Queen Victoria School:* Julian Hankinson
60. *Radiocommunications Agency:* Dr. Jim Norton
61. *RAF Support Command's Maintenance Group Defence Agency:*
62. *Rate Collection Agency:* David Gallagher
63. *Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency:* Michael Geddes
64. *Registers of Scotland:* James Barron
65. *Royal Mint:* Roger Holmes
66. *Royal Parks Agency:* David Welch
67. *Scottish Agricultural Science Agency:* Dr. Robert Hay
68. *Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency:* Andrew MacLeod
69. *Scottish Office Pensions Agency:* Norman McLeod
70. *Scottish Prison Service:* Edward Frizzell
71. *Scottish Record Office:* Patrick Cadell
72. *Security Facilities Executive:* John King
73. *Service Children's Schools (NWE):* Ian Mitchelson
74. *Social Security Agency (Northern Ireland):* Alec Wylie
75. *Social Security Benefits Agency:* Michael Bichard
76. *Social Security Child Support Agency:* Mrs. Ros Hepplewhite
77. *Social Security Contributions Agency:* Miss Ann Chant
78. *Social Security Information Technology Services Agency:* Ian Magee
79. *Social Security Resettlement Agency:* Tony Ward
80. *Teachers' Pensions Agency:* Mrs. Denyse Metcalfe
81. *The Buying Agency:* Stephen Sage
82. *Training and Employment Agency:* Julian Crozier
83. *Transport Research Laboratory:* John Wootton
84. *UK Passport Agency:* John Hayzelden
85. *Valuation and Lands Agency (N. Ireland):* David Bell
86. *Valuation Office:* Rex Shutler CB
87. *Vehicle Certification Agency:* Derek Harvey
88. *Vehicle Inspectorate:* Ron Oliver
89. *Veterinary Medicines Directorate:* Dr. Mike Rutter
90. *Warren Spring Laboratory:* Dr. Douglas Cormack
91. *Wilton Park Conference Centre:* Richard Langhorne

AGENCY CANDIDATES

1. *Highways Agency:* Lawrence Haynes
2. *Marine Emergencies Organisation:* Chris Harris
3. *Marine Safety Agency:* Robin Bradley
4. *Medical Devices Directorate:* Alan Kent
5. *Ministry of Defence Police:* John Reddington
6. *Public Trust Office:* Julia Lomas
7. *Royal Air Force Training:* Air Vice-Marshal Chris Coville
8. *Social Security War Pensions Directorate:* Peter Mathison
9. *Student Awards:* Ken MacRae

NATIONAL FINANCE

Insurance Premium Tax

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has for the expenditure incurred in administration and collection of insurance premium tax.

Sir John Cope: It is a priority in the implementation of insurance premium tax to minimise the compliance and administrative costs associated with it, recognising that there are a wide range of interests within the insurance sector. Discussions since the Budget between Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and representatives of the insurance industry have been very much directed toward this end. When firm conclusions have been reached on the actual operation of the tax, a revised compliance cost assessment will be issued. However, it is clear that in terms of the likely costs of administration by Customs the tax will be highly cost effective; whilst the compliance costs of the insurance industry should not in practice prove burdensome.

Division of Telecommunications

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to respond to the claim presented by Civil Service Unions for Treasury underwriting of the severance terms for Home Office DTELS employees when that division is privatised; and if he will make it his policy that DTELS employees are offered the same severance and redundancy terms as PSA employees and Forward Catering employees have been offered.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has responded to the civil service unions' representations.

On the second point, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 8 February 1994 at column *120*.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many pages of evidence have now been provided by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to the Scott inquiry.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise has to date supplied in the region of 15,100 pages of evidence to the Scott inquiry.

Domestic Fuel Consumption

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the reductions in consumption of domestic fuel resulting from the imposition of value added tax.

Sir John Cope: It was estimated that over the next two years imposing VAT at the standard rate on domestic fuel and power would reduce consumption by around 3 per cent. overall.

Public Appointments

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the total number of public appointments which he makes.

Mr. Nelson: Details of the number of public appointments which my right hon. and learned Friend makes are listed in the publication "Public Bodies", which is available in the Members' Library.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the takeover of British industry by foreign firms has on the exchange rate.

Mr. Nelson: The effect is uncertain. The purchase of British assets by foreign firms will tend to raise sterling. Similarly, when United Kingdom firms acquire overseas assets, this will tend to lower the exchange rate. In the 10 years to 1992, the most recent complete year for which data are available, direct investment overseas by United Kingdom residents has been £122 billion, while direct investment in the United Kingdom by overseas residents has been £91 billion.

Caribbean (Offshore Companies)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reports *(a)* the Treasury and *(b)* the Bank of England have prepared in the last five years on banking, financial services or offshore companies operating in British dependent territories in the Caribbean; what recommendations were made in those reports; what action has been taken on the recommendations; and if he will ensure that a copy of each of those reports is placed in the Library.

Mr. Nelson: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has responsibility for offshore financial regulation in the Caribbean Dependent Territories. It published a Survey of Offshore Finance Sectors in the Caribbean Dependent Territories in 1990. A copy is in the House of Commons Library. Work is proceeding on enhanced regulation in the offshore finance sector to which both Her Majesty's Treasury and the Bank of England contribute.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the gross domestic product per head in each county for each of the last five years.

Mr. Nelson: Estimates for gross domestic product by county are only calculated for years when there is an Annual Census of Employment. The latest available information for GDP per head by county is for 1987, 1989 and 1991 which was published in the December 1993 issue of *Economic Trends*, a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Inheritance Tax (Works of Art)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list of those works of art which must be made available for public access by reason of inheritance tax exemption.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 28 January 1994 at column *454*.

Taxpayers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number and percentage of taxpayers who had incomes of *(a)* £5 million or more, *(b)* between £1 million

and £5 million, *(c)* between £500,000 and £1 million and *(d)* between £100,000 and £500,000 in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Dorrell: Reliable estimates are available only for the numbers of taxpayers with incomes in excess of £100,000 and are as follows:

	Total number of taxpayers	*Number of taxpayers with incomes[1] in excess of £100,000*	*Percentage of taxpayers with incomes[1] in excess of £100,000*
	Thousands	Thousands	Per cent.
1991-92	25,700	100	0·4
1992-93[2]	25,100	110	0·4

[1] Total income for income tax purposes
[2] Provisional

British Aerospace

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what United Kingdom tax regime will apply to any payment received by the chairman of British Aerospace as a result of the increased value of his shareholding with that company.

Mr. Dorrell: For reasons of confidentiality, I cannot make any comment on the specific tax affairs of any individual.

Banks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the legal restrictions governing the use of the term "bank".

Mr. Nelson: The statutory restrictions governing the use of banking names and descriptions, including the use of the term "bank", are contained in sections 67-73 of the Banking Act 1987, as amended by the Banking Co-ordination (Second Council Directive) Regulations 1992 (SI 1992/3218).

Tax Changes

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing for each region the change in total tax in each year since 1978-79 as against the 1978-79 indexed regime broken down into the top 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent., and bottom 70 per cent., 50 per cent., 30 per cent. and all taxpayers, giving the number of taxpayers in each category.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* Available information was provided in the answers which I gave to the hon. Member on 20 January at column *777* and to the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) on 29 November 1993 at columns *337-38.* The analysis sought for the earlier years is not available and the analyses for the earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Pensioners

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to write to every pensioners group in the country giving details of the compensation package he announced in the Budget for all pensioners as a consequence of tax increases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* Efforts were made on Budget day to make the details available to pensioner groups.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to publicise the compensation package he announced in the Budget for all pensioners as a consequence of tax increases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The package of assistance with fuel bills announced in the November Budget was the subject of a press release, and has received widespread publicity at the time of the Budget and since. All pensioners will have received notification of the increase in the state retirement pension by 1 April 1994.

Leaflets offering information on the home energy efficiency scheme (HEES), which is to be extended to cover all pensioners, are supplied free of charge to local authorities, housing benefit offices, housing associations, citizens advice bureaux, the Benefits Agency, jobcentres, Age Concern and other organisations which have contact with HEES client group. The Energy Action Grants Agency (EAGA), which is responsible for administering the HEES, also encourages installers to promote HEES locally by means of advertising, press publicity and distribution of their own leaflets.

The Department for National Savings ran advertisements in the national press for the new pensioners' guaranteed income bond between 21 January and 13 February. The prospectus for the bond is available from all post offices and on request from the DNS office in Blackpool.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) who are the members currently appointed to the Board of the Registrar of Public Lending Right;

(2) who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee for the Public Lending Right.

Mr. Sproat: There is no PLR board, since the registrar (appointed by the Secretary of State) is a corporate sole. The current registrar is Dr. James Parker.

The public lending right (PLR) advisory committee advises the Secretary of State and/or the registrar on PLR matters.

The present members of the committee are:

Philip Ziegler CVO *(Chairman)*
Lee Langley
Keith Crawshaw
Clive Grenyer
Janet Hurrell
Gillian McClure
Roger Palmer
Lavinia Trevor

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Wallace collection.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the Wallace collection are:

Hon. Simon Sainsbury *(Chairman)*
Lord Egremont DL
Prof. Francis J. H. Haskell FBA
James Joll Esq
Dr. Jennifer I. R. Montagu FBA
Lady Shaw-Stewart.

Consultants

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1992, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Sproat: My Department and its two agencies have awarded consultancy contracts to the value of £5·13 million in 1992-93 (£5·3 million at constant 1994 prices) and £3·15 million in 1993-94.

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Sproat: Since the establishment of the Department of National Heritage on 13 April 1992 we have had one lap top personal computer stolen. The approximate value was £2,500.

British Library

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what is the estimated completion date for the British library project;

(2) if he will publish the report of his Department's consultants, Kennedy and Donkin, into the British library project.

Mr. Brooke: I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 7 February at column *40*.

Royal Parks

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was his Department's total expenditure on the royal parks in each year from 1978-79 to 1991-92.

Mr. Sproat: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency under its Chief Executive, Mr. David Welch. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Welch to Mr. Nick Raynsford, dated 11 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for National Heritage has asked me to reply to your Question of 9 February 1994 about expenditure on the royal parks for the period 1978-879 to 1991-92, originally addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Prior to 1988-89 Royal Parks was not separately accounted for so expenditure figures before this date are not available. However, the figures for spend from 1988-89 to 1991-92 are as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	16·2
1989-90	16·0
1990-91	20·1
1991-92	25·4

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was his Department's total expenditure on the royal parks in 1992-93 and 1993-94; and what is the budgeted expenditure for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Sproat: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency under its Chief Executive Mr. David Welch. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Welch to Mr. Nick Raynsford, dated 11 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for National Heritage has asked me to reply to your Question of 9 February 1994 about expenditure on the royal parks.

The figures for spend on the Royal Parks are as follows:

	£ million
1992-93	[1]22·80
1993-94	[2]22·91
1994-95	[3]23·87
1995-96	[3]25·75
1996-97	[3]25·75

[1] (Outturn).
[2] (Forecast outturn).
[3] (Planned).

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to commission a research study into useage of the royal parks from the University of North London; and what will be (i) the cost, (ii) the duration and (iii) the terms of reference of the research.

Mr. Sproat: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency under its Chief Executive, Mr. David Welch. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Welch to Mr. Nick Raynsford, dated 11 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for National Heritage has asked me to reply to your Question of 9 February 1994 about a research study into usage of the Royal Parks.

In December 1993 the Centre for Leisure and Tourism studies, University of North London, won a competitively tendered three year contract to undertake a market research study of people using The Royal Parks. This will cost £94,600 in year one. The terms of reference include estimation of visitor numbers, development of a questionnaire, interviews and production of reports. The volume of work to be ordered in years 2 and 3 of the commission will be influenced by the results obtained during the first year.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much his Department has spent on (i) consultancy and (ii) research relating to the royal parks in 1992-93 and 1993-94; and what is the budgeted expenditure for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Sproat: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency under its Chief Executive, Mr. David Welch. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Welch to Mr. Nick Raynsford, dated 11 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for National Heritage has asked me to reply to your Question of 9 February 1994 about spend on consultancy and research.

The Royal Parks figures for spend on consultancies, including market research, are as follows:

Year	*£000*
1992-93	[1]749
1993-94	[2]744
1994-95	[3]760
1995-96	[3]750
1996-97	[3]750

[1] Outturn.
[2] Forecast outturn.
[3] Planned.

The Royal Parks do not currently intend to spend any moneys on research other than the £95,000 market research to be carried out by the University of North London during 1994. The response to your Question of the same date as this one refers.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Department of National Heritage—1992-93 prices

£ million

	1990-91 Outturn	*1991-92 Outturn*	*1992-93 Outturn*	*1993-94 Provisional Outturn*	*1994-95 Plans*	*1995-96 Plans*
Executive Bodies						
Arts Council	194·1	212·9	221·2	218·5	173·2	167·8
British Film Institute	14·0	14·6	15·0	14·5	15·9	15·3
British Library (including St. Pancras)	120·6	127·6	127·3	104·7	123·7	116·8
British Tourist Authority	30·4	30·3	30·9	31·0	30·0	30·5
Broadcasting Complaints Commission	0·0	0·0	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·5
Broadcasting Standards Council	0·0	0·0	1·3	1·4	1·2	1·2
Crafts Council	2·8	2·9	3·0	3·3	3·0	3·0
English Tourist Board	16·7	16·8	13·9	10·9	9·3	9·0
Football Licensing Authority	0·1	0·8	0·8	0·9	0·8	0·8
Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England	87·8	94·7	102·0	96·9	96·9	95·0
Museums and Galleries						
British Museum	30·9	32·6	32·4	33·0	31·9	30·1
Geffrye Museum	0·0	0·8	0·9	0·9	0·9	1·0
Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry	1·9	2·0	2·2	2·1	2·1	2·2
Horniman Museum	0·0	2·4	2·6	2·8	3·1	3·0
Imperial War Museum	10·6	11·2	11·0	10·5	10·5	10·0
Museum of London	3·8	4·0	4·1	4·1	4·1	3·9
National Gallery	18·0	17·8	17·2	17·6	17·1	16·5
Natural History Museum	27·9	28·9	28·9	27·5	25·7	25·8
National Maritime Museum	12·0	11·6	11·6	10·3	10·2	9·7
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	13·6	13·1	13·4	13·5	15·3	12·1
National Museum for Science and Industry	20·4	20·5	21·9	20·7	20·4	19·5
National Portrait Gallery	4·7	6·4	5·5	4·6	3·6	4·6
Sir John Sloane's Museum	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·7	0·7	0·6
Tate Gallery	15·2	15·8	16·0	16·2	16·0	17·1
Victoria and Albert Museum	28·5	29·3	29·3	30·2	29·6	28·4
Wallace Collection	2·1	2·0	1·9	1·9	1·9	1·7
Museums and Galleries Commission	11·5	11·8	8·8	8·7	8·4	8·1
National Film and Television School	1·9	1·9	1·9	1·8	1·7	1·7
National Film Development Fund	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	
National Heritage Memorial Fund	3·3	12·5	12·0	11·6	8·1	7·9
Registrar of Public Lending Right	3·9	4·9	4·8	4·8	4·6	4·4
Royal Armouries	4·0	3·9	5·4	5·6	3·6	3·6
Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts	0·9	0·8	0·9	0·9	1·0	1·0
Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England)	7·4	8·3	11·9	14·0	12·8	10·3
South Bank Theatre Board	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Sports Council	49·4	48·5	48·6	49·0	46·4	43·9

Notes:
i. From 1 April 1994 responsibility for the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils will be transferred from the Secretary of State for National Heritage to the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales respectively. Whilst the above figures take account of all three Arts Councils for the years prior to 1994-95, from that year they represent the Arts Council of England only.
ii. The British Library figures include payments in relation to the building of the new British Library, St. Pancras.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each one the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Sproat: My Department has conducted no advertising or other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 in the current financial year. For 1994-95, the Department is planning a programme of civilian events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the D-day landings on 6 June 1994.

I have asked the chief executives of the Historic Royal Palaces and Royal Parks Agencies to write to the hon. Member about the position in their agencies.

Letter from Mr. D. Welch to Mr. Matthew Taylor, dated 10 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for National Heritage has asked me to reply to your Question of 8 February 1994 about advertising and promotional campaigns, in so far as the question relates to this Agency.

Neither in the current financial year nor in our 1994-95 plans do we have any advertising or other promotional campaign that will cost over £10,000.

Letter from Mr. D. Beeton to Mr. Matthew Taylor, dated 14 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for National Heritage has requested me to reply to your Written Question as far as it affects my Agency.

I am enclosing a schedule setting out the requested information. These promotional campaigns are aimed at protecting and enhancing our business income, which is forecast to total £28 million in 1994-95, having risen from £11 million on the establishment of the Agency in 1989-90.

In answer to your written Parliamentary Question, please find below a list of all television advertising, newspaper advertising and other promotional campaigns for Historic Royal Palaces, with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 in the current financial year, and those planned for 1994-95:

1993-94

TOWER OF LONDON

To contribute towards target visitor numbers of 2·32 million;

To continue to reposition the Tower to the domestic audience.

Campaigns:

1–30 April—cross track poster campaign on the London Underground; Total budget £100,000 (includes production).

27 July–12 August: London radio campaign on Capital FM: Total budget £40,000.

2 August–11 September; London television advertising campaign; Total budget £215,000.

Evaluation:

Advertising Track Study set up to evaluate the effectiveness of the television advertising against objectives by means of an omnibus survey. Conducted by BMRB Research.

Analysis of visitor numbers.

Annual Summer Visitor Survey comprising 300 on-site face-to-face interviews with visitors.

1994-95

TOWER OF LONDON

To contribute towards achieving target visitor numbers of 2·5 million

Campaigns:

12 July–30 August; London Television advertising campaign. Total budget £190,000.

26–31 December; London Television advertising campaign. Total budget £36,000.

Evaluation:

Advertising Tracking Study set up to evaluate the effectiveness of the television advertising against objectives by means of an omnibus survey conducted by BMRB Research.

Analysis of visitor numbers.

Annual Summer Visitor Survey comprising 300 on-site face-to-face interviews with visitors.

1994-95

HAMPTON COURT PALACE

Advertising objectives:

To contribute towards achieving target visitor numbers of 586,000.

Planned campaigns:

10–28 August; London Television advertising campaign: £92,000. Please note: neither budget nor timing confirmed.

Evaluation:

Advertising Tracking Study set up to evaluate the effectiveness of the television advertising against objectives by means of an omnibus survey conducted by BMRB Research.

Analysis of visitor numbers.

Annual Summer Visitor Survey comprising 300 on-site face-to-face interviews with visitors.

1993-94

CORPORATE SALES PROMOTION—Total budget £100,000

The corporate sales promotion activity comprised the Royal Pass, entitling visitors to entry to all the Palaces for £15, plus a souvenir guidebook, the joint Palaces leaflet promoting the Royal Pass and the Sovereign Trail competition.

Evaluation:

H H & S, the incumbent sales promotion agency, provide analysis of results based on targets agreed at the outset.

1994-95

CORPORATE SALES PROMOTION—Total planned budget £86,000

Pitches yet to be received from competitive tendering exercise. However, plan to further consolidate the Royal Pass, improve the design and usefulness of the joint Palaces leaflet, i.e. multilingual and develop appropriate business partnerships.

Evaluation:

Selected consultancy will be asked to provide detailed evaluation of their campaigns against targets set at the outset.

I do hope this answers your questions.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the total rent received for accommodation provided at Kensington palace and St. James's palace.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* The total annual rent receivable at the present time from this accommodation is £26,348.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will place in the Library a list of all the tenants of the grace and favour accommodation in the occupied royal palaces and of the offices these tenants held or hold.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* I refer to the answer that I gave to the right hon. Member on 19 January at column *652* in response to a similar question.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the (i) Government and (ii) Government-funded voluntary sector resources currently available for victims of sexual harassment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Government funding helps the victims of sexual harassment in a wide variety of ways.

I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment that the Equal Opportunities Commission incurs legal expenses for the purpose of giving advice and assisting those who have been discriminated against on grounds of sex to seek redress in industrial tribunals. Some of the assistance goes towards sexual harassment cases. Examples of Government funding, where violence occurs, include the criminal injuries compensation scheme, victim support schemes and police and health service facilities.

It is not, however, possible to identify separately the extent of Government funding, whether direct or through the voluntary sector, in support of victims of sexual harassment.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to continue funding projects currently in receipt of section 11 funding; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received with regard to the future of section 11 funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received many representations about section 11 funding from local authorities and associations, teaching unions, ethnic minority communities and other interested parties, mainly supporting its continuation. Commitments to projects currently in receipt of section 11 funding will be honoured. In the future the particular needs of ethnic minorities will be met either through section 11 funds, or through wider regeneration programmes under the single regeneration budget.

Sexual Offences

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sexual offences were committed by people under the age of 16 years in each year since 1987.

Mr. Maclean: The readily available information for 1987 to 1992 on the number of offenders aged under 16 years found guilty or cautioned for sexual offences is given in the table.

Number of persons aged 10 to under 16 cautioned and found guilty at all courts of indictable sexual offences by type of offence 1987 to 1992
England and Wales

Offence		*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
16	Buggery	33	30	30	52	26	30
17	Indecent assault on a male	99	98	100	123	112	102
18	Indecency between males	16	14	15	27	10	9
19	Rape	17	24	20	24	11	10
20	Indecent assault on a female	671	847	820	728	666	674
21	Unlawful sexual intercourse with girl under 13	41	28	55	34	29	26
22	Unlawful sexual intercourse with girl under 16	198	211	201	145	114	91
23	Incest	16	4	13	11	11	9
24	Procuration	1	—	1	1	—	2
25	Abduction	4	2	3	—	—	4
26	Bigamy	1	—	—	1	—	—
27	Soliciting by a man	6	1	1	—	1	4
74	Gross indecency with children	37	39	35	55	35	27
	Total sexual offences	1,140	1,298	1,294	1,201	1,015	988

Prison Food

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish the cost of food per prisoner week by prison in England;

(2) what is *(a)* the cost of food per prisoner week at the Wolds private prison and *(b)* the cost standard required in repsect of Doncaster prison when that becomes privately managed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange to a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Martin Redmond dated 16 February 1994:

Cost of food for prisoners

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your two recent Qeustions about the cost of food for prisoners at both publicly and privately managed prisons in England.

The information requested in respect of prisons whose management has not been contracted out is given in the attached table.

Contracts applying to those prisons managed by the private sector, including Wolds and Doncaster, do not directly specify the cost of food for prisoners. Contracts specify outputs and the requirements and standards which contractors much meet, rather than inputs which are left to contractors to determine.

The requirements and standards laid down are set out in the operational specification and performance criteria contained in the invitation to tender (ITT) documents issued to each bidder and subsequently in the contracts themselves. A copy of the operational specification from the ITT for each prison whose management has been contracted out has been placed in the Library of the House.

The requirements include the provision of three meals a day, one of which must be hot; a choice of dish for the main meal of the day; a hot meal for all reception prisoners; and suitable refreshment for prisoners at court or on escort outside the prison. In addition, meals must meet the daily amounts of food, energy and nutrients, recommended by the Department of Health; modified diets must be provided as necessary for medical, religious or other reasons; and food must be prepared and served to high standards of food handling and hygiene to ensure proper temperature, appearance and palatability.

Performance to the standards required is monitored by the on-site Prison Service Controller. Remedies for failure to deliver the required standards include withholding payment of part of all of the contractor's management fee. This is a powerful incentive for contractors to maintain standards and is one which is not available in the publicly managed part of the service.

Establishment	*Inmate cost per week £*	*Establishment*	*Inmate cost per week £*
Acklington	9·03	Albany	9·24
Aldington	9·73	Ashwell	9·24
Askham Grange	9·52	Aylesbury	9·24
Bedford	10·01	Belmarsh	9·03
Birmingham	9·66	Blantyre House	9·94
Blundeston	10·57	Brinsford	9·17
Bristol	9·66	Brixton	9·17
Brockhill	9·31	Bullingdon	9·17
Bullwood Hall	9·59	Camp Hill	9·31
Canterbury	9·31	Cardiff	9·73
Castington	9·24	Channings Wood	9·17
Chelmsford	N/a	Coldingley	9·24
Cookham Wood	N/a	Dartmoor	9·45
Deerbolt	N/a	Dorchester	9·31
Dover	9·52	Downview	N/a
Drake Hall	9·52	Durham	9·31
East Sutton Park	N/a	Elmley	9·10
Erlestoke	9·73	Everthorpe	9·73
Exeter	9·38	Featherstone	9·17
Feltham	9·03	Finnamore Wood	10·50
Ford	9·31	Frankland	9·45
Full Sutton	10·57	Garth	9·52
Gartree	10·29	Glen Parva	9·10
Gloucester	9·66	Grendon	9·45
Guys Marsh	9·59	Haslar	9·24
Hatfield	9·31	Haverigg	9·59
Hewell Grange	9·38	Highdown	9·24
Highpoint	9·03	Hindley	9·10
Hollesley	9·52	Holloway	9·80
Holme House	9·17	Hull	9·31
Huntercombe	9·45	Kingston	10·78
Kirkham	9·10	Kirklevington	9·24
Lancaster	9·59	Lancaster Farms	N/a
Latchmere	12·11	Leeds	9·24
Leicester	9·66	Lewes	10·08
Leyhill	9·59	Lincoln	9·03
Lindholme	9·24	Littlehey	10·01
Liverpool	9·10	Long Lartin	10·99
Low Newton	9·17	Maidstone	10·36
Manchester	9·24	Moorland	9·17
Morton Hall	9·31	Mount	10·29
New Hall	9·59	Northallerton	9·24
North Sea Camp	10·50	Norwich	10·08
Nottingham	10·15	Onley	9·31
Parkhurst	9·59	Pentonville	9·10
Portland	9·10	Preston	9·38
Pucklechurch	9·38	Ranby	9·31
Reading	9·24	Risley	9·45
Rochester	9·87	Rudgate	9·24
Send	9·31	Shepton Mallet	9·24
Shrewsbury	9·73	Springhill	9·66
Stafford	9·10	Standford Hill	9·24
Stocken	9·38	Stoke Heath	9·10
Styal	10·36	Sudbury/Foston	10·01
Swaleside	9·24	Swansea	9·45
Swinfen Hall	9·24	Thorn Cross	9·31
Thorp Arch	9·38	Usk	9·24
The Verne	9·31	Wakefield	9·52
Wandsworth	9·31	Wayland	9·59
Wellingborough	10·29	Werrington	9·24
Wetherby	9·24	Whatton	9·17
Whitemoor	9·52	Winchester	9·31
Woodhill	10·01	Wormwood Scrubs	9·38
Wymott	9·10		

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his policing priorities for the Metropolitan police authority for 1994.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend's policing priorities for 1994 are reflected in the Metropolitan police corporate strategy priorities document which he announced on 7 February at col 22.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visits abroad each Minister of State made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Howard: The cost and purpose of each visit made by the Ministers of State for the Home Department during 1993 were as follows:

Date	*Minister*	*Cost £*	*Purpose*
27-28 May	Peter Lloyd	1,703	Italian ministerial conference on European drug trafficking routes, Rome.
1-2 June	Charles Wardle	875	TREVI/immigration ministerial meeting, Copenhagen
28-29 September	David Maclean	441	European ministers of justice meeting, Brussels.
21-22 October	David Maclean	792	Third European ministerial conference on equality between men and women, Rome.
17-19 November	Charles Wardle	903	5th conference of European ministers responsible for migration affairs, Athens.
28-29 November	Charles Wardle	527	Interior/Justice Council meeting, Brussels.

Police Authority Members

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now make it his policy that all members of a police authority shall be elected representatives.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Traffic Police

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to contract out any of the functions currently discharged by the traffic police.

(2) what plans he has to contract out the convoy escort service for very heavy vehicles.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The possibility of using private escorts is being examined with the Association of Chief Police Officers as one way of reducing the police's involvement in the escorting of abnormal loads of up to 150 tonnes. There are no current plans to change the escort arrangements for very heavy loads of over 150 tonnes. However, as part of the review of police core and ancillary tasks there is to be a review of traffic policing whose terms of reference are:

> To review the role of the police in enforcing the traffic laws and, taking account of the impact of new technology on the most cost effective use of resources, to consider what changes are desirable consistent with the maintenance of high standards of road safety and traffic management.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* the Home Office and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Howard: In the current financial year advertising campaigns for the Home Office costing in excess of £10,000 are:

(a) Home Office

Television
- Electoral Registration
- Smoke Alarms
- Crime Prevention
- Special Constables Recruitment

Press
- Special Constables Recruitment
- Police Graduate Recruitment
- Crime Prevention

Posters
- Special Constables Recruitment
- Crime Prevention

Promotions
- Crime Prevention

Radio
- Crime Prevention

(b) Agencies

Press
- Passport Agency

Campaigns planned for 1994-95 are:

Press
- Fire Safety
- Police Graduate Recruitment

Special Constables Recruitment
Crime Prevention

Television
Special Constables Recruitment

Table A lists campaign objectives:

TABLE A

Electoral Registration
Increase awareness of the need to register in order to vote, especially among young people and ethnic minorities.

Smoke Alarms
Increase to 70 per cent. the number of households fitted with working smoke alarms.

Car Crime Prevention
Raise awareness among motorists of the need to take preventative measures; encourage a partnership approach to fight crime; stimulate business support; help encourage car manufacturers to improve vehicle security.

Passport Renewal
To encourage renewal of applications during the Autumn period.

Special Constables Recruitment
To increase the numbers of Specials.

Police Graduate Recruitment
To increase the numbers of recruits.

With the exception of passport renewal and police graduate recruitment, campaign effectiveness is measured by independent survey research and a range of other relevant measures which demonstrate response to advertising.

The effectiveness of the buying efficiency of television advertising is independently audited.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The members of the Commission for Racial Equality are as follows:

Chairman:
Mr. H. Ouseley

Deputy Chairmen:
Mr. R. Sondhi
Mr. T. Ward

Members:
Rev. E. Brown
Dr. M. Chan
Dr. R. Chandran
Ms M. Cunningham
Mr. M. Hastings
Mr. T. Khan
Dr. Z. Khan
Ms Z. Manzoor
Mr. D. Neil
Mr. R. Purkiss
Mr. A. Rose

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) who are the members currently appointed to the Gaming Board for Great Britain;

(2) who are the members currently appointed to the Horserace Totalisator Board;

(3) who are the members currently appointed to the Horserace Betting Levy Appeals Tribunal for England and Wales;

(4) who are the members currently appointed to the Horserace Betting Levy Board.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

GAMING BOARD FOR GREAT BRITAIN
Chairman
Lady Shirley Littler

Members
Sir Richard Barratt
Mr. W. B. Kirkpatrick
Lady Carolyn Trethowan
Mr. M. H. Hogan

HORSERACE TOTALISATOR BOARD
Chairman
Lord Wyatt of Weeford

Members
Mr. J. Sanderson
Mr. B. M. McDonnell
Mr. T. J. Phillips
Hon. D. Sieff
Hon. J. W. Deedes
Mr. C. Sporborg

HORSERACE BETTING LEVY APPEAL TRIBUNAL
Chairman
Hugh Bennett, QC

Members
Mr. B. W. Waters
Mrs. R. Dean

HORSERACE BETTING LEVY BOARD
Chairman
Sir John Sparrow

Members
Mr. J. W. Robb
Mrs. A. McCurley

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who are the members currently appointed to the Community Development Foundation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current trustees of the Community Development Foundation are:
Mr. Alan Haselhurst MP *(Chairman)*
Ms Beverley Bernard
Mr. Amir Bhatia
Professor Walter James CBE
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft
Mr. Eddie O'Hara MP
Mr. David Owen
Mr. Gerry Wade

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Howard: Equipment recorded as stolen from the Home Office during the past three years is as follows:

Equipment	*Value* £
1991-92	
40 floppy disks	20·00
Various IT items	2,050·00
1 printer	1,200·00
Various tools	3,500·00
Gardening equipment	480·00

Equipment	Value £
Electrical equipment	1,935·00
Cassette tape recorder and amplifier Video camera and video recorder	1,700·00
1992-93	
23 heat lamps	7,050·00
1 lawn mower	250·00
Various tools	910·00
3 strimmers	500·00
Rotary mower	504·00
2 motor mowers	1,088·00
Horsebox and tools	6,500·00
1 computer	1,000·00
Fax machine	230·00
1993-94 (to date)	
Trailer	2,470·00
3 strimmers	740·00
Power washer	525·00
Various tools	2,400·00
Various equipment	410·00

Combat 18

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what reports he has received from the chief constable of West Yorkshire about police action being taken to stop Combat 18 from issuing publications inciting the public to make nuisance telephone calls;

(2) what representations he has received about the activities and leadership of Combat 18; what complaints have been made under the Public Order Act or other legislation against Combat 18; what reports he has received about publications, issued by Combat 18, inciting the public to cause a nuisance against listed individuals and organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no reports from the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police about Combat 18. I understand that the Chief Constable has received a letter from the hon. Member and that he will be investigating the complaint it contains. The West Yorkshire Police have received no other complaints. My right hon. and learned Friend has received 10 representations from hon. Members and a number of letters from the general public about the undesirable activities of Combat 18.

Fire and Civil Defence Authorities

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what penalties are incurred by a fire and civil defence authority which exceeds its capping limit in the necessary pursuit of its statutory responsibilities;

(2) what action he intends to take to ensure that the Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority is financially able to fulfil its statutory duties;

(3) what was *(a)* the budgetary requirement and *(b)* the provisional standard spending assessment for 1994-95 of the Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority's budgetary requirement for 1994-95 is a matter for the authority. Its standard spending assessment for next year is £46·116 million. It is for the authority to set its budget taking account of all appropriate considerations including its statutory duties. Under the provisional capping criteria announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 2 December, Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority would be able to increase its budget by 1¼ per cent. Any major precepting authority which is required to set a substitute budget as a result of capping may be liable for any administrative expenses incurred by a billing authority as a consequence of that substitute budget.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the report of the inspection by Her Majesty's inspector of fire services of the Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority which took place on 5 July 1993 was published; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the value of annual inspections carried out by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services when its findings can be reversed by another inspection team within a period of five months;

(3) in what circumstances the findings of an annual inspection by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services in respect of a particular authority may be reversed, following inspection by another team in the period before the next annual inspection; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what representations he has received about the inspection carried out by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services which reversed within five months his professional assessment of the establishment requirements of the Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The report of the special inspection of the Merseyside fire brigade which took place during the week commencing 5 July 1993 was published on 11 January. My right hon. and learned Friend does not accept that the report reverses the findings of Her Majesty's inspector of fire services' 1993 annual inspection of the Merseyside fire brigade. Annual inspections of fire brigades serve the purpose of reporting to my right hon. and learned Friend and informing the fire authority on how effectively the brigade concerned is carrying out its statutory functions.

The 1993 annual inspection of the Merseyside fire brigade identified a number of concerns about the way in which the brigade was carrying out its functions, and about its financial position. The special inspection was carried out in the light of those concerns, and of the concerns of the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority itself about the brigade's financial position in the 1993-94 financial year. The special inspection was carried out by a team led by the inspector who had conducted the 1993 annual inspection. The detailed findings of the special inspection reflect the fact that the enlarged inspection team, which included independent financial and accountancy consultants, was able to examine the brigade's organisation and effectiveness in considerably greater detail than is possible in annual inspections of fire brigades. My right hon. and learned Friend has received correspondence from a number of hon. Members about the special inspection.

Inspectorate of Fire Services

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will initiate a thorough audit of the role and functions of Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that the role and functions of Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services are appropriate and that the inspectorate carries them out effectively.

Police Duties

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to define the core duties of the police service.

Mr. Howard: I have asked for a review of policing duties to be undertaken in consultation with the police service and police authority representatives. I share the concern of the police service that the extent of the burdens being placed on them needs examination. I have made it clear that I want to see a police service freed from non-essential tasks so that officers may have the time to concentrate on the tasks which really matter to the public. I shall want to listen very carefully to what the police have to say about the extent of the work they are asked to carry out, and how it might be organised differently.

I expect to receive a report on this exercise in the autumn. I shall consider the impact of any changes proposed on operational efficiency and the quality of service that the police offer the community. I shall also wish to consider how best to consult the public if any changes are proposed that would affect the police interface with the public.

Remand

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the latest year available, how many people were remanded in the west midlands area; and how many were *(a)* black males and *(b)* black females.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* Reliable information on the total numbers of defendants remanded in the west midlands is not available centrally. Neither is any regular information collected regularly on the ethnic origin of those proceeded against in court. Some information on the ethnic origin of those remanded in custody in the west midlands was given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd) in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 25 January at columns *155-56.*

Cannabis

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each police authority area, the number of people arrested for possession of cannabis in each year since 1989; and what percentage of those was *(a)* prosecuted and *(b)* cautioned.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 February 1994]:* Information on the number of persons arrested for possession of cannabis is not collected centrally. Information on the total number of persons dealt with for the offence of unlawful possession of cannabis, and the percentage of those persons who were cautioned, from 1989 to 1992, the latest year for which figures are available, is given in the table.

Number of offenders, and percentage cautioned, for the offence of possession of cannabis, by police force area, United Kingdom,[1] 1989-92

	Offenders 1989	*Percentage cautioned*	*Offenders 1990*	*Percentage cautioned*	*Offenders 1991*	*Percentage cautioned*	*Offenders 1992*	*Percentage cautioned*
Avon and Somerset	128	20	158	18	744	88	890	82
Bedfordshire	76	66	219	58	297	68	217	82
Cambridgeshire	94	73	251	44	193	48	280	72
Cheshire	166	45	298	12	525	46	727	64
Cleveland	47	64	139	59	230	67	206	67
Cumbria	75	23	279	10	404	28	380	37
Derbyshire	61	66	240	40	191	45	243	60
Devon and Cornwall	255	62	849	39	659	40	781	72
Dorset	29	41	139	15	159	30	292	60
Durham	29	38	48	27	53	25	146	48
Essex	335	82	717	70	889	66	850	75
Gloucestershire	112	71	280	66	415	71	470	82
Greater Manchester	476	35	1,035	26	1,104	32	1,066	52
Hampshire	349	86	596	77	558	86	268	81
Hertfordshire	77	43	337	26	603	49	518	64
Humberside	160	61	358	55	335	60	370	56
Kent	214	85	221	76	562	67	586	87
Lancashire	180	63	546	27	520	46	680	62
Leicestershire	68	54	239	34	342	51	214	67
Lincolnshire	64	64	183	32	309	44	227	38
Merseyside	795	78	1,745	53	1,971	48	1,593	54
City of London	35	86	206	75	151	75	118	86
Metropolitan Police	8,403	88	13,386	69	12,393	70	10,910	75
Norfolk	93	56	365	37	412	52	497	67
Northamptonshire	51	86	134	66	214	67	347	73
Northumbria	142	73	209	39	227	52	384	77
North Yorkshire	61	75	123	35	76	18	114	57
Nottinghamshire	124	65	204	56	302	56	384	59
South Yorkshire	251	69	529	64	756	67	817	69
Staffordshire	52	29	226	18	287	39	220	57
Suffolk	177	68	320	53	465	64	488	76
Surrey	184	80	474	41	644	63	411	79
Sussex	166	28	742	15	788	18	677	52
Thames Valley	242	62	1,147	39	1,043	55	1,339	68
Warwickshire	134	76	271	56	280	66	281	73
West Mercia	46	2	250	0	450	55	567	68
West Midlands	287	46	1,174	17	1,013	40	539	58

	Offenders 1989	Percentage cautioned	Offenders 1990	Percentage cautioned	Offenders 1991	Percentage cautioned	Offenders 1992	Percentage cautioned
West Yorkshire	115	12	859	11	488	19	595	22
Wiltshire	325	92	193	66	231	68	363	75
England—other	140	80	269	70	148	82	286	96
Dyfed and Powys	53	79	194	34	284	55	465	77
Gwent	12	8	192	49	166	69	254	78
North Wales	81	26	373	20	403	53	309	59
South Wales	243	22	505	11	323	7	292	40
Wales—other	0	—	2	0	4	75	10	80
RUC	44	41	110	53	69	38	129	33
Northern Ireland—other	0	—	0	—	0	—	1	100
United Kingdom	15,620	75	33,753	48	35,622	54	34,705	63

[1] There is no cautioning in Scotland

Police Officers

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the number of police officers per 100,000 population for each year since 1979 for the South Wales, Thames Valley, Kent, Lancashire, Avon and Somerset and Hampshire police authority areas; and what were the comparable totals for all non-metropolitan and Welsh non-metropolitan police authority areas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on ratios of police officers to population levels are contained in the appendices to the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, copies of which are in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Boundaries

17. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what submissions he has received on the local government boundaries for Somerset and Dorset.

Mr. Curry: We have received a large number of representations about the Local Government Commission's recommendations for Somerset, Avon and Gloucestershire.

Submissions about the boundaries for Dorset are at present a matter for the Local Government Commission, which began its review of the area on 13 December 1993.

Council House Rents

18. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes have taken place since 1979 in real terms in the average rent per dwelling per week of council houses.

Sir George Young: The average weekly rent for local housing authority dwellings in England increased from £6·41 in April 1979 to £33·50 in April 1993, an increase of 98 per cent. in real terms.

London Policy

19. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has had to the consultation document on London policy.

Mr. Gummer: Approximately 10,500 completed questionnaires from "London—Making the Best Better" have been returned and I have also received over 250 letters in response to the publication.

City Challenge (Leicester)

20. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the progress of the city challenge project in Leicester so far; and what communication he has received from board members or employees of city challenge which may cast doubt on its future success.

Sir George Young: My Department has monitored the progress of the Leicester city challenge action plan since it was approved last March. A mid-year progress review meeting in October identified a number of problem areas which required action. These issues will be discussed further at the formal annual review on 28 February with the sponsor Minister, my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and Technology. Future funding will depend on the outcome of the annual review.

Cash Incentive Scheme

21. **Mr. Betts:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the operation of the cash incentive scheme.

Sir George Young: Cash incentive schemes grants are a cost-effective measure which enable local authorities to improve the supply of affordable housing for rent to people in need. They also provide a boost to the housing market. Since its introduction in 1989 the cash incentive scheme has created over 8,000 vacancies by reletting, and enabled the same number of households to buy their own home.

Building and Construction Industry Activity

22. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest assessment of activity in the building and construction sector and prospects for the short and medium term.

Mr. Baldry: There are some grounds for optimism in the construction industry. The fall in output has halted. New orders are enjoying their best period of growth for years, with figures for the three months to December up 34 per cent. against the previous year.

Plymouth (Regional Sub-office)

23. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish an integral regional sub-office in Plymouth; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: We will consider this and other possibilities for the location of the new integrated regional offices in the South West.

EC Water Directives

24. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the future of the EC bathing and drinking water directives.

Mr. Atkins: The European Council in December asked the Commission to bring forward as soon as possible four framework directives to replace parts of existing Community water legislation. These would include replacements for the drinking and bathing water directives.

I understand that the Commission today agreed the text of a proposal for a revision of the Bathing Water Directive. The United Kingdom fully supports the move towards updating Community water legislation. We will now be examining the proposal to ensure that it meets the requirements of subsidiarity, up-to-date science and cost-effectiveness, and that it reorients the new directive towards essential quality and health parameters.

Social Housing Sector

25. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for extending shared ownership in the social housing sector.

Mr. Gummer: The Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme for 194-95, announced in December of last year, will provide £191·1 million for shared ownership schemes. This is expected to rise to £316·6 million in 1996-97. This will represent 21 per cent. of the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme compared with only 7 per cent. in 1992-93.

The Housing Corporation estimate that this will enable them to provide between 8,500 and 10,500 new homes under shared ownership in 1994-95 rising to between 11,700 and 13,900 by 1996-97. In many cases existing housing association and local authority tenancies will be released for reletting to people in housing need.

Local Authority Housing

26. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority dwellings have been built in the last year, to the latest possible date; and what were the comparable figures for 1978.

Sir George Young: Provisional figures show that in England in 1993 there were 1,200 housebuilding completions for local authorities. The comparative figure in 1978 was 83,700.

Housing associations are now the main providers of new social housing. 57,600 units of new provision made available with Government help are forecast for 1993-94, compared with 23,800 in 1978-79. Local authorities also sponsor housing associations, and so far in 1993-94 4,400 units of new provision have been made available in this way.

The number of new local authority and housing association lettings in 192-93 was, at 321,000, almost the same as in 1978-79, when there were an estimated 323,000.

35. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his proposals in the consultation document "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies" will help local authorities carry out their duties under the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Gummer: As the consultation paper makes clear, providing suitable accommodation for families will remain a priority for housing authorities.

36. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many organisations have been invited to respond to his Department's consultation paper, "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies".

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Construction and Inner Cities gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 9 February at column 299.

Local Government Finance

27. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the representations he has recently received from local authorities on the standard spending assessments.

Mr. Curry: During the recent period of consultation on the provisional revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95 we received representations on a wide range of issues from 142 local authorities. My right hon. Friend considered carefully all those representations and any other relevant information before taking his final decisions on the revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet the leaders of Liverpool city Council to discuss the standard spending assessment for 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning met a delegation from Liverpool city council on 17 January to discuss their provisional standard spending assessment for 1994-95. My right hon. Friend considered carefully all the representations made to him, including those from Liverpool, before taking final decisions on the revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95, which was approved by the House on 3 February.

Hedgerows

28. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he intends to take to provide enhanced protection against removal of hedgerows.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are committed to bringing forward measures for the protection of hedgerows when parliamentary time permits.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

29. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to encourage councils to extend compulsory competitive tendering to as wide a range of services as possible.

Mr. Baldry: We have already announced a detailed programme for extension of CCT to local authorities' professional and corporate services, to housing management, and to three further blue-collar services. I would encourage authorities to open up their services to competition wherever possible, and I am gratified to see that an increasing number of authorities are voluntarily subjecting a wide range of services to competitive tendering, ahead of the statutory timetable.

32. **Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about his plans for the application of compulsory competitive tendering to housing management.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on 26 November 1993 at column *264;* to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 15 December 1993 at column *733;* and to my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willets) on 21 January 1994 at columns *872-73.*

Ofwat

30. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next meet the Director General of Ofwat, to discuss water disconnections and compulsory metering of domestic households.

Mr. Atkins: I shall be having a meeting shortly with the Director General of Water Services to discuss matters of a current mutual interest.

34. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives from Ofwat to discuss water charges.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met Mr. Byatt, the Director General of Water Services, on 26 July 1993 to discuss Mr. Byatt's periodic review of water price limits.

Local Government Review

31. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Local Government Commission for England concerning the progress of the local government review.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State holds regular meetings with Sir John Banham, the chairman of the Local Government Commission, to discuss all local government reorganisation issues, including the commission's progress. My right hon. Friend last met Sir John formally on 18 January 1994. I last met Sir John on 8 February.

Housing Association Houses

33. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of new housing association houses to be completed in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Members for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) and for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) earlier today.

Water Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the landfill sites in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk where the pollution inspectorate or the National Rivers Authority have detected pollutants and dangerous chemical substances in nearby groundwater since 1991.

Mr. Atkins: Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 the licensing and monitoring of landfill sites is the responsibility of waste regulation authorities, in this case Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk county councils. Where the NRA has carried out monitoring, relevant results are available on the public register for the NRA's Anglian region.

Species Action Plans

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the basis of his estimate of a period of 10 years in order to complete and put into implementation the species action plans.

Mr. Atkins: The commitment to complete and put into implementation plans for at least 90 per cent. of the presently known globally threatened and threatened endemic species within the next 10 years was agreed with the territorial Departments and the statutory conservation agencies as a target which was achievable by the United Kingdom as a whole. It may prove possible for some countries, such as England, to improve upon this timescale.

Biodiversity Action Plan

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes in Government energy policy will follow from the linkage of energy use and biodiversity conservation expressed in the biodiversity action plan.

Mr. Atkins: The Government's energy policy aims are already pursued in the context of other Government policies and commitments including those relating to the environment. The biodiversity action plan will inform the further development of these policies.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received following his announcement on THORP on 15 June 1993.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations.

Recycling

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities who *(a)* submitted and *(b)* did not submit to him a draft recycling plan by January 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: All English local authorities apart from Brent and Wolverhampton have submitted a draft recycling plan.

The Secretary of State for the Environment is considering the use of his powers under section 49(7) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to require those authorities to produce a draft plan.

All Scottish and Welsh authorities apart from:
Caithness
Dunfermline
Lochaber
Motherwell
Nairn
Sutherland
Western Isles
Wigtown
Alyn and Deeside
Brecknock
Radnorshire

have submitted draft recycling plans. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales are responsible for the submission of recycling plans in Scotland and Wales respectively.

Sewage Discharge Consents

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in upgrading sewage treatment works were in breach of their discharge consents at the time of privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. Atkins: The water industry's investment programme is making good progress. The latest figures available demonstrate a continuing improvement in the operational performance of sewage treatment works. In 1992 the proportion of works complying with their consent standards was more than 95 per cent. compared with 83 per cent. in 1988.

Miners' Welfare Schemes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support has been provided to local authorities where they have taken over miners' welfare schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: No specific support has been provided to local authorities for this purpose. The support of miners' welfare schemes is a matter for British Coal and the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to issue further guidelines to the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Baldry: We have no plans to issue further guidance to the Local Government Commission.

Councillors (Directorships)

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has about the number of authorities which appoint councillors as directors of companies who have contracted-out services for local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not collate information on this subject.

Local Authority Reorganisation Costs

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources will be made available to authorities in Cleveland and the Isle of Wight for reorganisation costs incurred by them in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: We propose, on the basis, inter alia, of information provided by the authorities themselves, the Government's public expenditure plans and progress on implementing the review of local government, to issue to authorities in Cleveland and the Isle of Wight Supplementary Credit Approvals, subject to a maximum, to enable them to borrow to meet certain start-up costs which will be incurred in 1994-95 before they are reorganised. Once reorganised, the Government expects that, in general, early revenue savings and capital receipts from reorganisation will significantly reduce the need for further transitional assistance and will provide resources to repay borrowing undertaken in reliance on these SCAs. For 1994-95 the maximum amounts proposed for authorities in Cleveland and the Isle of Wight are as follows:

Authority	*SCA maximum amount £K (rounded)*
Isle of Wight	
Isle of Wight County Council	1,370
Medina Borough Council	80
South Wight Borough Council	30
Cleveland	
Cleveland Borough Council	1,060
Hartlepool Borough Council	1,680
Langbaurgh on Tees Borough Council	2,000
Middlesbrough Borough Council	1,040
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	1,740
Total	9,000

Electrical Wiring

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many accidents in the home each year result from faulty electrical wiring; and what steps the Health and Safety Executive is taking to ensure high standards of electrical installation.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* Between 1988 and 1992 the average number of deaths in the home due to receiving an electrical shock were 28. Of these less than 3 per cent. resulted from faults in fixed electrical wiring.

As a result of representations from: the deregulation task forces, the Electrical Contractors Association and others, my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Trade and Industry and the Health and Safety Executive, is looking at the desirability and practicability of including electrical safety within the Building Regulations. My Department has also recently accepted an invitation to join other Government bodies on the board of the National Inspection Council for electrical Installation Contractors. Inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive and of local authorities enforce the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 which govern the safety of electrical installations in workplaces.

DEFENCE

Defence Weapons Establishment

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if live horses have been used in the tests carried out at the defence weapons establishment at Porton Down into the efficacy of whips on horses;

(2) which organisation has commissioned the defence weapons establishment at Porton Down to conduct tests on the efficacy of whips on horses;

(3) what is the purpose of testing of the efficacy of whips on horses at the defence weapons establishment at Porton Down;

(4) on what date tests commenced at the defence weapons establishment at Porton Down on the efficacy of whips on horses; and on what date they finished or will finish.

Mr. Hanley: These are matters for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down—CBDE. I have asked the Chief Executive of CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. G. Pearson to Mr. Edward O'Hara, dated 16 February 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Defence asking about the testing of whips involving the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down have been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. In June 1993 the Stewards of the Jockey Club established a Working Group to assess whether the current Rules of Racing were adequate to control whip abuse. The Terms of Reference of the Working Group are to promote and co-ordinate further research into the specifications and design of the whip together with methods of assessing possible injury. Because of CBDE's expertise in the development of protective equipment for Service personnel against impacts and explosive blast we were invited by the Animal Health Trust on behalf of the Jockey Club to advise the Whip Working Group on the probable biomechanical principles of impacts to skin by whips and to recommend a simple, objective and scientifically credible test method that can be used to rank whips submitted to the Jockey Club. The Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is acting in a purely advisory role and will not be undertaking the tests on the whips submitted to the Jockey Club. Live horses are not used in any of this advisory work being carried out by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment. The tests will be carried out by the Jockey Club or their agents.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the policy of the Royal Air Force towards officers and men who fall into debt as a result of increased maintenance payments set by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Hanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 2 February 1994 at columns *713-14*.

Low Flying

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of booked low flying hours in the United Kingdom low flying system in 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The total number of hours booked at low level in the United Kingdom low flying system in 1993 was 107,220. This figure does not include the hours booked in the recently created low flying area 10 as this information is not yet available.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the southerly directional flow control for low flying aircraft was introduced between Penrhyndeudraeth and Trawsfynydd.

Mr. Hanley: The flow control was introduced on 10 August 1992.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low flying sorties were undertaken in the United Kingdom low flying system in the years 1989, 1990 and 1993, calculated on the pre-1985 basis of estimating sorties from numbers of movements.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*The approximate number of sorties using the pre-1985 method*
1989	121,088
1990	125,210
1993	[1]105,189

[1] This figure does not take account of movements flown within LFA 10 as this information is not yet available.

In addition, I regret that the answer given to the hon. Member on 2 April 1993 at column *505* did not take account of the number of night movements flown in 1991 and 1992. Revised figures for the approximate number of sorties flown using the pre-1985 method in 1991 and 1992 are as follows:

1991—102,460
1992—115,573

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low flying movements were recorded over Wales in 1993.

Mr. Hanley: It is not our practice to publish detailed information on activity in individual low flying areas.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations and dates of currently planned presentations by the Ministry of Defence low flying presentation team.

Mr. Hanley: Presentations by the Ministry of Defence low flying presentation team are currently planned to take place on Thursday 24 February at Barnard Castle, County Durham and on Monday 28 February at Llandrindod Wells, Powys.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the impact of the concentration of RAF fast jet advanced flying training at RAF Valley on the amount of low flying in north Wales; and what research was carried out by his Department, prior to the decision to concentrate training at Valley, on *(a)* the effects on air traffic density and air safety and *(b)* the noise disturbance.

Mr. Hanley: Although every effort will be made to spread low flying sorties throughout the United Kingdom flying system, it is inevitable that with the concentration of fast jet advanced flying training at RAF Valley more use will be made of the airspace over north and mid Wales. Revision of procedures for the management of the local airspace will ensure that the effect of this increased air traffic is minimised and that air safety is not compromised.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints about low flying were received by his Department from addresses in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland in each months since March 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of inquiries or complaints relating to military low flying training which my Department received during the period April 1993 to January 1994 from addresses in England, Wales and Scotland were as follows:

Month	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
1993			
April	263	30	84
May	404	54	118
June	541	53	105
July	666	83	92
August	566	70	108
September	403	70	70
October	259	35	94
November	164	29	73
December	193	34	49
1994			
January	237	27	31

Aircraft Movements

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft movements *(a)* by Hawk aircraft and *(b)* by other types of aircraft were recorded at RAF Valley in each of the last four years; and what is the projected number of Hawk movements per annum at RAF Valley after the transfer there of all RAF fast jet advanced flying training.

Mr. Hanley: Records of aircraft movements at RAF Valley are designated as either fixed-wing aircraft or helicopter. It is therefore not possible to give a precise figure on the number of movements recorded solely by Hawk aircraft during the last four years, although in the figures shown in the table for fixed-wing movements, the majority were flown by Hawks:

	Movements
1993	46,007
1992	60,771
1991	66,469
1990	62,007

The number of movements flown by helicopters at RAF Valley during the last four years were as follows:

	Movements
1993	5,410
1992	6,827
1991	12,813
1990	14,846

When advanced Hawk training is transferred to RAF Valley, the projected number of Hawk movements per annum will be in the order of 65,000.

Institute of Community and Occupational Medicine

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the titles of all survey and research reports produced by the Royal Air Force Institute of Community and Occupational Medicine since 1989.

Mr. Hanley: Since 1989 the RAF Institute of Health and Medical Training (RAF IHNT), formerly known as the Royal Air Force Institute of Community and Occupational Medicine (ICOM), has issued about 280 reports covering an extensive range of occupational and public health issues affecting the Royal Air Force worldwide. They include classified, in-confidence or otherwise sensitive subjects. All were produced solely for internal use within my Department and it would not be appropriate to release a complete list of titles.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current and planned activities of the Royal Air Force Institute of Community and Occupational Medicine relating to aircraft noise.

Mr. Hanley: The RAF Institute of Health and Medical Training's current research activities include investigation of the noise levels surrounding helicopter landing sites and development of criteria for classifying the effect of night-time helicopter noise. The institute is undertaking research with Salford university into the noise effects of light aircraft operations. It also provides a member for a working group which is examining the feasibility of a study to investigate the possible effects on health of noise from low flying aircraft.

The institute has a number of research tasks planned in addition to the routine surveys of the noise contours around operational airfields. Future tasks include incorporating helicopter noise data into the AIRNOISE computer model and the calculation of noise from Chinook auxiliary power supply engines.

Nuclear Test Participants

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will commission a health study of British nuclear test participants and their families in order to compare health and genetic records with the general population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has no plans for further studies regarding the British nuclear test veterans. As the recent National Radiological Protection Board report indicated that there was no risk to test participants, any effect on their families is therefore extremely unlikely.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he will take to ensure that cases of leukaemia and myeloma among British nuclear test participants are included in the studies of the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. Hanley: The recently published NRPB study took account of cases of leukaemia and myeloma among British nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to take following the recent publication of the National Radiological Protection Board report into mortality and incidence of cancer in British nuclear test participants.

Mr. Hanley: We have noted the recent NRPB report, which concluded that there was no health risk to test participants.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what efforts have been undertaken to assess the health risk to persons *(a)* not wearing protective equipment, *(b)* with a blue book entry and *(c)* present at the

time of explosion, in connection with studies by the National Radiological Protection Board into British nuclear test participants.

Mr. Hanley: The recent NRPB report concluded that participation in the test programme had no detectable effect on participants' expectation of life or on their overall risk of developing cancer or other fatal diseases.

Armed Services Personnel

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military personnel there were, for each year since 1979, in each of the armed services operating in and from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of United Kingdom regular forces and Gurkhas stationed in the United Kingdom (as at 1 July 1993) were as follows:

Year	United Kingdom regular forces			Gurkhas	Total including Gurkhas
	Royal Navy services	Army	Royal Air Force		
1979	66,588	92,899	72,741	742	232,970
1980	65,631	96,363	76,066	905	238,965
1981	70,526	96,653	77,862	1,258	246,299
1982	66,727	90,127	75,102	596	232,552
1983	66,257	88,977	73,605	1,167	230,006
1984	62,644	92,278	75,523	1,226	231,671
1985	60,300	93,021	76,230	1,226	230,777
1986	59,899	92,093	76,285	1,300	229,577
1987	60,899	90,616	76,578	1,201	229,294
1988	58,704	91,560	75,902	1,342	227,508
1989	58,131	88,481	73,583	1,170	221,365
1990	54,957	88,290	72,668	1,437	217,352
1991	53,512	82,392	71,982	1,373	209,259
1992	53,884	85,951	70,835	1,346	212,016
1993	52,805	82,605	66,775	1,397	203,582

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

RAF Saxa Vord (Sewage Treatment)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much public money has been spent by the Ministry of Defence in maintenance, monitoring and repair of the sewage treatment works at RAF Saxa Vord since its completion in 1989.

Mr. Hanley: Some £31,000 has been spent by the Ministry of Defence for the maintenance, monitoring and repair of the sewage treatment works at RAF Saxa Vord since its completion in 1989.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost to the RAF of the installation of the sewage treatment plant at RAF Saxa Vord completed in November 1989.

Mr. Hanley: The cost to the RAF for the installation of the sewage treatment plant at RAF Saxa Vord was approximately £55,000.

Noise Pollution (Compensation)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy with regard to compensation of residents living in close proximity to RAF bases in respect of increased or excessive noise pollution and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Since 1985, following a detailed examination of noise created by military aircraft, it has been my Department's policy to offer sound insulation grants to the owners/occupiers of houses in the vicinity of operational airfields which fall within certain scientifically defined noise contours. In cases where noise exceeds a higher level, the Department may offer to acquire the particular property concerned. There is also scope to provide compensation for the depreciation in value of property resulting from the bringing into use of new public works.

The Department's compensation scheme is a voluntary one but follows closely statutory schemes of the Department of Transport at civil airports.

To date, more than 30 such schemes have been introduced; these are reviewed at five-yearly intervals unless operational changes are such that an earlier review is warranted.

Nuclear Defence Capability (Test)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of the United Kingdom's nuclear defence capability, in money terms and as a percentage of his Department's budget, for *(a)* his Department as a whole, *(b)* the Royal Navy, *(c)* the Army and *(d)* the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

	Estimated financial year 1993-94 outturn £ million	Relevant percentage of grouping/total budget
Royal Navy	[1]1,200	22·00
Army[2]	—	—
RAF	[3]20	0·36
Total	[4]1,820	7·80

Notes
[1] Direct capital and operating costs of Trident and Polaris.
[2] The Army does not operate nuclear weapons.
[3] Non warhead equipment, security and operating costs of the WE177.
[4] Includes RN and RAF costs as shown, plus £600 million which falls to the Procurement Executive and Research Grouping.

Civil Defence Force (Medals)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether members of the Civil Defence Force, 1939-45, are entitled to wear the defence medal; and to which other medal they are entitled.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

Anyone who undertook certain civilian service in one of 50 different categories in the United Kingdom for a period of not less than three years between September 1939 and May 1945 may qualify for the defence medal; and these categories include relevant service in a number of organisations with the words "civil defence" in their title. I am arranging for copies of leaflets giving full details of those who may qualify to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Service qualifying for the defence medal does not as such confer entitlement to the award of any other medal.

Communications Satellite

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present position with regard to the United Kingdom military communications satellite; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: A contract worth some £300m has been awarded today for the development, production and delivery in orbit of two Skynet 4 stage 2 military communication satellites. These will replace the existing Skynet 4 stage 1 satellites as they approach the end of their operational life.

British Aerospace is prime contractor for this work. The main sub-contractors are Matra Marconi Space (UK) for satellite communications payload work and McDonnell Douglas and Arianespace for the launch vehicles. This is an important contract which will ensure the well-being of the United Kingdom's space industry and contribute to its long-term future.

Mr. Gordon Foxley

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *240*, if he will publish, or place in the Library, a copy of his letter on Mr. Gordon Foxley.

Mr. Aitken: Copies are now available in the House Library.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were in temporary employment; and what percentage they represented of total employees, in each region in each year since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: For years 1984 onwards, this information is available from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and can be obtained via the Quantime LFS service available in the Library.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons in receipt of unemployment benefit within the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow have been unemployed for *(a)* more than six months, *(b)* more than 12 months and *(c)* more than two years; and if he will give these figures for (i) men and (ii) women for each month since 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: A count of the numbers of people claiming unemployment related benefits, by duration, is available on the unadjusted basis only. Information for the months of January, April, July and October can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in *(a)* Lewisham and *(b)* London were in temporary employment at the latest available date; and how many of them were women.

Miss Widdecombe: Latest estimates from the Summer 1993 Labour Force Survey show that there were 196,000 people in temporary employment in Greater London, of which 109,000 were women. No information is available on the numbers in temporary employment in Lewisham.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his current estimate of the number of people in *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time employment.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is shown in the following table:

Work force in employment: Great Britain
(Seasonally adjusted)

Thousand

	Full time	*Part time*
September 1993	17,427	6,941

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 to 18-year-olds were undergoing apprenticeship training in *(a)* Lewisham and *(b)* London during each calendar year from 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: Information for the South East (which includes London) and for London separately on the estimated number of apprentices in spring of each year is given in the following table. No information is available for the Lewisham area.

Number of 16 to 18-year-olds undergoing apprenticeship training ('000s)[1]

	Spring 1990	*Spring 1991*	*Spring 1992*	*Spring 1993*
South East (including London)	45	37	38	25
London	17	12	[2]—	[2]—

Source: Labour Force Survey
[1] This is based on the number of people reporting they were doing a recognised trade apprenticeship at the time they were interviewed.
[2] Less than 10,000 in cell; estimate not shown.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the trend

in the number of people in *(a)* Lewisham and *(b)* London availing themselves of youth training, including credits and training for work schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of people on youth training and training for work including predecessor programmes in 1991, 1992 and 1993 is given in the following table:

Participants on training (inc predecessor) programmes 1991-1993

	13 October 1991	*11 October 1992*	*10 October 1993*
London			
Youth Training (including Youth Credits)	16,900	20,700	19,500
Employment Training	12,700	14,700	—
Employment Action	[1]—	4,000	—
High Technology National Training	35	[2]—	—
Training for Work	—	—	19,000
South Thames TEC			
Youth Training (including Youth Credits)	1,900	3,200	2,800
Employment Training	2,200	3,100	—
Employment Action	0	900	—
Training for Work	—	—	3,500

Source: TEC Operating Agreement (Annex J)
[1] Negligible number on Employment Action. Programme began operations on 1 October 1991.
[2] HTNT provision included in ET figures.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the percentage of young people aged 16 to 19 years who are (i) in full-time education, (ii) in training schemes, (iii) employed and (iv) unemployed in *(a)* Lewisham and *(b)* London.

Miss Widdecombe: Latest estimates from the summer 1993 Labour Force Survey (LFS) show that of all 16 to 19-year-olds in Greater London: 59 per cent. were in full-time education; 4 per cent. were employed in Government employment and training programmes; 17 per cent. were otherwise employed and not in full-time education; and 13 per cent. were ILO unemployed and not in full-time education. The Labour Force Survey also estimates that 76 per cent. of 16 to 19-year-olds in the London borough of Lewisham were in full-time education. The numbers of 16 to 19-year-olds in Lewisham sampled in the Labour Force Survey are too small to provide a reliable breakdown of their economic activity.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people would be registered as unemployed in January if the figures were treated on the same basis as 1978.

Miss Widdecombe: No official estimate is available and to produce one would involve speculation about economic, demographic and social changes that would serve no useful purpose.

Industrial Accidents, Injuries and Illness

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many industrial accidents, injuries and illness were recorded as requiring admission to hospital in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not collected annually but a special study of accidents collected in the General Household Survey during 1986-89, published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys "Home and Leisure Accident Research, 1991 data" indicates that each year, in Great Britain, the accident and emergency departments in hospitals treat around 1·6 million people who are injured during working activities, including driving to work. There is no information on the number of industrial illnesses requiring admission to hospital.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost due to accidents, injuries and illness, which were work related, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Current occupational injury reporting legislation does not require information on the actual length of absence from work to be reported. However, the Health and Safety Executive sponsored a supplement of questions on workplace injury and ill health to the 1990 Labour Force Survey. It is estimated that in Great Britain, workers were incapacitated for work for 23·2 million days in the year to spring 1990 due to workplace injury. Of these, 22·8 million were lost due to injuries reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrances Regulations. For work-related ill health, an estimated 750,000 workers were incapacitated for a total of 13 million days.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the annual cost, in lost production, benefit payments and lost revenue arising from industrial injuries, accidents and illness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Estimates of annual costs in benefit payments and lost revenue arising from industrial injuries, accidents and illness are not available.

Jobcentres

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of job vacancies referred to jobcentres by employers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On the seasonally adjusted basis there were 196,000 vacancies notified to United Kingdom jobcentres in January 1994. In the United Kingdom jobcentre vacancies account for about a third of the total.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of vacancies referred to jobcentres which are filled within *(a)* a day, *(b)* a week, *(c)* a month and *(d)* three months; and what significant regional variations there are in these average figures.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the proportion of vacancies at any one point in time held by jobcentres.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that nationally Jobcentre vacancies represent about one third of all unfilled vacancies.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many visits abroad the Minister of State made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 3 November 1993 at column *268* and to my subsequent letter to him of 17 January 1994, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

The information given to the hon. Member for Newport, East included information up to and including 26 October 1993. Since then, I have undertaken two further engagements overseas. The first to deliver the keynote address and attend a Council of Europe meeting in Malta at a cost of £5,451; the second, to accompany my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to a Social Affairs Council meeting in Brussels at a total cost of £3,403. These figures include the costs of accompanying officials.

Aero-generators

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs are currently supported by *(a)* aero-generator manufacture, *(b)* aero-generator construction and *(c)* aero-generator operation and maintenance in the United Kingdom.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available separately. However, the latest census of employment results show that there were 156,000 people employed in the aerospace equipment manufacturing and repairing industry in the United Kingdom in 1991.

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the money aimed at long-term unemployment from the EC structural funds will be spent on.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: EC assistance for the long-term unemployed is provided by the European social fund under objective 3 (which also covers several other priority groups). Following the adoption in July 1993 of new structural fund regulations for the period 1994-1999, a plan on the proposed use of objective 3 funds in Great Britain over that period was submitted to the EC Commission at the beginning of November; the Commission has not yet given a formal response.

The plan recognises that as the needs of the long-term unemployed vary, a range of provision is required, including work experience vocational training, job search facilities, and advice on job-finding and interview techniques. The aim will be to raise the skill levels, motivation and confidence of long-term unemployed people to enable them to compete more effectively in the labour market and to find and retain jobs.

Working Conditions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to improve working conditions and workers' rights.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The United Kingdom has a substantial body of employment and health and safety legislation. This is kept under regular review to ensure that it continues to strike the right balance between the essential interests of workers and the need to keep to a minimum the burdens on business. In general, terms and conditions of employment are for negotiation and agreement between employers and employees without Government intervention.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Engineering Technology Advisory Committee

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Engineering Technology Advisory Committee.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Engineering Technology Research Committee was dissolved in October 1993.

Hearing Aid Council

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Hearing Aid Council.

Mr. McLoughlin: Since 1 January 1994, membership of the Hearing Aid Council has been:

Chairman: Mr. William McKinnon Fernie

Members representing the interests of registered hearing aid dispensers and their employers:

Mr. Roger Evans
Mr. Frank Holden
Mr. Nigel King
Mr. Robert Rendell

Members representing the interests of persons with impaired hearing:

Miss Jackie Blount
Mr. Stephen Lloyd
Mrs. Christine Martin
Mrs. Patricia Thompson

Members with specialised medical knowledge of deafness or audiological technical knowledge:

Dr. Valeria Cleaver
Mrs. Margaret Excell
Professor Linda Luxon
Dr. Ewa Raglan

National Consumers Consultative Committee

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the National Consumers Consultative Committee.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department is not aware of any body by this name.

Estate Agents

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the Persons Hearing Estate Agents Appeals.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following is the list of people from which panels are appointed to hear appeals from decisions by the Director General of Fair Trading prohibiting or warning persons from doing estate agency work.

Professor G. Hornsey LLM
G. B. L. Brown BA
D. J. W. Browne
M. G. Clarke MA LLB
J. A. G. Fiddes FRICS FISVA
E. C. Lowson MBE BSc
Dr. R. A. McCreadie LLB PhD
J. Compass
R. A. S. Sisterson FRICS
Ms S. K. Ward BA
D. S. McDonald FISVA ARVA PPIBA
P. B. Robinson JP FNAEA LRSM
D. W. Hay
M. E. Channon
Mrs. L. A. Service JP MA
P. Simmonds
P. R. V. Watkins FRICS
R. Davis DPA
P. W. Wilson JP FRICS FISVA
Professor J. T. Farrand LLB LLD
P. M. Leonard
E. A. Goodbody
G. G. Buckley
D. M. Magennis FISVA FRICS
H. J. Smith FISVA
O. Edwards MBE JP
Professor E. J. Griew MA LLB
Professor D. Thompson LLB PhD
M. St G. Arrowsmith MA
Mrs H. Scott OBE JP BA LLB
Professor B. W. Harvey MA LLB
Professor D. L. Foulkes JP BA LLM

British Hallmarking Council

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who are the members currently appointed to the British Hallmarking Council.

Mr. McLoughlin: The current members of the British Hallmarking Council are as follows:

Mr. R. S. Burman—*(Chairman)*
Mr. S. L. Batiste, MP
Mr. J. R. Bettinson
Mr. R. D. Buchanan-Dunlop
Mr. M. Durst
The Baroness Fisher of Rednal
Mr. P. E. M. Fuller
Mr. R. G. Gowland
Mrs. D. M. H. Inches Carr
Mr. D. B. Inglis
Miss R. D. T. McRobert
Mr. T. Murray
Mrs. S. P. Payne
Mr. C. H. Perry
Mr. E. S. Poyser
Mr. A. M. Stirling
Mr. R. V. Wright

Car Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what share imported cars took of the United Kingdom car market in 1973; what they take currently; what forecasts were made in 1973 of the effect of EC membership on the British car industry; and by how much output and employment in the industry has changed since 1973.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not aware of the forecasts to which the hon. Gentleman refers. A search of relevant literature would involve disproportionate cost.

The available data are as follows:

Year	*Imports as a percentage of UK car market*	*Production (cars)*	*Employment in motor vehicles and parts industry*
1973	27	1,747,321	514,000
1974	28	1,543,119	500,000
1975	33	1,267,695	460,000
1976	38	1,333,449	451,000
1977	45	1,327,820	467,000
1978	49	1,222,949	474,000
1979	56	1,070,452	466,000
1980	57	923,744	437,000
1981	56	954,650	366,000
1982	58	887,679	318,000
1983	57	1,044,597	299,000
1984	58	908,906	281,000
1985	58	1,047,973	274,000
1986	56	1,018,962	266,000
1987	52	1,142,683	260,000
1988	56	1,226,835	271,000
1989	57	1,299,082	264,000
1990	57	1,295,611	249,000
1991	56	1,236,900	225,000
1992	55	1,291,880	234,000
1993	55	1,375,200	218,000

Sources: Imports as a percentage of UK market and production figures are from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Employment figures are from the Department of Employment.

Rover Group

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek assurances from BMW concerning its takeover of Rover.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the letter sent from BMW to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, a copy of the which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Timber and Pulp

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has as to the impact of timber and pulp imports into the United Kingdom on temperate rain forest areas in Canada; what quantity of timber and pulp originates from such sources; and if he will consider removing the favourable trade tariff awarded to imports of this kind from Canada.

Mr. Needham: In 1992 (the latest complete year for which data is available) the United Kingdom imported timber and pulp from Canada valued at £224,715,000. Imports from Canada do not receive any favourable tariff treatment. In any case, it is not open to the United Kingdom to alter the tariff on these products—that is a matter for the European Community, which has a common customs tariff. As for the impact of logging on temperature rain forest areas in Canada, that is a matter for the Canadian authorities, as principle 2 of the Rio declaration makes clear.

Parcelforce

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy that any announcement about the future of Parcelforce will be made concurrently with announcements about the future of Royal Mail.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade makes announcements about policy. It is not his practice to make policies about announcements.

Dress Sizes

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce a standard dress size in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Any new or revised British Standard is a matter primarily for the responsible Committee of the British Standards Institution. The Institution is independent of Government. I am advised that there are no plans to introduce a standard dress size in the United Kingdom. A British standard which provides for a system of designating the sizes of women's garments, BS3666 already exists. Except where special considerations such as safety apply, the Government's view is that the development, promotion and use of standards is best undertaken by industry itself, with the support of the British Standards Institution, in the light of consumer requirements in the market, on a voluntary basis.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the amount and reasons for unauthorised payments by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) on 2 February at column 772.

The payments made to exporters were irregular because, although they were made on what was considered to be an appropriate basis for sharing recoveries, they were in excess of what we are now advised is the exporters' strict entitlement under the terms of the guarantee, and because no Treasury approval had been obtained for making what were therefore in effect ex-gratia payments.

Tin Mining

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what assessment was made, and when, with the costs of closure of the South Crofty tin mine in Cornwall on *(a)* employment, *(b)* related industries, *(c)* the environment and *(d)* the National Rivers Authority operation at Wheal Jane (i) by his Department and (ii) in conjunction with other Departments; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what cross-departmental cost-benefit analysis was undertaken of the possible impact before refusing Carnon Consolidated a further loan; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what assessment was made of the impact on Carnon Consolidateds tin mining operation of refusing its request for a further loan; and what conclusions were reached.

Mr. Sainsbury: On 21 December 1993 Carnon's directors made a formal application to the Department for permission to draw additional monies from the existing loans, which had been made under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982; these loans were suspended in June 1990 on the grounds that the project was in jeopardy. When the application was made on 21 December 1993, the company's Directors were seeking an urgent decision in January 1994. Carnon submitted financial and other information in support of its request.

The decision to refuse further drawings from the loans was taken under the legal and financial criteria which apply to selective financial assistance under the 1982 Act, taking account of economic and employment considerations and the information available about the environmental implications. Assessment of the environmental issues is continuing.

Because of the need to maintain commercial confidentiality, I cannot disclose the results of the Department's investigations. Discussions continue with the company on their plans and proposals.

Enterprise Initiative

Mr. Bates: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much has been spent on the enterprise initiative since its inception in the north-east region of England.

Mr. Eggar: Total payments on enterprise initiative consultancy projects in the North East from the launch of the consultancy scheme in 1988 to the end of 1993 amounted to £11·1 million.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the visits that have been made by Trade and Industry Ministers to *(a)* Ecuador, *(b)* India, *(c)* Indonesia, *(d)* Jordan, *(d)* Malaysia, *(f)* Nigeria, *(g)* Oman, *(h)* Pakistan and *(i)* Thailand since June 1987; and what was the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Needham: Information on all overseas visits by Trade and Industry Ministers to these markets for any purpose since June 1987 could be made available only at disproportionate cost. The following Trade and Industry Ministers made trade promotion visits (to the markets referred to) in the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Needham
Thailand/Indonesia—June 1993
Malaysia—September 1993
Malaysia/Indonesia—November/December 1993
India—November 1993

Mr. Eggar
Thailand/Malaysia/Indonesia—September 1993

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board to Trade how many visits abroad the Minister for Energy made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Eggar: During 1993 I made 12 visits abroad. The visits and their purposes are set out in the table, together with an estimate of the costs which covers travel and subsistence for me and those who accompanied me.

Purpose/Place	*Cost* £
Energy Policy Seminar, Norway	1,119·55
Bilateral Discussions, France	718·81
Energy and Environment Council, Luxembourg	1,802·52

Purpose/Place	Cost £
Offshore Technology Conference and Bilateral discussions, USA	4,647·27
Trade Promotion, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain	5,950·38
International Energy Authority and Bilateral discussions, France	1,459·42
Energy Council, Luxembourg	3,187·95
Trade Promotion, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand	14,231·46
Trade Promotion, Kazakhstan	5,216·32
Trade Promotion, Algeria	1,851·33
Energy Council, Belgium	755·62
Bilateral discussions, Norway	884·00

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many visits abroad the Minister of State for Industry has made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Sainsbury: During 1993 I made 17 visits abroad. The visits and their purposes are set out in the table together with an estimate of the costs which covers travel and subsistance for me and those who accompanied me.

Purpose/Place	Cost £
Foreign Affairs Council, Brussels	912·00
Steel Council, Brussels	1,045·20
Foreign Affairs Council, Brussels	1,045·20
Informal Industry Council, Denmark	1,796·40
Inward Investment Promotion and Aerospace Sector Sponsorship, USA and Canada	13,205·05
Industry Council, Brussels	1,045·20
Speech at the Inauguration Ceremony for the European Transonic Windtunnel, Germany	653·74
Inward Investment Promotion and competitiveness, Japan	18,479·83
Foreign Affairs Council, Brussels	1,065·60
Bilaterals with Commissioners Millan and Van Miert to discuss Structural Funds, the Assisted Area Map and the Shipbuilding Intervention Fund	1,072·62
Foreign Affairs Council, Brussels	1,072·62
Agriculture and Trade Council, Brussels	1,289·20
Visit to Airbus, France	855·00
Inward Investment Promotion, Germany	1,106·26
Industry Council, Brussels	1,528·20
Bilaterals with Commissioners Millan and Van Miert to discuss Structural Funds and the Shipbuilding Intervention Fund	1,251·60
Steel Council, Brussels	2,350·20

Industry (Financial Assistance)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what have been the administration costs of each of his Department's schemes of financial assistance to industry in each of the last five years *(a)* as a total cost and *(b)* as a proportion of the total individual scheme budget.

Mr. Heseltine: The information in respect of the period I have been President of the Board of Trade is contained in form O of the Department's MINIS returns, which were placed in the Library of the House last July. Data is not available for the earlier years.

Steel Mills

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Government's policy concerning overcapacity in the steel mills of the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: State subsidies are a major cause of EC over-capacity. The agreement reached at the December Industry Council will ensure both worthwhile capacity reductions and a much improved framework for the control of state aids.

British Coal

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if, when he next meets the chairman of British Coal, he will ask him to reply to the letters sent to him by the hon. Member for Normanton.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that the chairman of British Coal replied to the hon. Member's letters on 11 February 1994.

North Sea Gas

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are his estimates of the date when progressive exhaustion of United Kingdom supplies of North sea gas, over the rate of proven discovery, has been or will be reached and, on the current rate of consumption, the quantities of energy at such dates that will be required from other sources to fill the consequential deficits.

Mr. Eggar: The table shows that the rate of proven discovery of gas on the United Kingdom continental shelf (as measured by the increase in proven reserves between the end of 1991 and the end of 1992) exceeded gas production in 1992 by 70 billion cubic metres. This indicates progressive enhancement rather than exhaustion.

Gas on the United Kingdom Continental Shelf[1]

Billion cubic metres

	1991	*1992*	*Increase*
Proven[2] reserves at end of period	1,345	1,465	+120
Cumulative production	805	855	+50
Remaining proven gas reserves	540	610	+70

[1] Includes onshore and offshore discoveries.
[2] Proven reserves are defined as those which on the available evidence are virtually certain to be technically and economically producible (i.e. those reserves which have a better than 90 per cent. chance of being produced).
Source: Table 4, Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom 1993, DTI.

Oil Pollution

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure that operators granted exemption under section 23 from section 3 of the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971 comply with the PARCOM decision approved at a meeting at the Oslo and Paris Commissions on 22 September 1992.

Mr. Eggar: Exemptions issued under section 23 of the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971 (POPA '71), have conditions attached to them which require operators to report the level and quantity of oil discharged with drill cuttings. The conditions specify the target level which is in accordance with the PARCOM Decision 92/2, approved at the meeting at the Oslo and Paris Commissions on 22 September 1992.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many operators are bound by section 3 of the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971; how many have applied for exemption under section 23; and how many have made no application for exemption.

Mr. Eggar: All 38 operators on the UKCS are bound by section 3 of the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971.

During 1993, 21 operators applied and were granted Exemptions under section 3 of the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971.

During 1993, 17 operators made no request for Exemption under section 3 of the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many applications have been made by companies for exemption under section 23, from section 3 of the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971; how many applications have been granted; and how many have been refused.

Mr. Eggar: A total of 178 applications were made during 1993. All were granted.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each exemption granted under section 23 from section 3 of the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971, the operator, the year, the volume of discharged cuttings and the measured oil content of discharged cuttings.

Mr. Eggar: A list showing operators and the total volume of discharged cuttings and oil content for the year 1993 is as follows:

Company	*Year*	*Total cuttings tonnes*	*Average oil content —grammes of oil per kilogramme of cuttings*
Agip	1993	1,358·7	86
Amerada Hess	1993	5,549·5	76
Arco	1993	1,606	84
BP	1993	10,336·4	83
Chevron	1993	1,758	69
Conoco	1993	4,581·9	72
Fina	1993	751·1	70
Hamilton	1993	1,515·1	10
Keer McGee	1993	1,743·3	93
Lasmo	1993	672·8	84
Marathon	1993	1,459	90
Mobil	1993	1,586·9	95
MSR	1993	1,244·7	89
Phillips	1993	2,595·4	77
Shell	1993	2,919·1	93
Texaco	1993	1,247·9	68
TOTAL	1993	2,366	57

Oil Licensing

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria he used in deciding to exclude from the 14th licensing round 35 blocks identified as highly sensitive but nominated for inclusion by the oil industry; and if he will list the blocks.

Mr. Eggar: Decisions on whether to offer environmentally sensitive blocks for licence in the 14th Round were taken on the basis of the following criteria:

whether the environmental sensitivities identified could be protected by imposing strict conditions on any licences awarded;

whether there were objections to the licensing of the block from other Government Departments and the combination of restrictions would have made exploration impractical; and

the degree of company interest in the blocks.

Since other Departments' objections were provided in confidence, I am unable to list the blocks.

Pension Plans

Mr. Darling: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what information he has as to the number of pension providers that have made provision for claims against them in respect of possible mis-selling of personal pension plans; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what advice he has given to pension providers to show in their accounts appropriate provision against possible claims in respect of alleged mis-selling of personal pension plans; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information he has as to the total amount provided by the life assurance industry against claims in respect of alleged mis-selling of personal pension plans.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Department has written to life offices to ask them to indicate their likely exposure to compensation in respect of mis-selling of personal pensions, and to provide guidance on how the Department expects life offices to reserve for any such exposure in future Companies Act accounts and DTI returns. The Securities and Investments Board are seeking to determine the extent of the mis-selling. The position will not be clear until that review is completed. However, where life offices consider that they are likely to have a liability or a contingent liability, the Department expects this to be recognised in the published accounts.

Textile Tariffs

Mr. Riddick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his discussions with Sir Leon Brittan and others concerning the level of tariffs being levied on textiles by India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Korea.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* In contacts with the commission on the Uruguay round market access negotiations, United Kingdom ministers and officials have underlined our concern that the Commission should take every opportunity to press the Governments of India, Pakistan and Indonesia to improve their offers in respect of textiles and clothing. The European Commission

has made clear its determination to continue negotiations to improve market access offers, if necessary until ministers sign the GATT Final Act in April. As far as Korean tariff increases on wool fabrics are concerned, I have written to the Korean Finance and Trade Industry ministers to express my concern.

EDUCATION

Surplus Places

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his latest assessment of the number of surplus places in each of *(a)* the London boroughs and *(b)* the Greater Manchester boroughs.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has not collected comprehensive information on surplus school places since the survey in 1991 from which were derived the figures given in reply to a similar question from the hon. Member on Wednesday 28 April 1993.

We intend to make regulations later this year under section 21 of the Education Act 1993 requiring all LEAs and, where it has relevant responsibilities, the new Funding Agency for Schools, to submit information to the Secretary of State annually, beginning in 1994, on surplus places in LEA maintained and grant-maintained schools respectively.

Grant-maintained Schools

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the number of grant-maintained schools at *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary level, set out by parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department does not at present hold a full list of locations of grant-maintained schools by parliamentary constituency. One is to be compiled shortly and I will send a copy to my hon. Friend as soon as it is available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the cost of special purpose grants—transitional—to grant-maintained schools in England in each year since 1991.

Mr. Robin Squire: Total spending on transitional grants to self-governing—grant maintained—schools in each year since 1991-92 has been as follows:

Year	*£ million*
[1]1991-92	5·3
[1]1992-93	10·4
[2]1993-94	23·0

[1] Outturn.
[2] Estimated outturn

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the current arrangements for funding grant-maintained schools in Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Grant-maintained schools in Essex are receiving funding in 1993-94 based on their entitlement under the local education authority's local management of schools scheme, plus additional sums to reflect their additional responsibilities. My right hon. Friend announced on 14 February his intention to introduce a common funding formula for funding GM schools in Essex and four other LEAs in 1994-95.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the proportion of the total number of pupils in Essex at *(a)* primary school and *(b)* secondary school who are attending grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Essex has the highest percentage of primary school pupils being educated in grant-maintained schools at 12 per cent of the total, and the third highest proportion of secondary school pupils with 64 per cent.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* secondary and *(b)* primary schools in Essex have become grant maintained; and how many applications to become grant maintained are outstanding.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are 63 secondary and 55 primary schools operating with grant-maintained status in Essex. A further four secondary and 15 primary schools are currently approved to become grant-maintained on 1 April. Three secondary and two primary schools have published proposals following a yes vote and are awaiting a decision.

Autism

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make a statement about the provision made by each local education authority for children with autism; and what steps he is taking to ensure that children with such difficulties are identified and helped appropriately;

(2) what information he has on the extent of under-identification of children with autism;

(3) how many children have been diagnosed as having autism problems in each local education authority area; how many have had statements in each of the past five years; and what estimate he has made of the number of children with autism problems who have not been identified and provided for appropriately;

(4) how many children have been diagnosed as having autism problems required special educational support in each local education authority area in each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not collected centrally. Under the Education Acts 1981 and 1993 it is the responsibility of schools and LEAs to identify, assess and make provision for children with special educational needs, including those with autism. The Secretary of State intends, subject to the approval of Parliament, to issue a code of practice which will give practical guidance to schools and local education authorities on the identification and assessment of all children with special educational needs.

The Department for Education and the Department of Health are currently sponsoring a research project by the University of Nottingham into the education and treatment of children with autism in England and Wales. The researchers, assuming a prevalence rate of six per 10,000, estimate that there are in the region of 7,800 children with autism in England and Wales. Of these, approximately 1,000 children attend schools or units which specialise in

teaching children with autism. We await the report of the second stage of the research project which aims to evaluate the main types of provision for young autistic children.

Bullying

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to *(a)* bullying in school, *(b)* inadequate playground supervision of children and *(c)* the provision of appropriate training for all staff in schools on how to handle bullying; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Head teachers are responsible for maintaining discipline and good behaviour in schools. The Government expect them to deal firmly with bullying and to make appropriate arrangements for supervision of children and for staff training. To help them, the Department issued practical advice in the form of "Action Against Bullying" packs to all schools in England in July 1992. We are considering whether further advice would be helpful. Local education authorities have also had the opportunity to bid for support for whole-school action on bullying under the "Truancy and Disaffected Pupils" category of the Department's grants for education support and training, GEST, schemes for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Further Education Colleges, Coventry

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much expenditure has been incurred by each of Coventry's further education colleges in legal costs since incorporation; and what are the comparable figures for the 1 April 1993.

Mr. Boswell: Neither the Department nor the Further Education Funding Council collects information on college expenditure at the level of detail necessary to enable the amounts spent on legal advice to be identified. In the year to 1 April 1993 legal costs incurred by Coventry's further education colleges were met by the city council, which is unable to disaggregate the information from overall costs.

Sixth Forms

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *168-69*, if he will provide information showing the proportion of sixth form students in schools and colleges by local education authority area, in sixth forms with *(a)* fewer than 50 students, *(b)* 50 to 100 students and *(c)* 100 to 150 students.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is shown in the table.

Percentage of sixth form pupils in sixth forms by size in LEA-maintained secondary schools in each local education authority in England January 1993

LEA	Sixth forms by size: Less than 50 pupils	50-100 pupils	101-150 pupils
Corporation of London (1)	0	0	0
Camden	2	0	19
Greenwich	6	20	26
Hackney	0	0	100
Hammersmith	50	50	0
Islington	0	61	39
Kensington and Chelsea	0	0	0
Lambeth	23	0	77
Lewisham	2	50	28
Southwark	0	100	0
Tower Hamlets	4	32	0
Wandsworth	10	18	0
Westminster	0	8	22
Barking	0	30	13
Barnet	0	12	23
Bexley	4	16	25
Brent	0	25	16
Bromley	0	23	53
Croydon	0	0	0
Ealing	25	0	0
Enfield	0	7	18
Haringey	0	22	58
Harrow (1, 2)	0	0	0
Havering	0	7	43
Hillingdon	10	13	40
Hounslow	0	4	51
Kingston upon Thames	4	19	22
Merton	0	0	0
Newham	33	0	25
Redbridge	0	0	9
Richmond upon Thames (1)	0	0	0
Sutton	0	26	16
Waltham Forest	0	0	100
Birmingham	2	8	25
Coventry	1	16	36
Dudley	0	0	100
Sandwell	0	26	14
Solihull	0	0	26
Walsall	4	26	30
Wolverhampton	11	30	22
Knowsley	8	28	26
Liverpool	4	20	39
St. Helens	0	7	26
Sefton	0	15	19
Wirral	0	20	9
Bolton	5	0	13
Bury (1, 2)	0	0	0
Manchester	10	25	0
Oldham	15	31	13
Rochdale	0	0	19
Salford (1, 2)	0	0	0
Stockport	0	26	74
Tameside	0	100	0
Trafford	0	10	15
Wigan	0	0	0
Barnsley	0	0	0
Doncaster	0	6	14
Rotherham	0	0	18
Sheffield	2	6	15
Bradford	0	8	12
Calderdale	0	23	39
Kirklees	0	0	28
Leeds	7	12	18
Wakefield	0	9	13
Gateshead	0	17	17
Newcastle upon Tyne	2	24	17
North Tyneside	0	14	46
South Tyneside	0	0	0
Sunderland	0	0	0
Isles of Scilly (1)	0	0	0
Avon	4	20	22
Bedfordshire	0	2	8
Berkshire	1	10	31
Buckinghamshire	3	10	12
Cambridgeshire	0	4	3
Cheshire	1	12	40
Cleveland	0	0	28
Cornwall	0	6	11
Cumbria	6	21	47
Derbyshire	0	2	17
Devon	0	5	31
Dorset	1	2	10
Durham	0	20	30

LEA	Sixth forms by size: Less than 50 pupils	50-100 pupils	101-150 pupils
East Sussex	0	0	43
Essex	2	4	25
Gloucestershire	2	14	25
Hampshire	0	15	30
Hereford and Worcester	1	11	35
Hertfordshire	0	26	33
Humberside	2	6	37
Isle of Wight	0	0	13
Kent	6	10	9
Lancashire	0	2	28
Leicestershire	0	2	8
Lincolnshire	0	17	26
Norfolk	1	2	10
North Yorkshire	1	3	34
Northamptonshire	0	17	21
Northumberland	0	3	16
Nottinghamshire	3	21	49
Oxfordshire	0	6	40
Shropshire	0	17	41
Somerset	1	7	9
Staffordshire	1	28	31
Suffolk	0	4	16
Surrey	0	10	19
Warwickshire	0	9	21
West Sussex	0	4	17
Wiltshire	0	3	28
England	2	11	24

(1) In January 1993 these LEAs did not maintain secondary schools with a sixth form.
(2) In January 1993 these LEAs maintained sixth form colleges only

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Boswell: The following information is recorded:

Description of item	Approximate value (£)
1991	
Printer cable	15
RM Nimbus 386SX PC	1,200
Toshiba T1000 Portable PC	800
1992	
HP Deskjet Printer	300
Compaq Laptop PC	2,000
Portable PC (type not recorded)	[illegible]
Mitsubishi colour printer	[illegible]
Compaq LTE20 Portable PC	[illegible]
Compaq LTE20 Portable PC	[illegible]
HPII Laser printer	1,000
1993	
Compaq Portable PC	2,000
Compaq Contura Portable PC	2,000
Toshiba T3300SL Portable PC	2,000
In addition the following items belonging to the Department where stolen whilst on loan to Local Education Authorities	
RM Nimbus PC CPU	1,000 (December 1991)
PC (type not recorded) ×2	2,000 (July 1992)
RM Nimbus 386 PC	1,000 (December 1993)

Prospect School, Berkshire

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what undertakings have been given to Prospect school, Berkshire, in relation to funding under the technology college initiative.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Prospect school submitted an application for technology college status to the Department on 19 January. No undertakings have been given by the Department to the school in relation to the outcome of this application, nor to funding under the technology college initiative.

Holdback Grant

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will outline the conditions for the release of holdback grant to further education colleges.

Mr. Boswell: Colleges within the further education sector will be required to give the FEFC an assurance that their governing body is satisfied that all contracts of employment entered into with newly employed staff on or after 1 April 1994 provide adequate flexibility for the college to make proper use of its resources, both human and material, throughout the week and year in accordance with the institution's and its customers' needs. In the case of colleges which, immediately prior to entering the further education sector, were maintained or assisted by a local education authority, this assurance will need to include confirmation that all contracts of employment entered into with newly appointed teachers or lecturers on or after 1 April 1994 are significantly different from those used by the maintaining or assisting LEA immediately before the college entered the further education sector. In both cases, the FEFC will ask colleges to sign a declaration that they have met the condition.

Colleges Employers Forum

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what legal advice he has received on the contents of the letter from the Minister for Further and Higher Education to the Colleges Employers Forum of 8 February; and what plans he has to revise the letter in the light of legal advice and recent pay settlements.

Mr. Boswell: I wrote the letter on advice from my Department. The letter was sent five days after the Prime Minister's announcement of proposed pay increases for the review body groups, including school teachers, and in full knowledge of it. I have no intention or revising the letter.

Education Bill

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the Education Bill [*Lords*] since 7 December; and what plans he has to amend or withdraw the proposals contained therein.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has had a variety of representations. As my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State made clear on 10 February, *Official Report, House of Lords*, column *133*, we are holding discussions with the representative bodies of the further and higher education institutions.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to each of the regional flood defence committees.

Mr. Jack: Current ministerial appointees to regional flood defence committees in England are as follows:

Anglian
Mr. John S. Martin OBE, Mr. John C. Childs JP
Mr. Hugh A. Duffield, Dr. Martin George OBE
Mr. William E. Grant, Mr. David J. Riddington
Mr. William H. R. Squier

Northumbria
Mr. Edward A. Wrangham, Mr. John W. Gibson
Mr. Roger S. P. Howell, The Hon. Andrew H. Joicey
Mrs. Alison J. Lough, Mr. David G. H. Stewart

North West
Mr. William M. Wannop OBE, Mr. Keith Bury
Mr. Peter M. Entwhistle, Mr. Sidney D. Hill
Mr. Rowland J. W. Slack

Severn-Trent
Mr. Charles G. Hawthorne, Mr. Jeremy R. Chamberlayne
Mr. John Dainty OBE, Mr. Derwas A. Dale
Mr. Andrew J. L. Fraser, Mrs Joyce Gilman
Mr. John G. Markwick, Mr. Martin R. Prosser

Southern
Mr. Christopher D. Neame, Dr. Timothy J. H. Bines
Mr. Ian R. F. Hammond, Mr. David G. L. Monnington
Mr. Howard J. Richards, Mr. Timothy J. Sobey

South West
Mr. Gerald Manning OBE, Miss Deborah J. Clark
Mr. Michael R. Hughes, Mr. Mark Robins
Mr. Michael J. Stanbury, Mr. Richard A. Waller

Thames
Mr. Michael Davies OBE, Mrs. Clare E. Broom
Dr. Yvonne O. Barton, Mr. Arnold Q. Hitchcock CBE
Mr. Jeremy B. Joseph, Mr. John G. Peel
Mr. Hugh Scantlebury, Mrs. Jean Venables

Wessex
Mr. Ralph H. Baker, Mr. John B. Bush
Mr. Stanley H. Chedzoy, Mr. Roger J. A. Martin
Mr. Roger Willis

Yorkshire
Mr. Thomas D. Collier, Mrs. Joan M. Burnett
Mr. Barry R. Croft, Mr. John R. Welford

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales.

Mr. Jack: Current members, appointed by the Secretary of State for Wales and myself, are as follows:
Professor J. S. Marsh *(Chairman)*
Mrs J. E. Thomas
Sir John Wordie
Mr. H. Hughes
Mrs. J. Gove

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Food Advisory Committee.

Mr. Soames: Current membership of the Food Advisory Committee is:
Dr. E. S. Page *(Chairman)*
Professor D. L. Georgala *(Deputy Chairman)*
Dr. M. Ashwell
Mr. R. Evans
Mrs. A. J. Hardinge
Professor R. M. Hicks
Mr. R. Manly
Miss P. Mann
Mr. P. A. Martin
Mrs. J. Moore
Dr. R. Pugh
Ms B. Saunders
Dr. J. V. Stevens
Dr. R. G. Whitehead
Professor H. F. Woods

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Home-Grown Cereals Authority.

Mr. Jack: The full membership of the Home-Grown Cereals Authority is currently as follows:
Independent Members
Mr. Brian Nelson CBE *(Chairman)*
Professor Gordon Dickson *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mrs. Valerie Boakes

Members Representing the Interests of Growers of Home-Grown Cereals
Mr. James Atkinson
Miss Helen Browning
Mr. Richard Butler
Mr. Jeremy Dillon-Robinson
Mr. David George OBE
Mr. John McKee
Mr. Ian McLaren
Mr. John Moor
Mr. Michael Pearson

Members Representing the Interests of Dealers and Processors of Home-Grown Cereals
Mr. Michael Adams
Mr. James Clark
Mr. Ken Hairs
Mr. Pat Lake
Dr. Archie McFarquhar
Mr. Bill Niven
Mr. George Parker
Mr. Robin Pirie
Mr. Eric Ross

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Covent Garden Market Authority.

Mr. Jack: Members currently appointed to the Covent Garden Market Authority are:
Mr. W. P. Bowman OBE, *(Chairman)*
Mr. J. A. Harvey CBE
Mr. P. J. Hunt
Sir Peter Reynolds CBE
Mr. R. Smith OBE
Mrs. A. M. Vinton

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to each of the agricultural land tribunals (England).

Mr. Jack: The appointed members who act as chairmen of the Agricultural Land Tribunal in England are:
Eastern Area
Mr. C. H. Beaumont
Mr. R. Ashton
Mr. A. G Don

Midlands Area
His Honour Judge Lee QC

Mr. M. L. Brent QC
Mr. M. Kingston
Mr. J. E. Mitting
Mr. P. Beasdale

Northern Area
Mr. K. J. Fisher
Mr. W. H. R. Crawford QC
Mr. B. E. Capstick QC

South Eastern Area
Mr. P. A. de la Piquerie
Mr. P. P. Bowcock

South Western Area
Mr. G. L. Newsom

Western Area
Mr. W. D. Greenwood
Mr. J. A. Hodgson
His Honour Judge Harry Walker

Yorkshire/Humberside Area
His Honour Judge Robert Taylor
Mr. D. W. Davy
Mr. J. Hampton

For each case heard by the tribunal, the chairman nominates two lay members. These are drawn from a landowners panel (116 members), a farmers panel (129 members) and/or a land drainage panel (28 members).

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Hill Farming Advisory Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is as follows:

Advisory Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Mr. Alun Evans, OBE *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mr. Charles Armstrong
Mr. Henry Bainbridge
Mr. Philip Cornelius
Mrs. Anthea Cowan
Mr. John Dowson
Mrs. Joyce Gilman
Mrs. Gwenfair Jones
Mr. Edmund Morphet
Mrs. Rosemary Mudge
Dr. Thomas Roskilly
Mr. John Sayer
Mr. John Tamplin
Mr. Campbell Tweed
Mr. John Vaughan

Sub-Committee for Wales
Mr. Alun Evans, OBE *(Chairman)*
Mr. Henry Bainbridge
Mr. Richard Howells
Mrs. Gwenfair Jones
Mr. Cyril Lewis
Mr. William Lloyd
Mr. John Price
Mr. Colin Pugh
Mr. John Tamplin, OBE
Mr. John Vaughan

The Chairman of the main committee is the Earl Howe, Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Horticultural Development Council.

Mr. Jack: Members currently appointed to the Horticultural Development Council are:

Mrs. M. Charrington *(Chairman)*
Mr. D. J. Barney
Mr. E. J. Evans
Mr. R. T. Hillier
Mr. M. G. Holmes
Mr. H. B. Lowe
Mr. T. P. Maxey
Mr. P. J. Middlebrook
Mr. R. Murdy
Mrs. M. F. Regan
Mr. P. H. Shephard, MBE
Mr. T. P. M. Thomson
Mr. N. Vrijland
Mr. A. T. Wood

Mr. Kifoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Milk and Dairies Tribunal (England).

Mr. Jack: The members appointed to the Milk and Dairies Tribunal (England) are:

Mr. James A. O. Aboaba
Councillor Mrs. Doris Martyna Ansari JP
Lady Elizabeth Audrey Anson *(Chairman)*
Mr. Ronald B. Ballard
Councillor Eric Bielby
Councillor Jack Blakey
Mrs. Claire Bushby
Mr. Thomas H. Bradley
Mr. David Brown
Mrs. Margaret Elaine Carrington *(Chairman)*
Mr. William Hugh Clements
Mr. Laurence Stanley Crabtree
Mr. Raymond Stephenson Cranfield
Mr. Anthony Dixon
Mr. Robert Domleo
Mr. Peter Allen Duckworth
Mr. Alexander Martin Dyke
Mrs. Ruth Elizabeth Eades
Mr. G. H. Eggleston
Mrs. Barbara Jean Ellerton JP
Mr. George Roland Fawdry
Mrs. Ann Golightly
Mr. Francis John Gosling
Mr. E. G. Harris
Mr. Richard Harrison
Mr. Francis Ivor Harvey
Mrs. Elizabeth Hodder
Councillor Mrs. Phyllis Margaret Hogarth
Mr. Ronald Thomas Holland
Mr. John Ray Horrell
Mr. William Sidney Hounsell
Mr. David John House
Mr. Peter Gwynne Hutchinson
Mr. Stanley Charles Jeanes
Mr. Pryce William Jewell
Mrs. Edna Dorothy Keen
Mr. Albert V. Kerr
Mr. Andrew Lammie
Mrs. Jean Mary Lang
Mrs. Susan Margaret Latter
Mr Edward Lloyd
Mrs. Susan Joy Marshfield JP
Mr. George Rigby Mason
Mr. John Edward Matthews
Mrs. Mary M. McArdle
Mr. Alastair David McCormack
Mr. Anthony B. Merriman
Mrs. Evelyn Mary Milton
Councillor Mrs. Ann Mugford
Mr. William Howard Organ
Mrs. Jennifer Margaret Papadopulos JP
Mr. Roger David Parkin
Mr. Frank Richard Platts
Mr. William Gordon Proud
Mr. Gordon John Reynolds
Mr. John Lydon Richards *(Chairman)*
Mr. John Robert Richardson FIH ASVA
Mr. David Ian Risk
Mr. Peter C. W. Ritchie
Mr. William Harold Robinson
Mrs. Judith Round
Mr. Andrew Henry Rutherford

Mr. Kevin Alfred Shaw
Mrs. Mary Ross Shephard MBE
Mr. John Anthony Siggs
Mr. Basil J. Silver
Mr. John Desmond Spence
Mrs. Susanne Hilary Spence
Councillor Mrs. Elizabeth Eleanor Still JP BA MPhil
Mr. Peter Henry Thompson
Mr. Thoman Anthony Twigg
Mr. Charles W. Wharton
Mrs. Sheila Kathleen Wormleighton
Mr. John Barrett Wright

Correspondence

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the hon. Member for Sherwood may expect a reply to his letters dated 16 December 1993 and 16 January 1994.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend replied to the hon. Member's letters on 14 February 1994.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who is responsible for ensuring the welfare provisions of animals being transported across the EC for slaughter are adhered to.

Mr. Soames: Directive 91/628/EEC on the protection of animals during transport requires each member state to bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the directive.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of agriculture, Fisheries and Food what instructions are given to her veterinary department for checking that (i) journey times for farm animals to be exported from the United Kingdom are properly completed, (ii) that such animals are fit to travel and (iii) animals being exported for slaughter in Spain are being sent to abbattoris which comply with the EU directive requiring animals to be stunned before slaughter; how many times since 1 January 1993 her veterinary department has failed to follow these instructions; and what steps she has taken to ensure that future failures will be avoided.

Mr. Soames: All farm animals sent to another member state are inspected for fitness to travel by a veterinary surgeon appointed by the Government. For journeys likely to take more than 15 hours the exporter is required to submit to the Department in writing the arrangements which have been made to rest, feed and water the animals.

The Government lifted the restrictions on exports to Spain in January 1993 after an agreement had been reached with the Spanish authorities to send animals only to those abattoirs which they have confirmed to be applying Community welfare rules. In December the Government agreed further safeguards with the Spanish authorities. Details of all consignments are sent to Spain so the authorities may check that animals arrive at the destinations declared by British exporters. No consignments of animals have been sent to Spain for slaughter this year.

On two occasions last year consignments were exported where the agreed procedures, to ensure that the slaughterhouses of destination were on the approved list, were not followed. This was due to a regrettable error. The procedures for authorising all export journeys have been reviewed and fresh instructions have been issued to the state veterinary service.

Pig Meat

Mr. Mills: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what action she is taking in her communications with the European Commission to prevent the subsidies given by certain EC member countries on the production of pig meat; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what representations she has received about the difficulties being experienced by United Kingdom pig producers due to the dumping of exported pig meat by France, Netherlands, Germany and Denmark.

Mr. Jack: We have received representations from hon. Members on behalf of constituents and from individual pig producers and their representative bodies. I will shortly be meeting the British Pig Association. They are all concerned about the state of the European Community pigmeat market and allegations of illegal national aids in some member states.

The current low prices are caused by high levels of supply on the pigmeat market resulting from industry expansion in most member states, including the United Kingdom. Prices are low throughout the single market.

Although there are rumours of illegal aids to pig producers in other member states, we only have firm evidence in respect of a scheme in France. My right hon. Friend has written to the European Commission twice urging that an early decision be made on the legal status of this aid in accordance with article 93 of the treaty and that the appropriate action then be taken. She has also twice raised the matter in the Council of Ministers and the United Kingdom delegation has raised it at every pigmeat management committee from September.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research her Department has commissioned into the correlation between the incidence of BSE and the use of organophosphorous pesticides.

Mr. Soames: When BSE was first indentified in 1986 a detailed epidemiological investigation was carried out to identify possible sources of the disease. This included an examination of any possible correlation betweeen BSE and exposure of cattle to organophophorus compounds but it was concluded, on the basis of those studies, that there was no such correlation and that the only positive correlation to be found was in relation to animal feed which contained ruminant protein. This resulted in the ban on the feeding of ruminant protein to ruminants in July 1988 which has now resulted in a marked decline in the incidence of the disease in younger animals and an overall 15 per cent. decline in the number of cases reported compared with the same period last year.

In January scientists from the Department, the Department of Health and the Agriculture and Food Research Council met Mr. Purdey to consider his views on the role of organophosphorus in the origins of the BSE epidemic and had a full discussion with him on the evidence that he put forward. Although it was agreed to consider some of the points covered in more detail, no formal research has been commissioned as a result of that very recent meeting.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many suspected cases of BSE

were placed under restriction by a Ministry veterinarian in respect of which the restrictions were subsequently cancelled by another Ministry veterinarian, for each month, from February 1992 to November 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of suspect cases of BSE in Great Britain which were placed under restrictions by Ministry veterinary officers, and from which restrictions were subsequently removed, from February 1992 to November 1993 are as follows:

Month of report	*Number*
February 1992	127
March 1992	146
April 1992	145
May 1992	153
June 1992	159
July 1992	125
August 1992	143
September 1992	173
October 1992	142
November 1992	119
December 1992	146
January 1993	118
February 1993	142
March 1993	202
April 1993	197
May 1993	181
June 1993	144
July 1993	128
August 1993	148
September 1993	153
October 1993	136
November 1993	133

The information as to whether restrictions were lifted by a different Ministry veterinary officer to the one by whom they were served could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The annual fluctuations in the rate at which restrictions are lifted reflect farm management practices which precipitate the onset of diseases with some clinical signs that are similar to those of BSE, but where treatment results in recovery.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle have died or been destroyed as a result of BSE since 1990.

Mr. Soames: From 1991 to 1993 inclusive, 111,878 cattle have been slaughtered in Great Britain because BSE was suspected. In the same period 963 cattle in which BSE was suspected died while under restrictions or between report to the Ministry and examination by a veterinary officer.

Farm Animals (Export)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farm animals were exported from the United Kingdom in 1993 *(a)* for slaughter and *(b)* for further fattening.

Mr. Soames: Because of delays following the introduction of the Intrastat system details of the total numbers of live animals exported in 1993 are not yet available. It is not possible to say when they will become available, but when they do I shall write to the hon. Member.

Fishermen

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures she is taking to ensure uniformity of treatment between British and French fishermen in the current market.

Mr. Jack: I set out in a previous reply on 14 February at col. 586 the steps that I and my hon. Friend have taken to help our fishermen and exporters maintain their access to the French market in the face of the disgraceful intimidation to which they have been subjected. I look to the European Commission to scrutinise the compatibility of the French government's new aid package with the rules on state aids.

Whales

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many different species of whales currently exist; and what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the measures available to protect them.

Mr. Jack: There are at least 78 species of cetaceans currently in existence, of which 12 are commonly referred to as "great" whales. Under European Community legislation there is a de facto ban on commercial whaling within the Community. Globally, responsibility for the conservation of whales rests with the International Whaling Commission where the United Kingdom works actively to secure effective measures for the conservation and protection of all whale species and strongly supports the current moratorium on commercial whaling.

Banana Producers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to negotiate a transferable banana quota for the Windward Islands.

Mr. Jack: We have already pressed the Commission on the need for a transferable banana quota for the Windward Islands. This is not, however, provided for in the Council regulation establishing the EC bananas regime. If changes in that regulation become necessary we shall continue to seek quota transferability between the Windward Islands.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will press for the implementation of the guarantees enshrined in protocol IV, of Lomé IV for the banana producers of the Caribbean.

Mr. Jack: The EC bananas regime negotiated under the United Kingdom presidency already ensures access for imports of bananas from the Caribbean and from other African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) producers into the Community in accordance with the provisions of the Lomé convention.

Organic Farming

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she last met representatives of the organic farming lobby to discuss the implementation of the organic aid scheme in England.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend last met representatives of the organic farming movement on 15 November 1993. It was agreed that there should be further discussions with officials and another ministerial meeting in the spring concentrating on the role of organic farming in relation to reform of the European Community's common agricultural policy.

Sea Mammal Research Unit (Guidelines)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when her Department received from the Department of the Environment draft guidelines prepared by the sea mammal research unit on precautions to minimise acoustic disturbance to small cetaceans; which bodies or organisations it has consulted or asked to comment on the guidelines; and what plans she has to consult non-governmental bodies on the guidelines.

Mr. Jack: A preliminary draft of the guidelines was made available to MAFF officials on 13 December 1993. A working party established by the Department of the Environment is currently preparing a further draft which will be discussed by other Government Departments with an interest in seismic testing and the agreement on the conservation of small cetaceans of the Baltic and North sea. At that stage, as the Minister for the Environment and Countryside explained to the hon. Member on 28 January at column *341*, a decision will be taken on whether to consult more widely.

State Veterinary Service

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will place in the Library a copy of the Lebrecht report on the State Veterinary Service.

Mr. Soames: The Lebrecht review of the department's animal health and veterinary group, which includes the state veterinary service, is concerned with its management, and it is not appropriate to publish its recommendations. However, staff and other interested parties will be consulted about any consequential changes my right hon. Friend is minded to make.

Poland (Spirits Quotas)

Mr. Sims: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to raise with the Polish Government their application of high tariff levels and restrictive quotas on imported spirits.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

My Department has a close working relationship with the drinks industry both through its trade associations and through many individual producers. The question of high tariff levels on certain spirits imported into Poland has been a concern of the industry—particularly Scotch whisky producers—for some time and it is an issue which we have raised with the Polish government on a number of occasions in the past. The issue of restrictive quotas is a relatively new one and my Department has asked the European Commission to take this up in the context of the EC/Poland association agreement. My Department will continue to give its full support to the industry in its representations to the Polish administration.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Central Services Agency

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Central Services Agency.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Central Services Agency are as follows:

Chairman:
J. G. Hunter

Non-Executive Members:
Mrs. A. Curran
J. A. Doris
T. J. Frawley
Mrs. S. Hillen
P. G. Kinder
Dr. M. P. J. Kilbane
P. B. Linehan
D. D. Smyth
Dr. J. Wilson

Health and Social Services Councils

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to each of the health and social services councils.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of each of the four health and social services councils are as follows:

EASTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL

Chairman:
Mr. P. Stout

Members:
Councillor Rev. W. J. Beattie
Councillor D. Browne
Mrs. Alderman B. M. Chambers
Councillor R. Cleland
Councillor D. Dow
Councillor Mrs. D. E. Field
Councillor K. McCarthy
Councillor G. Morrison
Councilor J. Ritchie
Councillor J. Rodgers
Councillor H. Smith
Councillor R. T. Stewart
Mrs. M. G. Bennett
Rev. W. S. Callaghan
Mr. C. Common
Ms M. E. Connolly
Mrs. D. M. Copeland
Mrs. M. Horner
Mr. J. J. Mallon
Ms C. M. McCavana
Mrs. M. McMullan
Mr. B. O'Reilly
Mr. M. Piggot
Mr. E. P. Rafferty
Mrs. E. A. Rea
Dr. M. Swallow
Mrs. E. Thompson
Mr. M. B. Weir
Miss M. Wilson

NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL

Chairman:
Mr. R. Pinkerton

Members:
Mrs. Alderman P. E. A. Armitage
Councillor A. F. Beggs
Councillor Mrs. J. M. I. Drummond
Councillor D. Haughey
Mr. Alderman S. C. Henry
Councillor D. Hollis
Councillor R. F. Kerr
Councillor W. J. Logan
Councillor S. D. McClelland
Councillor P. H. McErlean
Mrs. M. Dodds
Mr. J. A. Dougherty
Mr. H. Ewing
Mr. D. Francis
Miss M. H. Gilmore
Mrs. M. McCollum
Mr. J. McA. Pollock
Mrs. P. M. Probst
Mr. A. Reynolds

Mrs. M. P. Sheriff
Rev. C. G. Thompson
Mrs. M. Yoxall
one vacancy

SOUTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL
Chairman:
Mrs. M. F. A. Cook

Members:
Councillor J. A. Agnew
Councillor Mrs. R. S. J. Allen
Councillor Mrs. K. J. Baird
Councillor H. Casey
Councillor J. Cavanagh
Councillor B. Curran
Councillor I. B. Hanna
Mr. Alderman S. J. McCammick
Councillor P. McElroy
Councillor R. E. McWilliams
Mrs. J. K. Allister
Mr. H. Averly
Mrs. M. P. Campbell
Mr. R. G. Cummings
Miss A. E. P. Dowd
Mrs. A. C. Eames
Mrs. A. A. B. Gray
Mr. J. P. Loughran
Mr. G. E. Mills
Mr. E. W. Napier
Mr. A. Reid
one vacancy

WESTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL
Chairman:
Mr. F. G. Hughes

Members:
Councillor D. C. D. Anderson
Mr. Alderman G. Campbell
Councillor M. A. Coyle
Councillor J. M. Durkan
Councillor S. P. Gallagher
Councillor C. O. McClaughrey
Councillor L. McQuaid
Councillor F. McQuillan
Councillor Mrs. M. Nelis
Councillor J. J. O'Kane
Miss E. Bannon
Mr. A. J. Dardis
Mr. M. J. Falls
Mrs. S. Harris
Mrs. M. Harte
Mr. S. J. Logue
Miss C. Meehan
Mr. W. T. Montgomery
Mrs. A. M. Moore
Mrs. M. D. Nicholl
Mrs. M. Rolston
Miss M. C. Timoney
Mrs. S. S. G. White

Income Support and Family Credit

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentages of children in Northern Ireland aged *(a)* under five years, *(b)* five to 11 years and *(c)* 12 to 15 years live in families receiving (i) income support and (ii) family credit; and what were the figures in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Ancram: The available information is provided in the tables below. For supplementary benefit/income support, the information requested is not collated in the age group 5-11 but in the age group 5-10. Separate figures are not available for the years 1980 to 1983. No age breakdown is available for children in families receiving family income supplement/family credit.

Supplementary Benefit and Income Support
Number and proportion[1] of children in families receiving Supplementary Benefit/Income Support

Year	Type of benefit	Children aged under 5		Children aged 5–10		Children aged 11–15	
		Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
1978	Supplementary Benefit	19,300	15	27,418	16	21,453	14
1979	Supplementary Benefit	18,708	15	23,071	14	19,843	13

Year	Type of benefit	Children aged under 11		Children aged 11–15	
		Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
[2]1980	Supplementary Benefit	53,181	18	23,682	16
[2]1981	Supplementary Benefit	63,209	22	25,580	17
[2]1982	Supplementary Benefit	71,746	25	32,626	22
[2]1983	Supplementary Benefit	77,108	27	33,768	23

Year	Type of benefit	Children aged under 5		Children aged 5–10		Children aged 11–15	
		Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
1984	Supplementary Benefit	39,439	30	39,291	26	31,800	23
1985	Supplementary Benefit	Data not available as Annual Statistical Enquiry not held					
1986	Supplementary Benefit	42,320	32	43,540	28	33,360	25
1987	Supplementary Benefit	44,526	33	44,482	28	35,408	27
1988	Income Support[3]	38,720	29	41,300	26	30,620	24
1989	Income Support	38,700	29	42,760	27	31,900	26
1990	Income Support	38,080	29	43,060	27	29,220	23
1991	Income Support	Data not available as Annual Statistical Enquiry not held					
1992	Income Support	42,360	33	49,040	31	35,650	27
1993	Income Support	Figures not yet available					

[1] As percentage of the number of children for whom Child Benefit is received.
[2] Figures not available separately for children aged 0–4, 5–10.
[3] Income Support replaced Supplementary Benefit on 11 April 1988.

Family Income Supplement and Family Credit
Number[1] and proportion[2] of children in families receiving FIS/Family Credit

Year	Type of benefit	Number	Proportion (percentage)
1978	Family Income Supplement	30,402	6
1979	Family Income Supplement	27,493	6
1980	Family Income Supplement	28,857	6
1981	Family Income Supplement	36,378	8
1982	Family Income Supplement	38,734	8
1983	Family Income Supplement	39,557	8
1984	Family Income Supplement	Figures not available	
1985	Family Income Supplement	42,613	9
1986	Family Income Supplement	41,322	9
1987	Family Income Supplement	40,399	9
1988	Family Credit[3]	34,897	8
1989	Family Credit	36,204	8
1990	Family Credit	35,073	8
1991	Family Credit	37,294	8
1992	Family Credit	42532	9
1993	Family Credit	Figures not yet available	

[1] Includes dependent children up to 19 years of age.
[2] As percentage of the total number of children for whom Child Benefit is received.
[3] Family Credit replaced Family Income Supplement on 11 April 1988.

NHS Private Facilities

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many patients have been treated in national health service hospitals private facilities in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

Year	Ordinary admissions	Day cases
1988-89	1,796	1,709
1989-90	1,636	1,456
1990-91	1,983	1,437
1991-92	1,971	1,100
1992-93	1,938	1,291

Comparable information is not available for 1987.

Wind Turbines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many planning applications for wind turbine construction have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected since 1984; and how many wind turbines currently operate in the Province.

Mr. Tim Smith: Since 1984 three planning applications have been made for turbines and all have been approved. There are a total of four wind turbines currently in operation in Northern Ireland.

Child Support

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Child Support Agency applications have failed to be enforced because of the absent parent *(a)* leaving and *(b)* being outside the legal jurisdiction of the agency.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Child Support Agency under its Chief Executive, Patrick Devlin. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. P. Devlin to Mr. Clifford Forsythe, dated 16 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your question about the number of Child Support Agency applications that have failed to be enforced because of the absent parent being outside the jurisdiction of the Agency.

Information on the number of absent parents leaving the jurisdiction is not collected routinely and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Of the applications processed to date, 159 could not be pursued because the absent parent was outside the jurisdiction of the Agency.

I hope you find this information useful.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, c. *782*, what proportion of the vehicles licensed in Northern Ireland at December 1992 in each category had catalytic converters fitted.

Mr. Tim Smith: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland agency under its Chief Executive, Brendan Magee. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. B. Magee to Mr. Clifford Forsythe, dated 15 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your question regarding the proportion of vehicles licensed in Northern Ireland at December 1992 which had catalytic converters fitted.

We do not hold such data on our records and therefore I am unable to provide the information requested.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year from 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each of the Northern Ireland national health service bodies as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The information requested is as follows.

£ million

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Health and Social Services Boards				
Eastern	589	577	570	544
Northern	204	204	264	291
Southern	177	179	217	225
Western	177	175	196	208
Health and Social Services Councils				
Eastern	—	0·050	0·155	0·205
Northern	—	0·015	0·087	0·091
Southern	—	0·019	0·115	0·100
Western	—	0·019	0·067	0·082
Northern Ireland Central Services Agency	7·0	6·7	7·0	6·85
Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency	0·7	1·34	1·29	1·23
Health and Social Services Trusts	—	—		301·67

Notes:

1. The four health and social services councils were established with effect from 1 April 1991.
2. The Health Promotion Agency was established on 1 October 1990. 1990-91 figures are for the six month period ended 31 March 1991.
3. All figures shown are at 1992-93 prices. Figures for 1993-94 are estimated and deflated to 1992-93 prices.
4. The figures for total spending by health and social services boards for the year 1992-93 are not directly comparable with those for earlier years as:
   (a) for the first time they include amounts in respect of capital charges; and
   (b) they reflect the purchaser/provider split and show the Boards primarily as purchasers of services; and
   (c) they reflect the movement towards capitation funding and take account of patient flows across boundaries.
5. Six health and social services trusts were established on 1 April 1993. It should be noted that they obtain the greatest proportion of their income from boards and hence their expenditure will largely already be reflected in boards' expenditure figures.

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Sir John Wheeler: In addition to a variety of minor items, the following more substantial items were formally recorded as losses to the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments due to theft in the last three years.

1990-91	£
Chainsaws, Gerrycan, Diesel, Drill Set and Cash	1,551·58
Window Guards and Padlocks	427·18
Dictaphones and Pentex Camera	394·48
Fencing Materials	363·17
Tools	271·63
Mower, Tools, fire Extinguishers and Keys	258·22
Road Signs and Traffic Cones	257·76
Batteries, Worklights and Bulbs	183·24
Trees	160·00
Fencing Wire	152·29
Tools and Safety Equipment	124·75
Weir Gate Winching Handles	115·00
Electric Fence Unit and Battery	109·25
Field Greaser, Grease and Gas Ring	101·22
Tarring Roller	3,488·00
Copper Lightning Conductor	1,825·00
Radio Telephone	615·83
10 Rolls of Chainlink Mesh	665·00
1 Ford Transit Pick-Up	1,250·00

Additionally there were 13 write-offs totalling £498·30 valued under £100·00

1991-92	£
Four video recorders	1,196·00
Wire and locks	2,082·70
Equipment from forest stores	1,930·66
Equipment and materials	1,757·79
Stuffed animals	707·25
Materials and lock	586·50
Chainsaws	1,079·24
Two cameras, lenses and flashguns	434·81
Fuel	380·80
Sheep wire and barbed wire	325·68
Chainsaws	545·47
Power washer	257·89
Excavator tracks	250·00
Outboard motor	240·00
Powersaw	237·19
Tools	196·24
Batteries, grease gun and airline hose	193·01
Locking diesel cap	125·47
Batteries	116·98
Vacuum cleaner	103·50
Fire extinguishers and fire blankets	862·06
Prism set	631·50
Outboard engine	667·49
Three camcorders	1,760·00
Various items used for training purposes (drills, trowels, paint/varnish brushes)	462·00

Additionally there were 16 write offs totalling £861·08 valued under £100·00.

1992-93	£
Chainsaws	2,405·83
Computer hardware	1,955·86
Firefighting equipment	869·45
Computer, printer, camera, hammer and transformer	575·00
Pump, wheels and tyres	540·00
Equipment	474·97
Equipment from employee's car	344·15
Clearing saw	336·37
Brushcutter	336·37
Vehicle (assessed residual value only) and batteries	290·53
Chainsaw	502·39
Equipment and materials	277·39
Powerwasher	225·00
Theft from boat	178·00

	£
Equipment from car	175·07
Materials	111·20
Tools	105·66
Overboard projector	580·00
Twin axle trailer	1,109·75
Plant fitters' tools	698·62
Public pay phone	512·81
Maestro van	1,725·59
Hazard warning lights	648·60
Two video players	311·00
One remote control TV	170·00
Two Mackintosh computers	3,000·00
Cannon 35 mm camera	200·00
Vacuum cleaner	300·00
Telephone switchboard	2,000·00
Computer desk	500·00
Welding plant	800·00
Machine tools and vice	500·00

1992-93	£
HP Vectra Computer	6,000·00
Various items used for Training Purposes (Drills, Trowels, Tools)	4,348·00

Additionally there were 15 write offs totalling £630·46 valued under £100·00.

HEALTH

Indicative Prescribing

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of administering the indicative prescribing system in general practice in each of the last three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Improving prescribing, including managing the indicative prescribing scheme, is a key function of national health service management and the administration costs are not identified separately.

Psychiatric Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of psychiatric beds in each year since 1979.

Mr. Bowis: The available information is shown in the table compiled for the Mental Health Task Force "Survey of English Mental Illness Hospitals March 1993", a copy of which is available in the Library.

	Local Authority Mental Illness and Elderly Mentally ill places (1)	*Voluntary Mental illness and Elderly Mentally ill places (2)*	*Private Mental illness and Elderly Mentally ill places (3)*	*Private Hospital beds (4)*	*NHS other beds (5)*	*NHS Main hospital beds (6)*	*Total*
1982	4,173	1,603	764	1,994	15,145	68,555	92,234
1983	4,242	1,693	865	2,394	16,276	65,362	90,832
1984	4,363	1,952	1,219	2,176	16,969	61,795	88,474
1985	4,470	2,134	1,731	2,340	17,730	57,967	86,372
1986	7,549	2,377	4,151	3,165	18,771	53,434	89,447
1987-88	7,568	2,640	6,959	4,507	22,657	44,470	88,801
1988-89	7,916	2,648	7,680	5,862	19,712	43,287	87,105
1989-90	7,584	3,080	9,066	7,693	20,415	38,875	86,713
1990-91	7,715	3,508	9,724	10,772	21,246	33,993	86,958
1991-92	7,552	4,303	10,382	12,653	21,285	28,993	85,168

Sources:
(1) (2) (3) SD2 (tables 66 and 67); RAC5 (primary uses 02 and 08); RA 13A.
(4) SD2-SBH212; K036.
(5) (6) SH3 (to 1986); KH03 (from 1987-88). Column 6 figures from Inter Authority Comparison and Consultancy special data collection on main mental illness hospitals; column 5 by deducting these from totals for England.

Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of net NHS current expenditure on (i) regional hospital boards and regional health authorities, (ii) the NHS Management Executive and (iii) NHSME regional outposts in each year since 1973-74 expressed in 1993-94 prices adjusted by *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator and *(b)* changes in input unit costs.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows total revenue expenditure at 1993-94 prices of regional health authorities, the National Health Service Management Executive and the NHSME outposts. Expenditure is not readily available prior to 1987-88. The index showing changes in input unit costs is not available for 1993-94 prices.

Figures for regional health authorities (RHAs) for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are not comparable with those for earlier years. In particular, many RHAs were, in 1991-92 and 1992-93, involved in the purchase of healthcare and related services for their region.

	1987-88 £	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £
Regional health authorities	451,197,469	442,878,613	471,909,346	454,704,050	1,453,441,371	1,681,077,632
NHSME	n/a	n/a	n/a	34,124,495	31,523,934	44,277,025
NHSME outposts	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,713,410

Source:
Annual accounts of health authorities (England) 1985-86 to 1992-93.
Annual accounts of the Department of Health.

Trent regional health authority records.

Notes

Figures for regional health authorities (RHAs) for 1992-93 are provisional.

The figures cover the total revenue expenditure of the authorities including that incurred on headquarters administration and on the management and provision of services in the years concerned.

Figures are not available for the NHSME prior to 1990-91.

Figures for the NHSME are not directly comparable from year to year because of organisational changes between the NHSME and the rest of the Department.

The figures shown for the NHSME are gross because although the Department of Health receives income in the form of Receipts, this income is not split between the separate divisions within the Department and it is therefore not possible to provide net figures for the NHSME.

No information was collected for NHSME outposts prior to 1992-93.

Smoking

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the information available to her on the years that other countries introduced bans on tobacco advertising with the change in their and our levels of smoking since then in each case with the present levels of tax and retail price.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows the estimated changes in prevalence of cigarette smoking in countries which have introduced bans on tobacco advertising, together with the changes over similar periods in the United Kingdom:

Country	*Final year of data before ban*	*Smoking prevalence in that year*	*Prevalence in most recent year for which data is available*	*Percentage points by which smoking prevalence has fallen since ban*	*Percentage points by which smoking prevalence has fallen in the United Kingdom over similar period*
		Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
Norway	1975	43	35 (1992)	8	12
Finland	1977	29	26 (1985)	3	8
Canada	1989	32	30 (1990)	2	2 (1988-90)
New Zealand	1990	28	27 (1992)	1	2

Bans on tobacco advertising came into effect in Australia in 1992 and France in 1993. It is too early to estimate the changes in smoking prevalence since these bans were introduced.

The most recent available comparison of retail prices and levels of taxation for cigarettes in these countries is:

Country	*Average retail price of 20 cigarettes (October 1992)*	*Total taxes*
	£	£
Norway	3·46	2·37
Finland	2·33	1·72
Canada	2·68	1·84
New Zealand	1·78	1·20
Australia	1·53	0·92
France	1·32	0·94
United Kingdom	2·23	1·69

Parkinson's Disease

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement setting out details of the principal advances that have been made during the past 10 years in the treatment of Parkinson's disease.

Mr. Bowis: Parkinson's disease is associated with a deficiency of a substance called dopamine which is essential for the transmission of nerve impulses. In recent years there have been developments in new variants of "dopamine agonist" drugs which assist in the maintenance of the body's level of dopamine. The use of self-administered injections of apomorphine, the usual drug prescribed for the condition, is becoming widespread. The use of brain tissue transplants remains experimental and is not currently being carried out in the United Kingdom.

Safe Sex

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the role of the Health Education Authority in providing national public education campaigns to promote condom use following recent research into sexual attitudes and lifestyles.

Mr. Sackville: Since 1987, the Health Education Authority has had a continuing role in providing public education on HIV/AIDS and sexual health by delivering information about responsible sexual behaviour. The national survey of sexual attitudes and lifestyles showed the impact of public education, providing evidence of considerable awareness of HIV/AIDS among those reporting behaviour which carried a higher risk of infection, and of increased condom use both by those with more partners and by people under 24. It is important that the HEA and other agencies continue their national and local efforts to promote sexual health.

Local Authorities (Charging Guidance)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent guidance she has issued to local authorities regarding charging for home helps, day care and community alarms; what are the financial implications of this guidance; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Guidance about charging for non-residential social services for adults was sent to local social services authorities in January, and copies of the circular (LAC(94)1) are available in the Library. Powers to charge are discretionary and so it is not possible to quantify precisely the financial implications of this guidance.

Car Parking Charges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy towards the charging of nurses to park their cars on NHS premises.

Mr. Sackville: Charges for car parking on national health service premises are a matter for local determination in the light of local circumstances, including the needs of patients, visitors and staff and the availability and cost of providing such facilities.

Emergency Fees (Collection by NHS Trusts)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether NHS trusts are required to collect emergency fees under the Road Traffic Acts.

Mr. Sackville: Health service hospitals, including those managed by national health service trusts, are empowered to collect the emergency treatment fee under section 158 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and it is Government policy that it should be collected. The fee, which must be covered by motor vehicle insurance policies, is payable by vehicle users in respect of each person given immediate treatment or examination arising from a road traffic accident.

Bed Allocations

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what evidence she has that health authorities use age as a criterion for allocating acute patients to different hospitals within their area;

(2) what is her Department's policy on the use by health authorities of age as a criterion by which patients are allocated beds in specific hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities are responsible for purchasing appropriate services for all age groups in their resident populations. Children and young people in hospital should be provided with accommodation, facilities and staffing appropriate to their age and development. Depending on local circumstances, hospitals may elect to admit people over the age of 75 to specifically designated wards to ensure they receive the most appropriate care.

Reports (Costs)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to advise all health authorities and trusts to review the costs of producing, publishing, printing and distributing reports in order to maximise the proportion of funds spent on direct health care.

Dr. Mawhinney: Communications about the services being purchased on behalf of patients and the way they are provided are an essential part of serving the public. National Health Service trusts are required to publish, as a minimum, an annual report, annual accounts, a summary business plan and a strategic direction document; health authorities are required to provide a range of information as part of their public accountability. We expect them to make the best, most cost-effective use of their resources.

Paediatric Intensive Care

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will detail by region the *(a)* recommended and *(b)* actual number levels of paediatric intensive care beds; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no nationally agreed levels for paediatric intensive care bed provision. The British Paediatric Association has recently published a report "The Care of Critically Ill Children" which recommends that there should be one bed per 48,000 children. The report, which is available in the Library, shows the regional distribution of paediatric intensive care beds. The National Health Service Management Executive, in its executive letter of 27 January 1994 has asked district health authorities to review the current level of paediatric intensive care beds in order to develop in collaboration with other district health authorities and hospitals, a strategic plan for the purchasing of paediatric intensive care which takes into account local needs and resources. Copies of the letter are available in the Library.

Alternative and Complementary Medicine

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what analysis has been made of potential cost savings to public funds if alternative and complementary medical treatments, with particular reference to osteopathy, chiropractic and homoeopathy, were more widely available on the national health service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has commissioned a study by the medical care research unit of Sheffield university which will examine the impact complementary therapists—such as osteopaths, chiropractors, and homoeopaths—have on the prescribing patterns, cost of drugs, hospital referral practices, patient satisfaction and repeat attendances, within general practice. The study started last December and will take two years to complete.

Ambulance Service, London

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the response times by the London ambulance service to 999 calls for each of the last five years; and what were the target times in each of those years.

Mr. Sackville: The target response time for emergency calls in each year was 95 per cent. responded to within 14 minutes. The percentage of calls responded to in the target time is shown in the table.

Year	Percentage of ambulances responding within 14 minutes
1988-89	82·8
1989-90	78·8
1990-91	73·7
1991-92	64·0
1992-93	58·5

The London ambulance service's performance against the patients charter standard of a 95 per cent. response within 14 minutes has been unacceptable. In December 1993 the Government announced £14·8 million additional investment for the London ambulance service in 1994-95. The additional funding will be used to replace 40 per cent. of the vehicle fleet; recruit and train 240 additional ambulance personnel; accelerate the paramedic training programme and improve their communications systems.

In response to this investment, the London ambulance service has agreed with its managing agency, South West Thames regional health authority, interim targets of achieving an 80 per cent. response rate within 14 minutes by September 1994 and 85 per cent. by April 1995. When these targets have been met, the Government will expect the London ambulance service to establish an early date for the full achievement of the patients charter standard.

South Yorkshire Ambulance Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made as to whether the south Yorkshire ambulance trust meets patients charter standards; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for local purchasers to ensure that contracts and actual performance meet patient's charter standards.

Accident and Emergency Services, London

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made with regard to the review of accident and emergency services in London; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There has been no special review of London's accident and emergency services. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 21 October 1993 at column *316*.

Mentally Disturbed Children

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many mentally disturbed children were in adult wards in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Bowis: It is a matter for health authorities to determine what arrangements are made locally about admission of children to hospital. However, our advice to purchasers contained in the guidance the "Health of the Nation Key Area Handbook: Mental Illness", a copy of which is in the Library, refers to a range of services which they need to consider so as to meet the needs of children and adolescents and this includes designated in-patient and day patient facilities.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the risks to humans of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Sackville: The Government receive advice on all matters relating to spongiform encephalopathies in humans and animals from an independent, expert committee, the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC), chaired by Dr. David Tyrrell FRS.

The Government, on advice from SEAC, are satisfied that all the necessary safeguards are in place to minimise further spread of spongiform encephalopathies in animals and to prevent any risk of transmission to humans.

Scientific evidence has not revealed any link between bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle and incidence of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a human spongiform encephalopathy.

Public Relations

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which agencies are employed by each *(a)* regional health authority, *(b)* district health authority and *(c)* trust to deal with public relations; and what are the estimated costs involved.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the individual health authorities or trusts. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen for details.

Agency Nurses, Wandsworth

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of agency nurses who were employed by the Wandsworth health authority for the period 1 to 31 January.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for Wandsworth health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Dr. Enid Vincent, the chairman, for details.

Sir James Ackers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to ask Sir James Ackers to repay the sum paid to him on his resignation as chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority;

(2) if Sir James Ackers has repaid or offered to repay the sum paid to him on his resignation as chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir James Ackers has not repaid or offered to repay the sum paid to him on his resignation and we have no plans to ask him to do so.

Mr. John Hoare

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the detailed make-up of the £111,940 severance pay made to Mr. John Hoare, former Wessex regional health authority general manager.

Dr. Mawhinney: Mr. Hoare received a compensationary payment of £119,940 calculated on the basis of his final salary of £53,970 multiplied by the period remaining on his contract (26·67 months). He was allowed to purchase his lease car at a cost of £8,000, leaving a payment of £111,940.

NHS (Meetings)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will require all NHS authorities to publish the agendas of all meetings whether or not open to the public.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. All national health service authorities are required by the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to supply the press, on request, with a copy of the agenda for all full meetings at which approval for specific action is required.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to ensure that persons appointed to be chairmen of hospital trusts record their financial and professional interests in a register of interest a copy of which should be placed in the Library.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are currently consulting on draft codes of conduct and accountability for national health service boards. In these we propose that where there is a potential for private interests to be material and relevant to NHS business, the relevant interests should be declared and recorded in the board minutes. We also propose that directorships and other significant interests held by NHS board members should be declared on appointment, kept up to date and set out in the annual report. The codes are to be implemented in all NHS trusts and authorities, subject to consultation, from 1 April 1994.

Health Authorities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who will be chairman on 1 April of *(a)* Trent regional health authority and *(b)* Sheffield community health trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Michael Carlisle and Mrs. Kathryn Riddle respectively.

Steroids

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce tests for diabetes before steroids are used on patients.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to issue prescriptive guidance on such tests which are a matter for the clinical judgement of individual doctors.

Steroids, which are powerful drugs, may cause side effects especially in high doses. Doctors are fully aware of this possibility and to minimise the risk the dose is reduced as quickly as possible to the lowest maintenance level. During this period the patient is monitored for side effects.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients died in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1991-92 from the use of steroids in (i) England, (ii) the west midlands and (iii) Coventry.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths from the use of steroids, [1]ICD E932.0, in England, West Midlands regional health authority and Coventry in 1991 and 1992.

	1991	*1992*
England	1	0
West Midlands RHA	0	0
Coventry	0	0

[1] International Classification of Disease 9th revision.

Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will announce her decision regarding the future of Coventry and Warwickshire hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a local matter for Coventry health authority. Coventry health authority has recently completed a consultation on the transfer of services from the Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital to the Walsgrave Hospital. As the local community health council agreed the health authority's proposals, the authority is free to begin implementing its plans. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the authority, Mr. A Guy, for details.

West Midlands Health Authority

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to satisfy herself *(a)* regarding the proper financial management of the West Midlands health authority and *(b)* that proper accountability procedures are in place.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have proposed, and are consulting on, the introduction of a code of conduct for the NHS which will make explicit the standards of conduct expected of those in the most senior positions in the NHS and provide a basis for setting standards for their staff. The NHS Management Executive, which is responsible for ensuring that there is a strong accountability and management framework at all levels of the NHS, has taken a number of steps to strengthen financial management across the NHS. These include guidance on the role of the director of finance; revisions to standing orders, standing financial instructions and financial directions. Measures are also being taken to strengthen internal audit.

In West Midlands regional health authority the new board has taken a range of measures to strengthen financial management and accountability procedures within the region. These actions have been closely monitored by the NHS Management Executive.

Drug and Alcohol Dependence

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued to local authorities and health authorities regarding responsibility for funding detoxification during the treatment and care of drug or alcohol dependence.

Mr. Bowis: Our guidance circular "Alcohol and Drug Services within Community Care" (LAC(93)2), which was sent to local authorities and health authorities in January 1993, makes it clear that health authorities continue to be responsible for the funding of the health care element of alcohol and drug services, this would include detoxification facilities. Copies of this guidance are available in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on the imposition of time limits on the funding of residential care for the treatment of drug or alcohol dependence.

Mr. Bowis: It is for the local authority to decide, in the light of the assessed community care needs of the client

concerned and the programmes offered by treatment providers, how long to fund residential care for the treatment of drug and alcohol dependence.

Health Expenditure (Southend)

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress she is making in increasing the health funds available in areas which are underfunded; and what are her proposals for improving the situation in Southend during the next three years.

Mr. Sackville: One of the most important aspects of the reforms of the national health service is the progress we have made in distributing resources fairly to regional health authorities who have previously been underfunded. It is for them to do the same for district health authorities who have not had a fair share of NHS funds taking account of their resident populations and particular local characteristics and circumstances.

The allocation of funds to South Essex health authority is the responsibility of North East Thames regional health authority, and the hon. Member may wish to contact Sir William Staveley, the chairman, for details.

Bexley Health Authority

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has received in respect of the funding of Bexley health authority;

(2) what representations she has received about thefunding of Queen Mary's hospital, Sidcup; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have received representations from a number of people, including my hon. Friend in respect of the funding of Bexley health authority and Queen Mary's hospital, Sidcup.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to announce the appointment of a chairman for the new merged Bexley and Greenwich health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: We expect to make a decision on the chairmanship of the new merged Bexley and Greenwich health authority shortly.

Agency Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the expenditure on agency services for each year since 1990 for *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* NHS trusts;

(2) if she will list for each year since 1990 the expenditure on external contract staffing and consultancy service for *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* trusts.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* Since 1991-92 expenditure for agency services is defined as expenditure on external contract staffing and consultancy services which includes non-patient services provided by non-national health service bodies. Information for 1991-92 and 1992-93 is shown in the table. The figures are not comparable with those for earlier years but confirm the effectiveness of the government's policy of encouraging overall value for money in the NHS by using alternative sources to supply a range of services.

Expenditure on external contract staffing and consultancy services

£ thousands

	1991-92	*1992-93*
Regional Health Authorities	25,813	26,372
District Health Authorities	34,591	39,788
NHS Trusts	13,184	38,957

Source: Annual financial returns of regional health authorities, district health authorities and National Health Service trusts in England.

Notes:

1. Figures for 1992-93 are provisional.
2. The number of NHS trusts increased from 57 in 1991-92 to 156 in 1992-93.

Task Forces

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many task forces she has set up since becoming Secretary of State; if she will list them; and if she will provide a breakdown of their cost.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 24 January 1994]:* Task forces on the following have been set up since April 1992. Information on expenditure could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Task Forces

1. 'Health of the Nation' Accidents
2. 'Health of the Nation' Workplace
3. 'Health of the Nation' Physical Activity
4. Review of Clinical Input into Contracts
5. Mental Health Task Force
6. Interdepartmental Task Force on Smoking
7. Corporate Governance
8. Community Care Support Force
9. Norwich II
10. Black and Ethnic Minority Health
11. NHS Research
12. A Strategy for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting Research
13. Nutrition
14. Chiropody
15. St. Vincent's Task Force for Diabetes (Joint Department of Health and British Diabetic Association Task Force)
16. Data Quality
17. Day Surgery

Child Abuse

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prosecutions of child abuse cases have been sent directly to the Crown court since October 1992.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

The information readily available centrally relates to trials completed at the Crown court following the issue of a notice of transfer, under either section 53 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (certain cases involving children) or section 4 of the Criminal Justice Act 1987 (serious fraud cases). No cases were recorded in the period 1 October to 31 December 1992. Information for 1993 will be available in the autumn.

SCOTLAND

Forestry

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes there have been in the Government's policy on forestry since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Sir Hector Monro: Our forestry policy was set out in September 1991 in the booklet "Forestry Policy for Great Britain". Last month we published "Sustainable Forestry: The UK Programme", which is a comprehensive statement of the action we are taking to promote sustainable management at home and in other countries, including the initiatives we have launched since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money, in the form of grants for private forestry owners, the Government receive from the EC annually; and what conditions are attached to these grants with respect to promoting public access and environmental concerns.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government expect to receive £7·1 million from the European Community as co-financing of grant-aid for the afforestation of agricultural land and other forestry operations on farms in 1993-94. Agricultural land, for these purposes, includes all arable land and grassland.

To qualify for co-financing, member states have to obtain approval from the European Commission for national programmes setting out the aid schemes for which reimbursement will be sought. In Great Britain, the principal aid schemes are the woodland grant scheme and the associated farm woodland scheme and farm woodland premium scheme. Participants in these schemes are required to follow the environmental guidelines published by the Forestry Commission. In addition, the community woodland supplement, introduced in 1991 as part of the woodland grant scheme, provides grants for the creation of new woodlands near towns and cities on condition that the woodlands are open for informal public recreation. Similar arrangements apply in the schemes operated in Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the timetable for community forest initiatives has been affected by the Government's plans to privatise the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro: Ministers have asked the forestry review group to review the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment, to review options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands and to make proposals for changes which would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives, having regard to our other economic and environmental policies. Ministers will await the advice of the review group before considering what action, if any, should be taken in respect of the ownership and management of the commission's woodlands. The work of the review group has not affected the progress of the community forests initiative.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the national forestry plan that was promised to the United Nations conference on environment and development in 1993 is due to be published.

Sir Hector Monro: This was published on 25 January, under the title "Sustainable Forestry: The UK Programme". A copy is in the Library.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he intends to ensure that Britain implements the principles set out in the statement of forest principles endorsed at the UN Conference on Environment and Development.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 28 January, *Official Report*, column *461*.

Livestock Farms

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest estimate of the average number of *(a)* suckler cows and *(b)* ewes for (i) the average hill unit and (ii) the average upland unit and the gross margin based on the most recent market prices.

Sir Hector Monro: The table shows the average number of suckler cows and ewes on livestock farms in the less-favoured areas as represented in the farm accounts scheme, together with the estimated 1993-94 farm gross margins.

Farm type	*Average number of suckler cows*	*Average number of ewes*	*Estimated 1993-94 farm gross margin (£)*
LFA: Specialist Sheep	11	684	32,583
LFA: Specialist Beef	60	112	42,859
LFA: Cattle and Sheep	55	467	49,871

Farm Incomes

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the *(a)* projected and *(b)* actual levels of farm incomes, and the percentage increase/decrease which this represents with the previous year for (i) 1989-90, (ii) 1990-91, (iii) 1991-92, (iv) 1992-93, (v) 1993-94 and (vi) 1994-95.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested as derived from the farm accounts scheme in Scotland, is set out in the table. No actual income levels are available for 1993-94 and neither actual nor projected income figures are available for 1994-95.

	(Average £/farm)			
	Net farm income Projected		*Net farm income Actual*	
Farm type	*Level*	*Per cent. change*	*Level*	*Per cent. change*
LFA: Mainly sheep				
1989-90	7,911	–26	9,350	–7
1990-91	7,268	–22	9,252	–3
1991-92	10,941	+18	9,573	+15
1992-93	11,568	+21	10,946	+34

Farm type	(Average £/farm) Net farm income Projected Level	Per cent. change	Net farm income Actual Level	Per cent. change
LFA: Sheep and cattle				
1989-90	9,838	-18	9,334	-19
1990-91	6,803	-27	8,359	-12
1991-92	8,932	+7	10,458	+11
1992-93	11,308	+8	11,610	+9
LFA: Mainly cattle				
1989-90	9,984	-5	8,457	-12
1990-91	6,211	-27	8,424	-4
1991-92	7,653	-9	7,066	-13
1992-93	7,135	+1	9,464	+31
LFA: Mainly arable				
1989-90	8,016	-2	14,019	+34
1990-91	12,964	-8	16,895	+14
1991-92	14,745	-13	12,414	-22
1992-93	15,694	+26	—	—
Lowground cattle and sheep				
1989-90	5,526	-12	8,758	-12
1990-91	7,796	-11	9,819	+22
1991-92	6,121	-38	8,458	-32
1992-93	10,321	+22	15,308	+60
Cropping				
1989-90	5,650	+168	19,214	+191
1990-91	21,625	+13	15,592	+6
1991-92	7,995	-49	6,930	-57
1992-93	16,190	+134	17,186	+105
Dairy				
1989-90	27,109	+16	27,414	+17
1990-91	27,384	—	21,932	-21
1991-92	18,068	-18	21,345	-6
1992-93	23,529	+10	28,353	+23

(1) The system of farm classification changed in 1992-93. The actual levels and percentage changes shown are those for the nearest comparable type or combination of types except for LFA: Mainly arable farms where there is no comparable type.

(2) Under the farm accounts scheme comparisons in income in one year compared with the previous one, both in the case of projected or actual figures, are calculated from data on exactly the same farms ie an identical sample. This sample changes between projected and actual and also between years. Hence the figures do not provide a precise comparison either between projected and actual or between years.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of Scottish farm units included in the calculations on annual farm incomes on which the level of hill livestock compensatory allowance is based for the years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91, *(c)* 1991-92, *(d)* 1992-93, *(e)* 1993-94 and *(f)* 1994-95.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is set out in the table. No information is yet available for 1994-95.

Income forecasts in respect of	Number of businesses[1] in sample employed to calculate income forecast
1989-90	180
1990-91	191
1991-92	186
1992-93	199
1993-94	220

[1] Each business in the sample can comprise a number of farm units.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the *(a)* projected and *(b)* actual members of farmers who received hill livestock compensatory allowances for (i) 1989-90, (ii) 1990-91, (iii) 1991-92, (iv) 1993-94 and (v) 1994-95.

Sir Hector Monro: The numbers of farmers who received hill livestock compensatory allowances under the schemes from 1989 to 1993 were:

Scheme year	Number
1989	18,206
1990	18,137
1991	17,904
1992	17,903
1993	17,382

Projections of the numbers of farmers are made according to the previous year's scheme.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest estimate of farm incomes which are used to calculate the level of hill livestock compensatory allowances; and if she will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The latest farm income estimates used in considering the level of hill livestock compensatory allowances were lodged in the House of Commons Library on 30 November 1993.

These estimates showed that incomes on livestock farms in the less favoured areas were expected to increase substantially in 1993-94. Subsequent estimates published on 31 January 1994 also show a similar level of increase overall despite the reduction in rates for hill livestock compensatory allowances.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what *(a)* percentage and *(b)* number of hill livestock compensatory allowance claimants are estimated to have volunteered information to the colleges and universities responsible for collating information on which the calculations of farm incomes are based; and what (i) percentage and (ii) number of these claimants were from the severely disadvantaged areas for (1) 1989-90, (2) 1990-91, (3) 1991-92, (4) 1992-93, (5) 1993-94 and (6) 1994-95.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is set out in the table. It is not possible to split the farm accounts sample between severely disadvantaged and disadvantaged areas.

Year	*Total number of claimants*	*Number of claimants supplying incomes data*	*Percentage of total supplying incomes data*
			Per cent.
1989	18,206	255	1·4
1990	18,137	294	1·6
1991	17,904	316	1·8
1992	17,903	318	1·8
1993	17,382	323	1·9

(1) Incomes data is supplied only for full-time businesses while the total number of claimants will include many small units.

(2) The business supplying incomes data can comprise more than one unit.

A1 (Dualling)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the dates for the commencement and completion of the dualling of the A1 trunk road between Meadowmill and Amisfield.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The construction of a dual carriageway between Tranent and Haddington, including Meadowmill to Amisfield, is the major priority on the A1. Draft orders for this scheme, published on 30 March 1993 were the subject of a public local inquiry in June 1993. Subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, construction will be considered by the Secretary of State for inclusion within the trunk road programme for 1994-95. A specific date for the start and completion of the scheme cannot, however, be given at this time.

North-West Sutherland

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what time limit he set for the feasibility study, "A Rural Framework for North West Sutherland", in respect of *(a)* presentation of the draft report, *(b)* consultation and *(c)* presentation of the final report.

Sir Hector Monro: As a condition of its contribution to the funding of the feasibility study the Scottish Office Environment Department required that it be kept informed of progress on the study; have the opportunity to comment on the final draft report which was to be submitted by 31 March 1993; and receive a copy of the final report at least five working days prior to publication. These conditions were fulfilled.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of whether the feasibility study, "A Rural Framework for North West Sutherland", meets the objective which he set out on page 5 of his document, "Rural Framework 1992".

Sir Hector Monro: A main purpose of "The Scottish Office Rural Framework" was to identify a number of themes to act as a focus for thought and action about the future of rural Scotland. It was a consultation paper and did not seek to prescribe the way forward or the activities of existing organisations. It is now for the North West Sutherland council of social service and the Scottish Crofters Union to decide on whether or how to take forward its feasibility study into the possibility of restructuring itself into a rural framework organisation, having regard to the particular circumstances of north-west Sutherland and to the views and wishes of interested parties.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conditions he attached to his part-funding of the feasibility study, "A Rural Framework for North West Sutherland".

Sir Hector Monro: The Scottish Office Environment Department contributed £1,500 towards the cost of a feasibility study into the possibility of restructuring North West Sutherland council of social service into a rural framework organisation. It did not, however, commission the study. The report of the study is the property of NWSCSS and the Scottish Crofters Union, and its implementation is a matter for them. Standard conditions were set requiring that the Scottish Office Environment Department be kept informed of progress on the study; be given the opportunity to comment on the final draft report and receive a copy of the final report prior to publication.

Self-governing Schools

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will be publishing the audit regulations covering self-governing schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A consultation document on the Self-Governing Schools Grant and Recovery (Scotland) Regulations 1994 was issued to a wide range of interested bodies and individuals on 17 January 1994. We have asked for responses by 18 February 1994. Once we have considered these responses, we shall bring forward final regulations as soon as possible.

Criminal Justice

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further proposals he has for improving the Scottish criminal justice system.

Mr. Lang: I am today publishing a consultation paper entitled "Sentencing and Appeals", which seeks views on

a number of proposals for improving the ability of our system of justice to deal with crime effectively and fairly. The paper seeks views on possible changes of the system of fiscal fines and the sentencing powers of the sheriff courts and invites views on the case for introduction of sentencing guidelines. It proposes revised procedures for dealing with criminal appeals and invites views on whether there is a need for change to the criteria by which criminal appeals are determined. The paper also seeks views on whether the current arrangments for dealing with alleged miscarriages of justice in Scotland are satisfactory and sets out a number of possible options for change.

The consultation paper is the fourth in a series seeking views on proposals for improving the delivery of justice in Scotland. We are inviting comments by 16 April. Copies of the consultation paper have been placed in the Library.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the allocation of funds to each regional council for the provision of sheltered placement schemes in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* The grant-aided expenditure for sheltered employment for each regional authority for the years 1989-90 to 1993-94 is given in the table. GAE is the level of expenditure which is taken into account in distributing aggregate external finance to local authorities. It is, of course, for the authorities themselves to determine actual levels of expenditure on a particular service.

Sheltered employment grant-aided expenditure

	1989-90 £000	*1990-91 £000*	*1991-92 £000*	*1992-93 £000*	*1993-94 £000*
Borders	0	0	0	0	0
Central	304	317	329	407	340
Dumfries and Galloway	23	26	26	27	24
Fife	611	828	1,144	1,179	1,186
Grampian	1,023	1,161	920	825	1,249
Highland	384	420	496	512	469
Lothian	755	828	940	957	1,260
Strathclyde	1,976	2,352	2,683	2,677	2,342
Tayside	560	906	1,018	1,035	1,080

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of organisations representing disabled people to discuss comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State met the all-party disablement group on 24 February 1993.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People is taking forward his remit from the Prime Minister to identify areas where further action, without expenditure implications, can be taken to eliminate discrimination against disabled people, within the Government's policy of tackling the problem through a programme of education, persuasion and practical help backed up by targeted legislation, as necessary.

Quarries

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines he issues in respect of the establishment of new quarries; what plans he has to amend these guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* National planning guidelines on the working of aggregates in Scotland were issued in 1977. These guidelines which are still extant examines the various issues arising from quarry developments. The guidelines indicate that quarrying is essential to the national economy and that proposals for the extraction of aggregates and other minerals should be provided for in an environmentally acceptable manner. In the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200) a commitment was made to review all planning guidance. In July 1992, a draft national planning policy guideline entitled "Land for Mineral Working" was issued for consultation. The finalised version will issue in the near future and will provide the strategic context within which local authorities will provide up to date development plan policies for mineral working. Such policies will be developed in full consultation with the local community and with regard to the economic needs and environmental considerations of their area.

Sporting Rates

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of representations he received calling for the abolition of sporting rates prior to his announcement of 3 November 1993; if he will list the individuals or organisations which made such representations; and if he will place copies in the Library.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 February 1994]:* The current rating liability of sporting rights in Scotland dates from the Sporting Lands Rating (Scotland) Act 1886. Given the long period of years over which representations on this subject have been made, it is not practicable to identify all representations received prior to my right hon. Friend's announcement, on 3 November 1993, to exempt sporting rights from rating.

Football Stadiums

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he proposes to take action to introduce a fairer system of rating of football stadiums in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 February 1994]:* I propose to table shortly a draft order introducing a revised method of valuation for Scottish Football League club grounds.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of chairpersons and board members of the local enterprise companies in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding 11 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 17 December, at col *884*.

Carbon Dioxide

Mr. Dalyell: To ask sthe Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library the full text of the advice he has received from Forestry Commission scientists about the extent to which boreal forests have driven global carbon dioxide fluxes during this century, and information about the relationships with tropical deforestation.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* I have arranged for a copy of the briefing to be placed in the Library.

The Forestry Commission's research is focused on temperate rather than boreal or tropical forests. The Commission's scientists contribute to the intergovernmental panel on climate change, which was set up under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meterological Organisation, and the Commission has published a research information note, No. 189, on "Climate Change: The Contribution of Forestry to Response Strategies", which summarises some of the panel's main conclusions relating to forestry. The Comsmission has also published a research information note, No. 160, on "The Storage of Carbon in Trees and Timber", which describes preliminary calculations on the amount of carbon which can be stored in different tree species. I have arranged for copies of both notes to be placed in the Library of the House.

New Towns

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are currently on the waiting lists for housing in each of Scotland's new towns.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The information is as follows:

New Town	*Number of people on waiting list as at 31 January 1994*
Cumbernauld	1,351
East Kilbride	4,234
Glenrothes	1,323
Irvine	1,526
Livingston	1,367

Property Lettings

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has issued to Scotland's development corporations relating to the continued letting of properties that become vacant in light of his decision to proceed with wind-up.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The guidance issued to development corporations in August 1992 about the disposal of their housing stocks set out a number of measures designed to increase the choice of landlords available to tenants. These included the sale of vacant properties to housing associations. The hon. Member was sent a copy of the guidance on 31 August 1992.

Housing, Irvine

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects Irvine development corporation to begin transferring properties to the Irvine housing association.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The corporation is negotiating the transfer of newly built homes and vacant properties to Irvine housing association. The negotiations will not be concluded until after Irvine housing association is registered as a housing association by Scottish Homes. It is not, therefore, possible to set a date for the first transfer.

Planning Permission

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes are proposed to the Scottish Office's revised fee scales for applications for planning permission; how much additional revenue will be raised by the increased charges; which bodies will benefit from the increased charges; what representations he has received from local authorities relating to the charges; and what assessment he has made as to the level of the proposed charges.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* There are no proposals at present to change the revised fee scales approved by Parliament in December 1993 for introduction on 13 January 1994 and on 3 January 1995. However, the scales are kept under regular review.

Based on the latest information available, and assuming receipt of similar numbers and types of application an additional £1 million may be raised in Scotland in 1994-95. The principal beneficiary of increased charges is the tax payer because the more income local authorities raise through fees and charges the less they need support from the Government in the form of aggregate external finance or from council tax payers.

My right hon. Friend has not received any representations from local authorities in relation to the costs applicants for planning permission have to pay.

Increases are assessed having regard to information provided by planning authorities on their income and costs in handling planning applications in the preceding year, and other considerations.

WALES

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible have been *(a)* abolished or *(b)* created since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 1 February at col. *611.*

Environmental Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure that within the schools' inspection framework that responsibility of schools for raising awareness and understanding of environmental and conservation issues is subject to inspection and comment.

Sir Wyn Roberts: School inspections are a matter for the Office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales. Inspectors have to report on the quality and standards of education in accordance with OHMCI's framework for inspections. I have asked the chief inspector to write to the hon. Member.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to change the terms of the proposed Welsh Economic Council to take account of the United Kingdom strategy for sustainable development.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Economic Council will be able to take account of the strategy in its deliberations.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to work with the voluntary sector to promote sustainable development.

Mr. Redwood: The Government's plans for involving the voluntary sector in working towards sustainable development are set out in the United Kingdom strategy for sustainable development published on 25 January. Within this the Welsh Office will be seeking to ensure that the voluntary sector in Wales is appropriately catered for in the United Kingdom round table and citizen's environment initiatives.

Wind Turbines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the number of local jobs that would be created in each of the travel-to-work areas adjoining the localities currently nominated for wind farm development and awaiting planning permission.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Heritage Trusts

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will bring forward to increase the number of heritage trusts in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government's response to the Welsh Affairs Committee report on the preservation of historic buildings and ancient monuments (Command 2416) emphasised our commitment to supporting voluntary sector activities in this area. The Department is assisting the architectural heritage fund in its efforts to encourage the establishment of further historic buildings preservation trusts in Wales. The Department's financial support in 1993-94 includes a contribution of £100,000 towards the AHF's loan fund and a grant of £11,300 towards the cost of a development officer. On 4 March I shall be addressing the AHF's conference "From Mansions to Mud-Walled Cottages", which is expected to generate further impetus.

EU Council of Ministers

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times he has attended meetings of the EU Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Ministerial colleagues from the lead Departments covering the subject area concerned represent our interests at meetings of the Council of the European Union and my senior officials also attend to advise those Ministers when this is relevant. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State at the Welsh Office represented the United Kingdom at the informal council on regional policy held in Liege on 12 and 13 November last year.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of sheep scab have been reported in Wales in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Since controls on sheep scab were deregulated in June 1992, figures for the number of cases have not been collected and consequently the information is not available.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Redwood: Promotional advertising and other campaigns run by my Department in the current financial year and which have each cost over £10,000 are as follows:

Advertising

Television	*Newspapers*	*Radio*	*Outdoor*[1]
None	None	None	Drink Drive

[1] Posters.

Objectives for national drink drive advertising are set and measured on a United Kingdom wide basis by the Department of Transport. Additional research activity is currently being carried out in Wales specifically to evaluate advertising activity.

Other Promotional Activity
Caring for the Future
Community Care
Council Tax
Education Charters
How Is Your Child Doing At School?
Planning Development Control
Programme for the Valleys
Sheep Annual Premium

My Department's publicity programme for 1994-95 has not yet been finalised.

Cadw is my Department's only executive agency. In 1993-94 it has undertaken no television advertising. Budgeted expenditure on other general promotional activity is £232,000, of which £95,000 is budgeted for general press advertising. For 1994-95 budgets and plans are not yet finalised. It is expected that expenditure of a broadly similar amount will be incurred, primarily directed towards the agency's "Makers of Wales" promotional campaign.

Welsh House Condition Survey

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects his Department to publish the next Welsh house condition survey.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I expect the results of the survey to be published in the spring.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to exempt public bodies from being required to put out to competitive contract activities costing less than £100,000 a year.

Mr. Redwood: No. Purchasing by public bodies should be based on value for money. Goods and services should be acquired by competition unless there are good reasons to the contrary.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each public body for which he is responsible all activities costing less than £100,000 a year, together with the appropriate payments in each case, which they contracted out for competitive tender for the latest convenient financial year.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally.

Energy Efficiency Office

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to establish a Welsh Energy Efficiency Office on the lines of those that currently exist in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There has been a regional energy efficiency office in the Welsh Office since 1983.

Industrial Aid

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much central Government money was spent on developing industry in Wales for each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash price and *(b)* 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Redwood: Expenditure through the Welsh Office's main schemes for business support is shown in the following table. The figures do not include grant-in-aid for development agencies in Wales, nor expenditure by DTI on United Kingdom-wide schemes.

	Cash prices[1] *000's*	*1993-94 prices 000's*
1979-80	55,417	136,208
1980-81	111,500	231,614
1981-82	134,198	254,177
1982-83	131,766	232,976
[2]1983-84	85,359	144,235
1984-85	49,939	80,347
1985-86	105,090	160,193
1986-87	117,128	173,465
1987-88	76,726	107,882
1988-89	93,287	122,915
1989-90	68,542	84,440
1990-91	57,806	65,900
1991-92	74,147	79,496
1992-93	70,927	73,232
[3]1993-94	77,188	77,188

[1] Expenditure comprises regional development grant, regional selective assistance, regional enterprise grant, and exchange risk guarantee scheme.
[2] Figures for regional development grant up to 1983-84 are gross of receipts. All other figures are net of receipts.
[3] Latest provision.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much the Welsh Office has spent on the operation of the assisted places scheme in each year since 1981; how many pupils have been covered by the scheme since 1981; and if there was any overspend on the budget allocated in each of these years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Year	*Cost of assisted places scheme* £	*Number of pupils in assisted places scheme*	*Overspend* £
1981-82	160,783	114	—
1982-83	274,777	220	—
1983-84	459,626	318	—
1984-85	626,876	403	—
1985-86	842,488	495	—
1986-87	1,519,772	580	429,772
1987-88	1,394,246	622	47,246
1988-89	1,359,681	633	—
1989-90	1,589,392	631	—
1990-91	1,756,283	634	—
1991-92	2,064,813	662	116,813
1992-93	2,457,230	700	57,230

Wind Power

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his national policy for Wales for wind farms.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government's policy is to stimulate the development of renewable energy sources, including wind power, wherever they have prospects of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable in order to contribute to diverse, secure and sustainable energy supplies.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many wind farms have so far been constructed, or have been approved; and for how many planning applications are pending.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As at the beginning of February 1994, the operational status of wind farms in Wales under the non-fossil fuel renewables orders 1 and 2 was:

	Number
Generating	6
Under construction	2
Planning approved	2

Information on planning applications pending is not collected by the Welsh Office.

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Redwood: Details of equipment stolen from the Department during the last three financial years are set out in the following tables:

	£
Financial Year 1990-91	
Wax jacket Camera	780·30
	780·30
Financial Year 1991-92	
Desk top calculator	25·00
Office equipment	70·00
Radio/cassette player	133·50
1 generator 1 microwave 1 strimmer 1 wheelbarrow	1,493·51
Tools	546·67
1 microwave	140·00
Landrover wheel, tyre and padlock	418·58
Radio telephone and various lifejackets	759·28
	3,586·54
Financial Year 1992-93	
Radio/cassette player	168·50
Radio/cassette player	168·50
Laptop computer	2,000·00
Pallet truck	150·00
	2,487·00

A55 Conwy Tunnel

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the original tender price for the A55 Conwy tunnel project; what is his current estimate of the final cost of the contract; and how much of any estimated increase in cost is due to matters other than price inflation provisions within the contract.

Mr. Redwood: The tender price for the main contract for the A55 Conwy crossing project was £102 million. The final cost, excluding the price inflation provision within the contract, is of the order of £144·5 million. Most of the increase reflects the unforeseen circumstances encountered during the contruction of this large and complex scheme. Price inflation provision accounts for around a further £18 million.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure that Welsh interests are represented on the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority.

Mr. Redwood: Consideration is currently being given to appointing a suitable candidate from Wales.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 17 February 1994

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax Allowances

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what studies have been done to assess the effects on relative living standards, work incentives and family life of phasing out married couples' income tax allowance and the additional personal allowance for lone parents.

Mr. Dorrell: No specific studies on this question have been carried out. Although tax changes in 1994 and 1995 will result in a proportionately greater tax burden for married couples and unmarried people with children, they will still pay less tax than other single people with the same incomes.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the cost in tax relief of each dwelling let under the business expansion scheme; and what estimates he has made of the amount of capital gains tax which will be lost if and when these are sold;

(2) how many dwellings let under the business expansion scheme were specifically let for the university sector; and what the proportion of business expansion scheme dwellings are assured exit schemes;

(3) how many new lettings from investments under the business expansion scheme there were in *(a)* each region and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole; and what percentage these figures represent of (i) all privately rented property and (ii) all rented property, for each year of its existence.

Mr. Dorrell: The average cost per dwelling of providing BES income tax relief is estimated to be about £17,500 for lettings made between 1988 and 1992. It is not possible to give a reliable estimate of the cost of exempting gains arising from disposals of BES shares from capital gains tax. Any gains arising from the sale of properties owned by BES companies are, of course, subject to corporation tax in the usual way. Information is not available centrally from administrative sources on the number of dwellings let under the BES for the university sector or the proportion of dwellings which are let through assured exit schemes. However, information from independent analysts suggests that of the total amount of investment made through BES assured tenancy public offers about 30 per cent. was invested in accommodation let for academic establishments and about 60 per cent. was in assured exit schemes. Reliable estimates by regions are available for years up to 1991-92. These and preliminary estimates for the United Kingdom total in 1992-93 are shown in the table.

New Lettings

	Total number[1]	*as a percentage of: All privately rented property (per cent.)*	*as a percentage of: All rented rented property (per cent.)*
1988-89			
England:			
South-East	2,200	0·33	0·09
East Anglia	300	0·33	0·11
South-West	300	0·14	0·06
West Midlands	300	0·22	0·04
East Midlands	400	0·29	0·08
Yorkshire and Humberside	400	0·25	0·06
North-West	1,100	0·61	0·13
North	200	0·21	0·04
Wales	400	0·47	0·11
Scotland	800	0·58	0·07
Northern Ireland	neg	neg	neg
United Kingdom	6,400	0·33	0·08
1989-90			
England:			
South-East	1,200	0·17	0·05
East Anglia	100	0·10	0·04
South-West	100	0·05	0·02
West Midlands	100	0·07	0·01
East Midlands	200	0·14	0·04
Yorkshire and Humberside	400	0·24	0·06
North-West	500	0·27	0·06
North	neg	neg	neg
Wales	neg	neg	neg
Scotland	400	0·30	0·04
Northern Ireland	100	0·45	0·05
United Kingdom	3,100	0·15	0·04
1990-91			
England:			
South-East	2,500	0·31	0·10
East Anglia	1,100	1·05	0·40
South-West	500	0·22	0·09
West Midlands	100	0·07	0·01
East Midlands	400	0·28	0·08
Yorkshire and Humberside	100	0·06	0·01
North-West	500	0·26	0·06
North	neg	neg	neg
Wales	neg	neg	neg
Scotland	100	0·08	0·01
Northern Ireland	400	1·82	0·20
United Kingdom	5,700	0·27	0·07
1991-92			
England:			
South-East	4,100	0·50	0·17
East Anglia	300	0·27	0·11
South-West	1,100	0·47	0·20
West Midlands	100	0·06	0·01
East Midlands	700	0·49	0·14
Yorkshire and Humberside	400	0·22	0·06
North-West	1,300	0·65	0·15
North	100	0·10	0·02
Wales	500	0·52	0·14
Scotland	100	0·07	0·01
Northern Ireland	800	3·64	0·41
United Kingdom	9,300	0·42	0·12
1992-93			
United Kingdom	24,000	1·08	0·30

[1] Estimates rounded to nearest 100.

Building Societies

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list the building societies that have agreed to allow the building societies ombudsman scheme to consider home income plans cases;

(2) if he will list those building societies who were involved with home income plans; and which have refused to agree that such cases can go to the ombudsman scheme.

Mr. Nelson: I understand that the following societies have consented to an extension of the Building Societies Ombudsman's powers to cover complaints or possible complaints related to home income plans:

- Bradford and Bingley
- Britannia
- Chelsea (Capital Access Scheme mortgages on a case by case basis)
- Cheltenham and Gloucester (including complaints arising out of lending by the former Guardian, Heart of England and Portsmouth Building Societies)
- Halifax
- Melton Mowbray
- National and Provincial
- Newcastle
- Northern Rock (all complaints arise out of lending by the former Lancastrian Building Society)
- Portman (including lending by the former Wessex Building Society)
- Staffordshire (if Society cannot first resolve complaint itself)
- Woolwich (all complaints arise out of lending by the former Town and Country Building Society).

The following societies have refused:

- Bristol and West
- Kent Reliance
- Lambeth
- National Counties
- West Bromwich.

The Leeds has formally refused but is in practice co-operating on a case-by-case basis—this includes all complaints arising out of lending by Sussex County, Eastbourne Mutual or Southdown building societies.

The following societies have not yet made a firm decision:

- Alliance and Leicester
- Birmingham Midshires
- Manchester
- Nationwide.

Business Premises

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer under what authority district valuers may require those whose business premises are being revalued to produce audited accounts; for how many years they may be asked to produce these; within what period they may be asked to provide them; what sanctions apply in the event of non-production; and for what purpose such detailed information may be required.

Mr. Nelson: Valuation officers are empowered under paragraph 5 of schedule 9 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended, to serve a notice on a person, who is the owner or occupier of a hereditament, requesting that person to supply information, specified in the notice, that the officer reasonably believes will assist him on carrying out his statutory functions.

Accounts are asked for where rental information is sparse for the type of property in question. Valuation officers will specify a period sufficient to establish trends, but this would not normally exceed three years.

The Act provides that the information should be supplied within a period of 21 days from the date of service of the notice. There is a fine on summary conviction for failing to do so without reasonable excuse.

The information supplied will be used to establish rental values for those classes of properties in order that valuation officers may fulfil their statutory obligation to compile and maintain rating lists.

North Sea Oil

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, columns *607-8*, if he will publish a similar table of revenues from North sea oil since 1979-80, based on 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: Revenues raised from North sea oil and gas production by category of tax since 1979-80 at 1993-94 prices have been as follows:

£ million at 1993-94 prices

Year	*Petroleum revenue tax*	*Supplementary petroleum duty*	*Corporation tax*		*Royalty*	*Total*
			ACT setoff	*Mainstream CT*		
1979-80	3,526	—	192	423	1,543	5,683
1980-81	5,004	—	201	507	2,060	7,772
1981-82	4,526	3,834	511	778	2,643	12,293
1982-83	5,786	4,232	357	564	2,884	13,822
1983-84	10,163	—	726	755	3,216	14,860
1984-85	11,537	—	2,000	1,910	3,900	19,346
1985-86	9,718	—	1,654	2,791	3,136	17,299
1986-87	1,759	—	1,673	2,289	1,361	7,082
1987-88	3,228	—	957	867	1,440	6,493
1988-89	1,805	—	902	671	792	4,170
1989-90	1,293	—	610	305	708	2,916
1990-91	980	—	413	551	689	2,634
1991-92	−231	—	397	287	597	1,049
1992-93	71	—	495	208	572	1,347
1993-94[1]	500	—	300	—	600	1,400

[1] 1994-95 Financial Statement and Budget Report estimate.

Tax Changes

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Peckham will receive an answer to the two questions about the effect of the 1995-96 tax changes, tabled for answer on 31 January.

Mr. Dorrell: Today.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *635-41*, to provide similar estimates of the burden of direct and indirect taxes for 1995-96 to take account of the tax changes announced for 1995-96, assuming that other aspects of the tax regime are subject to statutory indexation and that prices rise by the amount specified in the working assumption on page 121 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95" and assuming earnings growth in 1995-96 is the same as in 1994-95.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 31 January 1994]:* Estimates of tax payments in 1995-96 on the basis requested are given in the table. The actual tax burden in 1995-96 will depend on decisions taken in the 1994 Budget as well as on changes in prices and earnings.

Income tax, national insurance contributions and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1995-96[1]

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1000*	*2000*
Single											
Indexed 1978-79 tax system applied in 1995-96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	41·8	73·60	105·72	173·64	270·72	525·43	823·33	1,146·45	1,792·69	2,762·04	5,993·23
NICs	12·65	19·98	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05
Income tax + NICs	54·14	92·58	129·77	197·69	294·77	549·48	847·38	1,170·50	1,816·74	2,786·09	6,017·28
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	21·3	25·2	27·2	29·7	34·8	45·0	52·9	58·9	65·8	70·9	77·0
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·2	4·1	3·1	2·1	1·5	1·2	0·9	0·6	0·3
Income tax + NICs	27·8	31·7	33·3	33·9	37·9	476·0	54·4	60·1	66·7	71·6	77·3
1995-96 tax measures applied in 1995-96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	28·54	52·87	77·20	132·50	210·36	366·08	521·80	677·52	988·96	1,456·12	3,013·32
NICs	14·75	24·48	34·21	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78
Income tax and NICs	43·29	77·35	111·41	172·28	250·14	405·86	561·58	717·30	1,028·74	1,495·90	3,053·10
VAT	—	18·89	24·84	37·47	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	22·26	27·45	38·43	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	118·50	163·70	248·18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	14·7	18·1	19·8	22·7	27·0	31·3	33·5	34·8	36·3	37·4	38·7
NICs	7·6	8·4	8·8	6·8	5·1	3·4	2·6	2·0	1·5	1·0	0·5
Income tax and NICs	22·2	26·5	28·6	29·5	32·1	34·8	36·1	36·9	37·8	38·4	39·2
VAT	—	6·5	6·4	6·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·6	7·1	6·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	40·6	42·1	42·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, no children											
Indexed 1978-79 tax system applied in 1995-96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	30·76	62·88	94·99	160·64	252·84	502·20	796·36	1,119·47	1,765·71	2,735·07	5,966·26
NICs	12·65	18·98	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05
Income tax + NICs	43·41	81·85	119·04	184·69	276·89	526·25	820·41	1,143·52	1,789·76	2,759·12	5,990·31
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	15·8	21·5	24·4	27·5	32·5	43·0	51·1	57·5	64·8	70·3	76·6
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·2	4·1	3·1	2·1	1·5	1·2	0·9	0·6	0·3
Income tax + NICs	22·3	28·0	30·6	31·6	35·6	45·1	52·7	58·7	65·7	70·9	76·9
1995-96 tax measures applied in 1995-96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	23·58	47·91	72·24	127·54	205·40	361·12	516·84	672·56	984·00	1,451·16	3,008·36
NICs	14·75	24·48	34·21	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78
Income tax and NICs	28·33	72·39	106·45	167·32	245·18	400·90	556·62	712·34	1,023·78	1,490·94	3,048·14
VAT	—	17·30	23·72	37·33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	24·60	29·93	41·12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	114·29	160·10	245·77	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	12·1	16·4	18·6	21·8	26·4	30·9	33·2	34·6	36·1	37·3	38·6
NICs	7·6	8·4	8·8	6·8	5·1	3·4	2·6	2·0	1·5	1·0	0·5
Income tax and NICs	19·7	24·8	27·3	28·7	31·5	34·3	35·7	36·6	37·6	38·3	39·1
VAT	—	5·9	6·1	6·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·4	7·7	7·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	39·1	41·1	42·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1000*	*2000*
Married, 2 children											
Indexed 1978-79 tax system applied in 1995-96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	10·82	42·94	75·06	139·87	230·29	477·85	770·46	1,093·58	1,739·82	2,709·17	5,940·36
NICs	12·65	18·98	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05	24·05
Income tax + NICs	23·48	61·92	99·11	163·92	254·34	501·90	794·51	1,117·63	1,763·87	2,733·22	5,964·41
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	5·6	14·7	19·3	24·0	29·6	40·9	49·5	56·2	63·8	69·6	76·3
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·2	4·1	3·1	2·1	1·5	1·2	0·9	0·6	0·3
Income tax + NICs	12·1	21·2	25·5	28·1	32·7	43·0	51·0	57·4	64·7	70·2	76·6
1995-96 tax measures applied in 1995-96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	4·58	28·86	53·19	108·49	186·35	342·07	497·79	653·51	964·95	1,432·11	2,989·31
NICs	14·75	24·48	34·21	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78	39·78
Income tax and NICs	19·28	53·34	87·40	148·27	226·13	381·85	537·57	693·29	1,004·73	1,471·89	3,029·09
VAT	—	17·06	24·40	39·95		—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	24·62	28·88	37·91	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	95·02	140·68	226·13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	2·3	9·9	13·7	18·6	23·9	29·3	32·0	33·6	35·4	36·8	38·4
NICs	7·6	8·4	8·8	6·8	5·1	3·4	2·6	2·0	1·5	1·0	0·5
Income tax and NICs	9·9	18·3	22·5	25·4	29·0	32·7	34·5	35·6	36·9	37·8	38·9
VAT	—	5·8	6·3	6·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·4	7·4	6·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	32·5	36·2	38·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, both working, no children											
Indexed 1978-79 tax system applied in 1995-96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	11·45	40·12	72·24	136·48	211·44	359·78	556·04	796·15	1,358·40	2,292·90	5,524·09
NICs	12·65	18·98	25·30	37·96	44·29	48·10	48·10	48·10	48·10	48·10	48·10
Income tax + NICs	24·10	59·10	97·55	174·43	255·73	407·88	604·14	844·25	1,406·50	2,341·00	5,572·19
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	5·9	13·7	18·6	23·4	27·2	30·8	35·7	40·9	49·8	58·9	70·9
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·5	6·5	5·7	4·1	3·1	2·5	1·8	1·2	0·6
Income tax + NICs	12·4	20·2	25·1	29·9	32·8	34·9	38·8	43·4	51·6	60·1	71·6
1995-96 tax measures applied in 1995-96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	6·55	28·36	52·12	100·79	149·45	270·93	415·76	571·48	882·92	1,350·08	2,907·28
NICs	10·03	19·76	29·49	48·96	66·20	79·56	79·56	79·56	79·56	79·56	79·56
Income tax and NICs	16·57	48·12	81·61	149·74	215·65	350·49	495·32	651·04	962·48	1,429·64	2,986·84
VAT	—	19·57	26·60	40·54	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	28·97	33·59	42·73	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	96·66	141·80	233·01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	3·4	9·7	13·4	17·3	19·2	23·2	26·7	29·4	32·4	34·7	37·3
NICs	5·2	6·8	7·6	8·4	8·5	6·8	5·1	4·1	2·9	2·0	1·0
Income tax and NICs	8·5	16·5	21·0	25·6	27·7	30·0	31·8	33·4	35·3	36·7	38·4
VAT	—	6·7	6·9	6·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect[5]	—	9·9	8·6	7·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	33·1	36·5	39·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes to tables

1 Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay Class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in rate.

2 Since 1990-91, husbands and wives have been taxed independently. Previously the tax liability of couples depended on their joint income. To permit comparisons with earlier years, the table therefore shows income tax and National Insurance Contributions paid by a married couple as a proportion of their joint income, assuming, as in the earlier years, that where both partners are earners, the husband and wife share the relevant multiple of earnings in the ratio 60:40.

3 In order to provide comparability with 1978-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowance, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax for the married couple with two children.

4 Estimates of income tax and National Insurance Contributions in 1995-96 are based on the illustrative assumption of uprating 1994-95 personal allowances, tax thresholds, NIC Lower and Upper earnings limits and the level of Child Benefit in line with the assumption of 3·25 per cent. given in the 1994-95 Financial Statement and Budget Report for the increase in the Retail Price Index in 1995-96.

5 Estimates of income tax and National Insurance Contributions in 1995-96 if the 1978-79 tax regime had been indexed for inflation are based on

the assumption that the 1978-79 levels of personal allowances, child tax allowances, tax thresholds, NIC Lower and Upper earnings limits and Child Benefit are indexed to 1995-96 in line with the growth in the RPI. The growth in the RPI in years beyond 1993-94 uses the assumptions for RPI increases for 1994-95 and 1995-96 contained in the 1994-95 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

6. In both cases, average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence and are assumed to be £389·30 per week based on the earnings growth assumption of 4 per cent. for 1995-96.

7. The estimates of most indirect taxes are based on equations derived from the 1985 Family Expenditure Survey, uprated to later years using forecasts of aggregate tax receipts. Estimates of VAT on domestic fuel and power, Airline Passenger Duty and Insurance Premium Tax are based on equations using results from the 1991 and 1992 Family Expenditure Survey respectively, uprated using a similar methodology. These estimates are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved.

8. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with the same composition and similar incomes and estimated payments of VAT and other indirect taxes are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range, the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between estimates obtained from Family Expenditure Surveys for different years.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *653-41* and, on the same basis as his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of 22 April 1993, *Official Report*, columns *176-78*, provide similar estimates of the burden of direct and indirect taxes that would take effect in 1994-95 if the tax rates announced for 1995-96 and contained in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95", applied in 1994-95.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 31 January 1994]:* Figures illustrating the hypothetical tax burdens in 1995-96 if the measures announced for 1995-96 applied in 1994-95 are given in the table. The actual burden of tax in 1995-96 will depend on decisions taken in the 1994 Budget as well as on changes in prices and earnings.

Income tax, national insurance contributions and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1994-95

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1000*	*2000*
Single											
Indexed 1978-79 tax system applied in 1994-95											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	39·70	70·58	101·46	166·53	259·26	503·22	788·90	1,099·57	1,720·91	2,652·91	5,759·60
NICs	12·16	18·25	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40
Income tax + NICs	51·87	88·83	124·86	189·93	282·66	526·62	812·30	1,122·97	1,744·31	2,676·31	5,783·00
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	21·2	25·1	27·1	29·7	34·6	44·8	52·7	58·8	65·7	70·9	76·9
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·3	4·2	3·1	2·1	1·6	1·3	0·9	0·6	0·3
Income tax + NICs	27·7	31·6	33·4	33·8	37·8	46·9	54·3	60·0	66·6	71·5	77·3
1995-96 tax measures applied in 1994-95											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	27·34	50·73	74·13	126·83	201·69	351·41	501·13	650·85	950·29	1,399·45	2,896·65
NICs	14·16	23·51	32·87	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44
Income tax and NICs	41·50	74·25	107·00	165·27	240·13	389·85	539·57	689·29	988·73	1,437·89	2,935·09
VAT	—	18·12	23·85	35·97	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	21·40	26·31	36·74	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	113·76	157·16	237·98	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	14·6	18·1	19·8	22·6	26·9	31·3	33·5	34·8	36·3	37·4	38·7
NICs	7·6	8·4	8·8	6·8	5·1	3·4	2·6	2·1	1·5	1·0	0·5
Income tax and NICs	22·2	26·4	28·6	29·4	32·1	34·7	36·0	36·8	37·7	38·4	39·2
VAT	—	6·5	6·4	6·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·6	7·0	6·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	40·5	42·0	42·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, no children											
Indexed 1978-79 tax system applied in 1994-95											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	29·36	60·24	91·12	154·00	242·02	481·13	762·88	1,073·55	1,694·89	2,626·89	5,733·58
NICs	12·16	18·25	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40
Income tax + NICs	41·52	78·49	114·52	177·40	265·42	504·53	786·28	1,096·95	1,718·29	2,650·29	5,756·98
Percentage of gross earnings											
Income tax	15·7	21·5	24·3	27·4	32·3	42·8	51·0	57·4	64·7	70·2	76·6
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·3	4·2	3·1	2·1	1·6	1·3	0·9	0·6	0·3
Income tax + NICs	22·2	28·0	30·6	31·6	35·5	44·9	52·5	58·6	65·6	70·8	76·9
1995-96 tax measures applied in 1994-95											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	22·38	45·77	69·17	121·87	196·73	346·45	496·17	645·89	945·89	1,394·49	2,891·69
NICs	14·16	23·51	32·87	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44
Income tax and NICs	36·53	69·29	102·04	160·31	235·17	384·89	534·61	684·33	983·77	1,432·93	2,930·13
VAT	—	16·48	22·64	35·73	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	Multiples of average earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1000*	*2000*
Other indirect	—	23·71	28·75	39·38	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	109·48	153·42	235·42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	12·0	16·3	18·5	21·7	26·3	30·9	33·1	34·5	36·1	37·3	38·6
NICs	7·6	8·4	8·8	6·8	5·1	3·4	2·6	2·1	1·5	1·0	0·5
Income tax and NICs	19·5	24·7	27·3	28·6	31·4	34·3	35·7	36·5	37·5	38·3	39·1
VAT	—	5·8	6·1	6·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·5	7·6	7·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	39·0	41·0	41·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, 2 children											
Indexed 1978-79 tax system applied in 1994-95											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	10·05	40·93	71·81	133·88	220·17	457·55	737·80	1,048·47	1,669·81	2,601·82	5,708·51
NICs	12·16	18·25	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40	23·40
Income tax + NICs	22·22	59·18	95·21	157·28	243·57	480·95	761·20	1,071·87	1,693·21	2,625·22	5,731·91
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	5·4	14·6	19·2	23·8	29·4	40·7	49·3	56·0	63·7	69·5	76·3
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·3	4·2	3·1	2·1	1·6	1·3	0·9	0·6	0·3
Income tax + NICs	11·9	21·1	25·4	28·0	32·5	42·8	50·8	57·3	64·6	70·1	76·6
1995-96 tax measures applied in 1994-95											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	3·93	27·32	50·72	103·42	178·28	328·00	477·72	627·44	926·88	1,376·04	2,873·24
NICs	14·16	23·51	32·87	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44	38·44
Income tax and NICs	18·08	50·84	83·59	141·86	216·72	366·44	516·16	665·88	965·32	1,414·48	2,911·68
VAT	—	16·06	23·11	38·06	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	23·79	27·83	36·37	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	90·69	134·52	216·29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	2·1	9·7	13·5	18·4	23·8	29·2	31·9	33·5	35·4	36·8	38·4
NICs	7·6	8·4	8·8	6·8	5·1	3·4	2·6	2·1	1·5	1·0	0·5
Income tax and NICs	9·7	18·1	22·3	25·3	28·9	32·6	34·5	35·6	36·8	37·8	38·9
VAT	—	5·7	6·2	6·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·5	7·4	6·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	32·3	35·9	38·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, both working, no children											
Indexed 1978-79 tax system applied in 1994-95											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	10·73	38·18	69·06	130·82	202·92	344·92	532·59	762·48	1,301·70	2,199·13	5,305·82
NICs	12·16	18·25	24·33	36·49	42·86	46·80	46·80	46·80	46·80	46·80	46·80
Income tax + NICs	22·89	56·43	93·39	167·32	245·79	391·72	579·39	809·28	1,348·50	2,245·93	5,352·62
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	5·7	13·6	18·5	23·3	27·1	30·7	35·6	40·7	49·7	58·8	70·9
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·5	6·5	5·7	4·2	3·1	2·5	1·8	1·3	0·6
Income tax + NICs	12·2	20·1	25·0	29·8	32·8	34·9	38·7	43·2	51·5	60·0	71·5
1995-96 tax measures applied in 1994-95											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	5·97	26·91	49·72	96·51	143·29	259·63	398·42	548·14	847·58	1,296·74	2,793·94
NICs	9·60	18·95	28·31	47·03	63·82	76·88	76·88	76·88	76·88	76·88	76·88
Income tax and NICs	15·56	45·86	78·03	143·53	207·12	336·51	475·30	625·02	924·46	1,373·62	2,870·82
VAT	—	18·59	25·34	38·75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	28·05	32·42	41·05	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	92·50	135·79	223·33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	3·2	9·6	13·3	17·2	19·1	23·1	26·6	29·3	32·3	34·6	37·3
NICs	5·1	6·8	7·6	8·4	8·5	6·8	5·1	4·1	2·9	2·1	1·0
Income tax and NICs	8·3	16·3	20·8	25·6	27·7	30·0	31·7	33·4	35·3	36·7	38·3
VAT	—	6·6	6·8	6·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	10·0	8·6	7·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	33·0	36·3	39·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes to tables.

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have

income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay Class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in rate.

2. Since 1990-91, husbands and wives have been taxed independently. Previously the tax liability of couples depended on their joint income. To permit comparisons with earlier years, the table therefore shows income tax and National Insurance Contributions paid by a married couple as a proportion of their joint income, assuming, as in the earlier years, that where both partners are earners, the husband and wife share the relevant multiple of earnings in the ratio 60:40.
3. In order to provide comparability with 1978-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowance, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax for the married couple with two children.
4. Estimates have been provided on the basis that measures for 1995-96 announced in the 1993 Budgets are implemented in 1994-95, on the basis of 1994-95 levels of earnings and prices and with other tax allowances, thresholds at 1994-95 levels. Estimates have also been provided for tax payments on the basis that the 1978-79 tax regime had been indexed for inflation in line with the growth in the RPI and applied to 1994-95 levels of earnings.
5. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence and are assumed to be £374·30 a week based on the illustrative earnings growth assumption of 4 per cent. in 1994-95.
6. The estimates of most indirect taxes are based on equations derived from the 1985 Family Expenditure Survey, uprated to later years using forecasts of aggregate tax receipts. Estimates of VAT on domestic fuel and power are based on equations using results from the 1991 Family Expenditure Survey, uprated using a similar methodology. These estimates are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved.
7. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with the same composition and similar incomes and estimated payments of VAT and other indirect taxes are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range, the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between estimates obtained from Family Expenditure Surveys for different years.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *635-41*, if he will provide estimates for the years 1978-79 to 1992-93 of the burden of direct and indirect taxes on a married couple, two children, and one earner on 100 per cent. of average earnings, including the impact of mortgage interest relief, if the family is assumed to have a mortgage at the average outstanding level in each year, and is paying the average mortgage interest rate.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 1 February 1994]:* The available information is given in the table.

Tax and mortgage payments

	1978-79	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
(i) Whole economy			
Income tax	11·2	9·3	9·1
NICs	7·2	6·2	6·2
(ii) Family			
Income tax	14·4	12·3	12·4
NICs	6·5	7·9	7·9
Net mortgage payments	11·8	14·0	10·8

Notes:

1. Whole economy income tax and NICs show total tax receipts on an accruals basis as a proportion of GDP. The figures for NICs include both employers' and employee contributions.
2. Family income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners are assumed to pay Class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in rate.
3. In order to provide comparability with 1978-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowance, child benefit is treated as a deduction from income tax. Both children are assumed to be under 11 years old.
4. The calculations assume a mortgage of £33,000 in 1992-93 and 1993-94, and one of £8,400 in 1978-79. The figures for 1978-79 and 1992-93 represent broadly the same proportion of the average house price as a £33,000 mortgage today.
5. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. Average earnings stood at £92·80 per week in 1978-79 and £347·70 in 1992-93. They are assumed to grow by 3½ per cent. in 1993-94 to £359·90.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *635*, if he will *(a)* provide estimates for the years 1993-94 and 1994-95 of the burden of direct and indirect taxes on a married couple, one earner, two children, on 100 per cent. of the average earnings, including the impact of mortgage interest tax relief, assuming that the family has a £35,000 mortgage and that mortgage interest rates are 7·9 per cent. in 1993-94 and 7·8 per cent. in 1994-95 and *(b)* provide similar estimates for 1995-96 to take account of the tax changes announced for 1995-96, assuming that other aspects of the tax regime are subject to statutory indexation, that prices rise by the amount specified in the working assumption on page 121 of the Financial Statement and Budget report 1994-95, that earnings growth in 1995-96 is the same as in 1994-95 and that the family has a £35,000 mortgage and that mortgage interest rates are 7·8 per cent. in 1995-96.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 1 February 1994]:* The available information is given in the table.

Tax and mortgage payments

	1993-94	*1994-95*	*1995-96*
(i) Whole economy			
Income tax	9·1	9·6	9·9
NICs	6·2	6·4	6·3
(ii) Family			
Income tax	12·4	13·1	13·7
NICs	7·9	8·8	8·8
Net mortgage payments	11·6	11·6	11·8

Notes to Table:

1. Whole economy income tax and NICs show total tax receipts on an accruals basis as a proportion of GDP. The figures for NICs include both employers' and employee contributions.
2. Family tax and mortgage payments show income tax, employee NICs and net mortgage payments for a one-earner married couple on average earnings with two children as a percentage of earnings.
3. Family income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners are assumed to pay Class 1 NI contributions at the contracted-in rate.
4. Child benefit is treated as a deduction from income tax.
5. Estimates of family income tax and National Insurance Contributions in 1995-96 are based on the illustrative assumption of uprating personal allowances, tax thresholds, NIC Lower and Upper earnings limits and Child Benefit in line with the assumption of 3·25 per cent. given in the 1994-95 Financial Statement and Budget Report for the increase in the Retail Price Index in 1995-96.
6. Mortgage payments are shown net of mortgage interest relief.
7. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are assumed to be £359·90 per week in 1993-94, £374·30 in 1994-95 and £389·30 in 1995-96, based on illustrative earnings growth assumptions of 4 per cent. per year in 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Pension Transfers

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information the Securities and Investments Board requested from FIMBRA, LAUTRO and IMRO in relation to pension transfers; what was the basis of the brief given by the Securities and Investments Board to KPMG; what action was taken by the Securities and Investments Board in investigating pension transfers by the companies directly regulated by the Securities and Investments Board; what were the terms of reference of the steering committee on pension transfers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* KPMG was asked by the Securities and Investments Board to examine in conjunction with FIMBRA, LAUTRO and IMRO the extent of compliance with regulators' requirements in the sale of lump sum pension transfers. I understand that the study was carried out on a representative sample of client files provided by those SROs. It was commissioned as a result of SIB's analysis of compliance by directly regulated firms, which indicated significant levels of non-compliance. SIB published the report on 16 December 1993. It found that, as with SIB's directly regulated firms, a large proportion of files did not contain all the material that they should have contained. SIB has stressed that it remains to be seen how far this finding is symptomatic of unsuitable advice causing financial disadvantage to investors.

A regulators steering group, chaired by the chief executive of SIB, has been charged with examining the extent of the problem and devising preventative and remedial guidelines. An advisory committee of experts, chaired by Sir Douglas Wass, has been set up to advise the SIB board on further work on pension transfers. Full terms of reference of both are set out hereafter.

Pensions Advisory Committee

1. To review the plans and proposals developed by the Regulators' Steering Group in accordance with its terms of reference, with particular regard to their practicability and to the extent to which they address the problems identified; and

2. To submit to the SIB two reports on the outcome of its review:

the first on the proposals of the Steering Group for the development of preventative measures; and

the second on the full report of the Steering Group on the actions required to provide remedies for any shortcomings in the advice given to clients.

3. It is understood:

(a) that members of the Advisory Board will be free to consult their "constituencies" on an informal and confidential basis during the course of its work, and

(b) that the Advisory Board will be free to publish its reports to the SIB in the event that the body does not accept its advice in whole or in part.

Regulators' Steering Group

(i) To advise on further measures necessary to ensure that future pension business involving transfers or opt outs from occupational pension schemes is conducted in accordance with applicable regulatory standards.

(ii) To develop specifications for an industry review of potential problem cases, and the priorities for tackling the review.

(iii) To clarify the scale and incidence of detriment to investors.

((iv) To consider what forms of remedy are appropriate in different sets of circumstances.

(v) To plan for co-ordinated regulatory activity where it is necessary.

(vi) To foster commitment within the investment and occupational pensions industries and the actuarial profession to the review, and to the resolution of problem cases.

To keep SIB informed of its progress on the above by means of monthly reports, and in particular to report on (i) above by 28 February 1994 and to report on overall progress by 30 June 1994.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Passports

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now arrange for the issue of a full British passport or travel documents to Mrs. Hunwicks, a constituent of the hon. Member for Ilford, South.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mrs. Hunwicks has not acquired British citizenship and thus does not qualify for a British passport. Any application she may wish to make for a Home Office travel document will be considered on its merits.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are applied by officials in the Passport Agency and his Department when deciding whether or not to issue passports to people living in this country for the last 30 years but who were born in the republic of Cyprus *(a)* before and *(b)* after it gained its independence.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Passport Agency issues British passports to those who qualify under the relevant nationality legislation. In the case of people born in Cyprus, this is the Cyprus Act 1960 and the British Nationality (Cyprus) Order 1960.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the Passport Agency has refused to issue a full passport to Mrs. Hunwicks, a constituent of the hon. Member for Ilford, South; and what account was taken of the issue of a British visitor's passport.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mrs. Hunwicks has not acquired British citizenship and thus does not qualify for a British passport.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Mr. and Mrs. Hunwicks, constituents of the hon. Member for Ilford, South, first applied for passports at the Passport Office at Petty France, London; what reasons they gave for the application; when Mr. Hunwicks was given his passport; why Mrs. Hunwicks was refused a passport; and how many subsequent visits and telephone calls Mr. and Mrs. Hunwicks made to the Passport Office.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mr. Hunwicks applied for British passports for himself and his wife on 18 January 1994 to enable them to travel to Morocco. A passport for Mr. Hunwicks was issued on 21 January. He was informed that a passport could not be issued to Mrs. Hunwicks as she has not yet acquired British citizenship. Mr. and Mrs. Hunwicks have made three visits to London passport office, and had several telephone conversations, in seeking to clarify this situation.

Temazepam

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce his decision on the conclusions reached by his Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs regarding the misuse of the hypnotic temazepam.

Mr. Maclean: I am studying the Advisory Council's conclusions in consultation with ministerial colleagues. The consultation process is taking a little longer than at first envisaged, but I hope to reach a decision shortly after Easter.

Assault

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by region the available data on the breakdown of assault victims by (i) race and (ii) religion in 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by region the number of female victims of (i) sexual and (ii) physical assaults since 1990 who were assaulted by males against whom they had restraining orders.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not available centrally.

Sex Offences

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted sex offenders have then gone on to offend once again after their release from prison in the last 10 years.

Mr. Maclean: The available information on the re-offending of prisoners is the reconviction rate for a "standard list" offence, as defined in appendix 4 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1992", within two or four years after discharge from a prison service establishment. The latest statistics are for those discharged in 1987 after completion of a prison sentence for which the principal offence was a sex offence. Of those discharged, 416 or 25 per cent. had been convicted of a further offence within two years and 540 or 32 per cent. within four years. The numbers exclude the reconviction of a small number of discharges whose criminal histories could not be traced.

Fraud

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce provisions for minimum custodial sentences linked with the amounts involved in cases of major fraud.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans to do so.

Sheehy Inquiry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made as to the effect on the report of the Sheehy inquiry of the members of the inquiry all being men.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will answer the questions from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton tabled for answer on 28 January regarding the appointments he makes to public bodies.

Mr. Howard: I have no record of any question tabled by the hon. Member to my Department for answer on 28 January.

The hon. Member has received an answer to all the questions he tabled for answer on 26 January concerning public bodies.

Police Surveillance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 13 December, *Official Report*, column *435*, if he will review the position as respects court cases of citizens allowing their houses to be used for surveillance by the police.

Mr. Maclean: It is clear that the operation of the current rules on disclosure causes a number of problems in respect of members of the public who allow their homes to be used for surveillance by the police. The Government are reviewing this issue as part of their consideration of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice about prosecution and defence disclosure.

Game Licences

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will abolish the game licence system.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are currently consulting interested groups on how far game licences continue to meet their original objective of combating poaching and enforcing the statutory close season and on whether there may be better means of achieving the same object.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many teachers, per London borough, are employed directly on section 11 funded projects; and what estimate he has made as to how many will lose their jobs following the change in the grants formula.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not maintained centrally in the form requested. The number of designated teacher posts approved for funding under section 11 grant in each London borough is shown in the table, in full-time equivalent terms.

London Borough	*Number of FTE teacher posts approved*
Barking and Dagenham	15·6
Barnet	48·5
Bexley	7·0
Brent	92·5
Bromley	—
Camden	72·4
Croydon	63·2
Ealing	184·4
Enfield	64·0

London Borough	Number of FTE teacher posts approved
Greenwich	85·0
Hackney	225·5
Hammersmith and Fulham	40·6
Haringey	181·1
Harrow	37·0
Havering	3·0
Hillingdon	13·0
Hounslow	91·4
Islington	102·0
Kensington and Chelsea	58·0
Kingston	7·1
Lambeth	51·2
Lewisham	98·0
Merton	28·0
Newham	132·2
Redbridge	56·6
Richmond	4·0
Southwark	108·5
Sutton	2·0
Tower Hamlets	428·5
Waltham Forest	114·0
Wandsworth	112·4
Westminster	95·5

Notes:
1. Figures relate to posts in full-time equivalent terms, not individuals.
2. Figures include any such posts in grant maintained schools within a borough's area

All approved posts remain eligible for grant funding. It is a matter for authorities to decide, within their overall financial provision, how they propose to proceed in the light of the reductions in section 11 funding which we regret it has been necessary to make.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the expenditure, per London borough, on section 11 projects for each of the past five years; what it will be in the current year; and what is the proposed expenditure for 1994-95.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows, in relation to each London borough, and also the London Boroughs Grants Unit and, where relevant, the Inner London education authority,

(a) for the years between 1988-89 and 1992-93, grant expenditure under section 11;
(b) for 1993-94, amounts of grant under three quarterly payments so far made; and
(c) budget allocations which have been notified as the basis for grant recipients' own expenditure in 1994-95.

Since grant is currently paid on the basis of actual expenditure incurred by grant recipients, it is not possible to give grant expenditure figures for 1993-94 as a whole, or for 1994-95.

It should be noted that the later figures in relation to the Inner London education authority include grant in respect of earlier years, payment of which had been delayed due to the late submission of claims.

Section 11 Grant: London boroughs

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95
Barking and Dagenham	211,233	246,230	245,849	223,204	317,607	230,289	230,860
Barnet	1,049,851	949,002	1,202,176	1,073,736	1,135,419	808,203	748,243
Bexley	11,104	13,049	15,523	13,105	55,271	95,293	100,138
Brent	4,025,852	3,349,013	2,614,389	2,521,332	2,449,332	1,627,435	1,742,385
Bromley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	244,234	424,671	1,544,899	1,635,092	1,441,285	784,832	1,111,346
Croydon	1,235,905	1,093,806	1,384,268	1,351,821	1,250,852	930,801	949,775
Ealing	3,654,390	4,711,527	5,579,558	4,578,343	3,253,875	2,112,204	2,632,879
Enfield	346,133	470,294	535,477	496,131	988,721	1,053,026	1,058,164
Greenwich	491,847	455,939	1,248,340	1,334,721	1,557,710	1,178,481	1,329,673
Hackney	941,829	1,499,707	4,299,227	4,128,546	4,191,327	2,874,005	3,002,040
Hammersmith and Fulham	212,962	142,900	1,011,358	1,000,212	764,353	680,384	713,289
Haringey	1,992,027	2,988,487	2,871,610	1,663,800	2,357,008	1,857,603	2,604,874
Harrow	567,214	568,947	755,346	708,141	808,967	580,320	556,992
Havering	0	36,407	29,798	27,934	45,490	36,622	39,169
Hillingdon	369,717	374,464	448,158	529,700	432,290	332,159	317,055
Hounslow	1,250,491	1,889,641	1,620,992	1,712,577	1,824,153	1,265,608	1,401,864
Islington	412,193	527,806	1,727,799	1,689,993	1,981,114	1,262,481	1,434,673
Kensington and Chelsea	133,599	162,496	1,051,382	1,027,752	1,081,670	830,214	899,845
Kingston	9,866	1,210	0	0	77,628	108,532	106,742
Lambeth	689,373	262,171	1,468,067	1,665,526	1,511,432	1,046,532	1,109,603
Lewisham	317,569	332,541	1,440,252	1,382,641	1,883,935	1,394,157	1,637,467
Merton	705,491	441,369	588,786	435,738	373,830	463,386	490,246
Newham	2,506,284	2,877,460	2,580,767	2,428,165	3,255,362	1,899,954	2,206,728
Redbridge	816,962	853,644	880,844	858,488	1,103,708	870,444	933,052
Richmond	69,177	66,446	74,879	52,427	56,716	53,729	56,225
Southwark	515,764	270,503	2,302,159	2,096,790	1,894,304	1,622,506	1,965,479
Sutton	3,848	16,920	15,696	19,367	46,201	44,137	46,902
Tower Hamlets	266,711	291,460	4,353,398	4,962,547	8,771,856	5,978,576	6,826,782
Waltham Forest	1,641,928	1,540,411	1,627,145	1,270,270	1,897,467	1,501,779	1,585,015
Wandsworth	312,391	309,424	2,117,834	2,176,164	1,998,135	1,234,737	1,434,386
Westminster	68,948	73,648	1,519,653	1,316,560	1,899,147	1,329,921	1,498,548
London Boroughs Grants Unit	0	18,142	7,022	7,928	62,510	113,815	117,528
Inner London Education Authority	7,503,850	21,941,375	19,308,052	0	0	0	0

Prison Dogs

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the effect of the privatisation of prisons on prison dogs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 17 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking what representations have been received about the effect of the privatisation of prisons on prison dogs.

I have assumed that your Question refers to recent newspaper articles suggesting that the Prison Service intends to have the dogs destroyed. We have received a number of representations in response to these articles.

The candidacy of the Prison Dog Service for market testing has been suspended, as under present law contractors would be unable to exercise powers to stop and search inmates. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill would remedy this. The future of the dogs will come into question only if there is a market test and a private sector contractor wins the contract. We would expect to find alternative work placements or homes for the dogs.

Crime Detection

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish for the last convenient year details of the crime detection rate for each police force area in England and Wales, together with the equivalent rates for England as a whole and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Maclean: The latest available information relates to 1992 and is published in table 2.11 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1992", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Communications Business

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans the communications business of the Home Office has to close the Ruddington head office; what are the consequences to be for the staff in the event of such closure; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he expects to initiate pre-redundancy measures as detailed in the model redundancy agreement and if necessary to offer staff the option of secondment; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will ensure that any proposed purchaser intends to respect existing terms and conditions of employment of the communicatioins business of the Home Office employees and that employees' severance terms shall not be changed without consent and that there can be no unilateral change to these terms;

(4) what conclusion he has reached on the representations made by unions at the communications business of the Home Office concerning a guarantee of redundancy money in the event that any new owner of DTELS becomes insolvent; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what is the status of the proposed sale of the communications business of the Home Office; who has managed the sale; what is the purchase consideration; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what proposals there are for the communications business of the Home Office to relocate staff presently operating at Ruddington head office to be relocated at the DTELS establishment at Stanton; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what indications he has received from any proposed purchaser of the communications business of the Home Office to maintain the recognition agreement with NUCPS, CPSA and IPMS unions; and if he will make a statement;

(8) what steps he has taken to ensure that the communications business of the Home Office shall retain its autonomy and that the privatisation process shall help to protect jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: DTELS, formerly the Directorate of Telecommunications, is being privatised by means of a trade sale. Price Waterhouse is the financial adviser to the Department on the sale.

National Transcommunications Ltd. has been approved as preferred bidders for DTELS and negotiations to complete the sale are under way. The purchase consideration must be treated as commercial in confidence.

NTL is not in a position to set out in detail future staffing plans for the business. These will be finalised following completion of the sale. It has announced, though, that it intends to close DTELS's existing Ruddington head office within 12 months and to transfer operations to Winchester, with some staff relocating to the existing DTELS site at nearby Stanton. Opportunities may also arise at other NTL or DTELS locations.

We have no plans to initiate pre-redundancy measures under the model redundancy agreement or to second staff in response to NTL plans. The unions have been informed that the Government's normal clean break policy on privatisation will apply and that there will be no Government underwriting of any redundancy payment which are the responsibility of NTL.

NTL has undertaken that where redundancies are necessary it will respect the procedures currently in place. Staff terms and conditions, including severance rights, are protected on transfer by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

NTL has undertaken also to adhere to collective bargaining arrangements. Any proposal to change conditions of service would be discussed and agreement sought. It has confirmed that it would not seek to make unilateral changes.

The Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union is the union recognised by NTL for collective bargaining. NTL recognises that existing recognition of civil service unions within DTELS transfers across. It aims though, to recognise BECTU as the sole union which represents all staff. It is understood that BECTU and the civil service unions are discussing how this might be achieved.

While it was not a requirement of sale, NTL has indicated that DTELS will operate as a separate entity within its organisation and that a separate operations structure will be maintained.

We think that DTELS is being sold to a purchaser which will meet its responsibilities to staff and customers. While NTL has indicated that there will be redundancies, privatisation ensures that for the majority there is the best prospect of long-term job security.

Sentencing (Illness)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for ensuring that courts are placed under a stronger duty to inquire into a convicted defendant's former medical history and circumstances where there is an application to adjourn the date of sentencing on grounds of illness.

Mr. Maclean: Courts already have a power to adjourn after conviction to enable inquiries to be made.

We are not persuaded that it is necessary to place courts under such a duty.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the total cost to public funds of the Metropolitan police in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: As police authority for the Metropolitan police district, I have approved estimates which provide for net revenue expenditure of £1,660·724 million in 1994-95. There will be a cash limit on current expenditure of £1,616·511 million. Capital expenditure is subject to separate control.

I have also approved the issue of a precept of £133·55 per property in band D of the council tax valuation band Metropolitan police purposes.

I have discussed the estimates for the Metropolitan police expenditure in 1994-95 with representatives of the London local authority associations.

Fire Precautions

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received the report on the review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 which began in July 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We received the report late in December. The report concludes that the Fire Precautions Act 1971 has been successful in its primary objective of saving lives. But it suggests that certification is no longer the only or best way of achieving fire safety and that there is room for a substantial move to self-compliance. It recommends, however, that adequate controls must be retained to maintain high standards of public protection where necessary and to enable fire authorities to target their resources at high risk premises. It recommends the removal of Crown immunity from enforcement action other than in very limited circumstances.

We will consider this report alongside the findings and recommendations of the scrutiny on fire safety enforcement which began on 17 January. However, in the meantime, we believe that it is important that all interested parties are able to consider the findings and recommendations of the review and I have today arranged for copies of the report to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Interested parties can obtain copies by writing to the Fire Safety Division of the Home Office, Horseferry house, Dean Ryle street, London SW1P 2AW.

Racial Chanting

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there were in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993 for racial chanting at football matches under section 3(1) of the Football (Offences) Act 1991: and how many of these prosecutions were successful.

Mr. Maclean: In England and Wales in 1992, there were 31 prosecutions under section 3 of the Football (Offences) Act 1991, 21 of which resulted in a conviction. 1993 data will not be available until the autumn.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* the Lord Chancellor's Department and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each one the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department has conducted no television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising or promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 in the current financial year, 1993-94. No advertising or promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 are planned for 1994-95. The same applies to the two agencies for which the Lord Chancellor has responsibility—the Public Record Office and Her Majesty's Land Registry.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Law Commission.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The members currently appointed to the Law Commission are:

Mr. Justice Brooke *(Chairman)*
Professor Jack Beatson
Miss Diana Faber
Mr. Charles Harpum.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Judicial Studies Board.

Mr. John Mr. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The following are currently members of the Judicial Studies Board: Lord Justice Henry (Chairman), Judge Francis Allen, Mr. P. Birts, QC, Mr. Justice Brooke, Judge Crane, Mr. P. F. Guggenheim, JP, Mr. J. F. Halliday, District Judge Holloway, Mr. R. E. K. Holmes, Mr. Justice Johnson, Lord Justice Kennedy, Judge Machin, QC, Professor M. Partington, Judge Sumner, Mr. Justice Tuckey, Dr. D. A. Thomas.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Section 706 Tribunal.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 2 February 1994]:* His Honour Stephen Oliver, QC is the chairman of the tribunal constituted under section 706 of the Income

and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. There are also six members appointed by the Lord Chancellor as having special knowledge of or experience in financial or commercial matters. Their names are Mr. H. A. Stevenson, Mr. R. L. Payton, Mr. A. Spier, Mr. R. J. G. White, Mr. A. J. Ring and Mrs. S. Sadeque.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Transport Tribunal.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The president of the transport tribunal is Judge Harold Wilson. The chairmen are Judge Michael Brodrick, Robert Owen QC and, in Scotland, J. Mair. The other members of the tribunal are Miss B. Haran, Mr. T. Hall, Mr. G. Simms, Mr. J. Whitworth and Mr. P. Rogers.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Lands Tribunal.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The members of the Lands Tribunal are His Honour Judge Marder QC (President), His Honour Judge O'Donoghue and His Honour Judge Rich. In addition to these legal members there are also five surveyor members: Mr. P. H. Clarke, Mr. J. C. Hill, Mr. M. Hopper, Dr. T. Hoyes and Mr. A. P. Musto.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Value Added Tax Tribunal.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The president of the Value Added Tax Tribunal is His Honour Stephen Oliver QC. The four full-time chairmen are Mr. R. A. Bennett QC, Mr. J. D. Demack, Mr. A. W. Simpson and Mr. W. T. A. Wallace. There are also 30 part-time chairmen whose names are:

J. F. Avery Jones
C. P. Bishopp
Mrs. A. N. Brice
M. P. Cornwell-Kelly
Viscount Dilhorne
J. F. Easton
Lady French
J. H. Fryer-Spedding
Mrs. E. Gilliland
Miss J. C. Gort
P. E. Heim
A. Hilton
P. Horsfield, QC
R. P. Huggins
M. S. Johnson
F. L. De May
R. K. Miller, CB
Mrs. J. C. Mitting
A. S. T. E. Nicol
B. M. F. O'Brien
M. F. J. Palmer
Miss J. Plumptre
D. S. Porter
D. Potter
H. H. Robin Rowland, QC
D. A. Shirley
I. E. Vellins
R. H. Widdows
P. W. De Voil
Miss J. Warburton

There are also 136 other members as follows:

Mrs Edith Rachel Adams, FCA ATII
John Adrian, Esq
Ms Caroline Susan De Albuquerque
Michael Hamilton Allan, Esq
George Kevin Armstrong, Esq FCMA FCIS
Robert Asbridge, Esq
Mrs. Vera Ashcroft
Ronald William Atkinson, Esq
David George Bailey Esq
Dr. Norma Rhoda Ball, AKC FRGS
John Daniel Dudley Bates, Esq
Lindsay Harry Berry, Esq
Richard Stewart Boddington, Esq
Robert Bridge, Esq
Vivian Robert Vincent Brindley, Esq
Alan Bell Brown, Esq FCA ATII
Arthur Ernest Brown, Esq
Gordon Burnison, Esq
Mrs. Brenda May Burrell
John Anthony Byrne, Esq DCM FIPM
Mrs. Margaret Ada Tomsett Calvert, FAC
Frederick Ernest Thomas Card, Esq
James Carew, Esq FCIS
Kenneth Chambers, Esq
Richard Chant, Esq ACA FTII
Arthur Haywood Charlesworth Esq
Roger Edmund Cockfield, Esq
Ian Condie, Esq
Bernard J. Coode, Esq FFA
Richard Dudley Corke, Esq
Anthony Norburn Craven, Esq
Robert Laverock Hamilton Crawford, Esq
James D. Crerar, Esq
James Stredwick Cullen, Esq
Jon Patrick Maynard Denny, Esq
Miss Vera June Di Palma, FCCA FTII OBE
Keith Stuart Dugdale Esq
John Brian Dynes, Esq
Mrs. Sheila Edmondson FCA
Mohammed Farooq, Esq
Hector William Michael Fiske, Esq
Geoffrey Gallon, Esq
Cranstoun Bygott Harold Gill, Esq
John Martyn Gilliat, Esq
John Bryan Goulding, Esq
William Graves, Esq
Robert Geoffrey Grice, Esq
Derrick Peter Harris, Esq FCA
Charles Vernon Hasted, Esq
Frank Hazledine, Esq
Anthony Francis Hennessey, Esq
William Edward Hesketh, Esq ICCA
Roger David Hicks, Esq
Stanley Hobson, Esq
William Chalmers Hogg, Esq
Frank Paul De Montezuma Horsey, Esq
Mohammad Modashar Hossain, Esq FCA FCBSI
Robin M. Ivison, Esq FCA FTII ATT
Ms Jessica Mary Jacob
Michael James, Esq
Roy Leonard Jennings, Esq FCA FTII
Mrs. Roberta Scott Johnson
Ivor Arthur Herbert Jordan, Esq
Aziz Khan, Esq
John David Kippest, Esq
John Michael Lapthorne, Esq
Peter Halford Lawson, Esq
Peter Dennis Lewis, Esq TD
Geoffrey John Charles Lockhart, Esq
Miss Karen Bruce Lockhart
Maurice McCloy, Esq
George McCulloch, Esq
Edgar Michael McGahey, Esq OBE
Mrs. Janis Rosemary Adelaide McGowan
Francis McIlwee, Esq FCCA ATII
Terence McKeag, Esq
Hugh McMichael, Esq
Mrs. Rosalind Jean Mackworth
Kenneth Charles Manterfield, Esq FCA
Lt. Colonel Tymothy Marsh
John N. Mendelssohn, Esq
George Miles, Esq
Herbert William Millar, Esq

Dennis Victor Mundy, Esq
Linley Barrett Ollier, Esq
Richard Turner Parkinson, Esq
Mrs. Rosemary Vivien Penn
Thomas Murch Petherick, Esq
Norman Henry Phillips, Esq
Reginald James Pickerill, Esq FCA FTII
William Joseph Pickup, Esq
Alan William Potter, Esq
Mrs. Gilian Pratt
James Pratt, Esq
Mrs. Gretta Pritchard
Dr. William Idwal Pumphrey, FIM
Scott Alexander Rae, Esq
John Benjamin Rees, Esq
David Spencer Richards, Esq
Stephen Paterson Riddell, Esq MA LLB
Anthony John Ring, Esq FTII FCA
Mrs. Nancy Joan Roberts
Phillip James Roberts, Esq
Albert Leonard Robinson, Esq RHCIMA FCFA
Mrs. Margaret Jane Rees Rogers
Dominic Thomas Scarre Rutter, Esq
Mrs. Shahwar Sadeque MBCS
Mrs. Lynneth Mary Salisbury
George Kenneth Baber Saxby, Esq
Peter John Seward, Esq
Michael Alan Sharp, Esq
Cyril Raymond Shaw, Esq FCA
Stanley Ronald Sibley, Esq FCCA
Michael Maurice Silbert, Esq FRICS
Vivian Sklar, Esq
Basil Benjamin Smith, Esq
Frank Smith, Esq
Mrs. Janet M. Smith
Ramniklal Pranial Sodagar, Esq FCA ATII
Lewis Springfield, Esq
James Thomas Brian Strangward, Esq
Ranbir Singh Suri, Esq
Selvyn Walker Telfer, Esq
Neil Francis Townsend, Esq
Maurice William Trace, Esq
Willian Raymond Turner, Esq
Dame Joan Fleetwood Varley, DBE
Anthony Wreford Bothwell Voge, Esq
Dame Rachel Elizabeth Waterhouse, DBE
Howard Edmund Watkinson, Esq
Michael Eckford Lind Weir, Esq
Ian Ronald Welch, Esq
Peter Whitehead, Esq
Leon Guy Wilkinson, Esq
Miss Diana M. Wilson
John Anthony Wright, Esq

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to immigration appellate authorities adjudicators.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* There are currently 15 full-time adjudicators of immigration appeals. They are: R. G. Care, J. R. Bright, Mrs. J. Davidson, J. R. Disley, I. M. S. Donnell, J. G. Freeman, M. T. Fugard, A. T. Hatt, E. J. T. Housden, M. I. Khan, J. A. O. O'Brien-Quinn, D. J. Parkes, M. W. Rapinet, C. O. Richards and J. G. Storry. There are also 100 part-time adjudicators whose names are:

G. Alis
D. K. Allen
E. F. Aragon
Miss E. Arfon-Jones
C. H. Bennett
S. J. Blackford
W. G. Beckett
D. N. Bowen
Ms J. M. Braybrook
Mrs. F. C. Bremner
J. S. Brodwell
V. Callender
The Reverend J. Camp
Professor D. B. Casson
Miss A. M. Cheales
Major General M. H. F. Clarke
Dr. H. Concannon
Professor K. Courter
M. E. Curzon Lewis
Mrs. A. C. Davies
M. Davies
G. Dearden
Mrs. D. Drew
Miss K. E. Eshun
J. B. Fitzpatrick CBE
J. R. A. Fox
J. Frankland
Mrs. D. A. Friedman
J. C. Gibbs
Miss J. C. Gort
B. S. Grewal
The Honourable J. K. A. Grey
J. L. Guest
I. Guild CBE
P. Gulbenkian
D. T. Hallchurch
J. J. Halliwell
M. Hinchliffe
A. J. Hirst
J. L. O. Holden
M. S. W. Hoyle
R. J. C. Ince
Ms C. Jarvis
D. J. Jefferson
E. J. Jenkins
M. H. Jubber
R. A. Kay
Mrs. C. M. Kennedy
P. M. Kilty
I. S. Kulatilake
A. Labor
D. A. Lamb
H. J. E. Latter
J. W. H. Law
Sir Alan Leslie
Miss M. N. Lingard
Mrs. C. J. LLoyd
Mrs. C. J. W. Malins
A. J. Martin
Mrs. E. S. Martins
Master R. Martyn
D. W. Mayall
H. M. Mitchell QC
J. J. Molloy
M. Neuberger
E. L. Newsome
C. M. G. Ockelton
R. J. Oliver
O. G. Onoufriou
C. Osborne
J. D. Perkins
Dr. S. L. Popper
J. F. Pullig
N. W. Renton QC
Mrs. C. E. Roberts
Mrs. H. C. Rose
P. B. Rose
C. P. Rushton
D. J. Salmon
N. Selwyn
Mrs. P. M. Skitmore
Dr. P. E. Slinn
L. J. Smith
Dr. H. Storey
Mrs. S. H. Story
B. M. Suchack
Mrs. P. A. Symons
Mrs. D. E. Taylor
J. M. Timmons
S. D. Travers
I. E. Vellins
T. G. Walters

G. Warr
B. C. M. G. Watkins
Mrs. J. L. Weinberg
E. M. E. White
Mrs. K. Woodhouse
C. C. Wright
P. J. Wynne
C. J. Yelloly

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the immigration appellate authorities, Immigration Appeal Tribunal.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The president of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal is Mr. George Farmer. The two vice presidents are Mrs. J. Chatwani and Professor D. Jackson. There are also nine part-time legal members whose names are:

I. Kinnell, QC
R. E. Maddison
Mrs. R. Mannion
Professor D. S. Pearl
W. B. Scott
M. Shrimpton
Mrs. M. Simon
J. M. Simons
A. C. Whitaker

There are 27 lay members of the tribunal. Their names are:

Mrs. J. M. Abrahams
M. R. Beale
The Honourable Mrs. L. Bonham Carter
G. J. Brown
V. R. Cadogan, JP
Mrs. A. J. F. Cross De Chavannes, JP
C. A. N. Edinboro
B. Edmond
Major D. Francombe
D. M. Froome
Mrs. J. H. M. Goodchild
J. L. S. Harrison
Mrs. S. I. Hewitt
R. E. Hunte
M. James
A. G. Jeevanjee
A. K. Khandwala
N. Kumar
Miss P. G. Liverman
A. A. Lloyd, JP
The Countess of Mar
Mrs. M. Padfield
Miss S. S. Ramsumair
Mrs. M. Roe
P. Rogers
A. Smith
Mrs. A. Weitzman

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who are the members currently appointed to the Pensions Appeal Tribunal.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* There are 62 members of the Pensions Appeal Tribunal. The president is Mr. J. R. T. Holt. The deputy president is Mr. J. A. Davidson and the legal members are Mr. A. M. Bage, Mr. J. Frankland, Mr. R. J. Godfrey, Mr. C. B. Robson, Mr. F. H. Warriner and Mr. J. Westcott. There are also 28 medical members whose names are:

C. A. C. Charlton
J. C. M. Currie
D. Davies
A. E. Dormer
R. F. Fletcher
A. C. Fraser
G. Freeman
M. Grundy
M. Hamilton, OBE
P. J. D Heaf
A. R. Horler
A. G. Horsburgh
M. S. Hughes
D. Longson
P. R. K. Medley
J. E. Mitchell
B. J. Muir
A. Paton
J. Potter
R. Pracey
C. Robertson
Sir William Slack, KCVO
D. R. Smith
I. V. O. Smith
T. B. Stretton
W. C. Walker
J. P. Williams
P. M. Yeoman

There are also 26 service members whose names are:

D. F. G. Bentley
Ms C. E. Birtwistle
D. I. Cadman, CBE
M. B. Chesterfield
A. W. Colvin
R. Dales
P. Deering, JP
R. S. Elliott
Lt. Col. Epplestone, JP
D. F. Field
Mrs. J. M. Finlay
Miss B. I. Forbes-Adam
Mrs. J. L. Ford
B. L. Glynn
J. Heath
N. Howlett
C. F. Jebens
C. Jewitt
R. W. Jones
P. G. Kibble
Miss S. M. Lamont
Miss E. Rhodie
R. E. Saunders
D. Seaman
Sir Leslie Townsend, KCVO CBE
A. D. Welsh

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the museum of London.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the Museum of London are:

Peter Revell-Smith, Esq *(Chairman)*
Colin Amery, Esq
Mrs. Averil Burgess
Sir Ashley Bramall, DL
Dr. Alan Clinton
Peter Draw, Esq OBE
Norman H. Harding, Esq
Lady Amabel Lindsay
Dr. Geoffrey Howard Martin, CBE DPhil
Ian D. McNeil, Esq
Sheriff Anthony Moss
Mrs. Dawn Muirhead
Keith Wells, Esq
Michael Wheeler, Esq
Professor John J. Wilkes, BA FSA
Gordon Wixley, Esq
C. D. Woodward, Esq OBE

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Tate gallery.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the Tate gallery are:

Dennis Stevenson, Esq CBE *(Chairman)*
The Countess of Airlie, CVO
The Hon. Janet de Botton
Michael Craig-Martin, Esq
Richard Deacon, Esq
Bamber Gascoigne, Esq FRSL
David Gordon, Esq
Christopher Le Brun, Esq
Sir Richard Carew Pole
Mrs. Paula F. Ridley, JP MA
David Verey, Esq

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Sir John Soane's museum.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the Sir John Soane's museum are:

His Grace the Duke of Grafton *(Chairman)*
Sir Walter F. Bodmer, Kt FRS FRC Path
Ms Bridget Cherry, FSA
Edward Cullinan, CBE RA
Richard Griffiths, Esq
Ronald W. Lightbown, Esq MA FSA FRAS
Alderman Sir Francis McWilliams, Kt BSc FEng FICE
Sir Philip Powell, KT RA ARA FRIBA
T. Russell-Cobb, Esq

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the Museums and Galleries Commission.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the Museums and Galleries Commission are:

Graham Greene, Esq CBE *(Chairman)*
The Marchioness of Anglesey
Dr. Frank Atkinson, OBE
Jack Baer, Esq
The Baroness Brigstocke
The Viscountess Cobham
Frederick W. Dunning, Esq OBE BSc FGS FMA
Richard Foster, Esq
Professor W. John Last, CBE MA Hon FMA
Professor David Michie, RSA RGI FRSA
Lord (Raymond) O'Neill
Right Hon. Lord Rees, QC
Robert Smith, Esq
Dame Margaret Weston

Royal Parks

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what future plans he has for the royal parks.

Mr. Sproat: The royal parks are one of London's finest assets and give pleasure to millions. The Government are committed to maintaining and improving these important open spaces so that they attain the highest standards of excellence.

I have now considered the second report on the role and management of the royal parks from an independent review group, chaired by Dame Jennifer Jenkins. The group's first report considered Hyde park and Kensington gardens; this time its attention was focused on the four remaining parks in central London; St. James's park, Green park, Regent's park and Primrose hill. The group once again examined a wide range of issues and consulted many individuals and organisations. The conclusions of its report were discussed at a one-day conference.

The group's recommendations highlight the opportunities we now have to enhance the quality of the parks, and to provide for changing demands and pressures, but in doing so we must not lose sight of the fundamental purpose of the parks as places where hundreds of people can enjoy themselves in the open air. We are looking positively at the proposals in the group's report, although it is clear that some of them would involve significant changes and significant expenditure: for example, to landscape, traffic and parking. In this answer I shall describe the action we have already taken, and my proposals for taking matters forward. There will have to be detailed consultations with interested parties, including the royal household, Westminster city council, and the Crown Estate Commission, before some proposals can be implemented; some will require further study to determine whether practical solutions are possible; and the availability of financial resources will play a major part in determining the extent and timing and implementation of others.

A central theme of the Jenkins group was that the pedestrian should have priority within the parks and that the impact of traffic on the atmosphere of the parks, particularly St. James's and Green parks, should be significantly reduced.

The group highlighted the area in front of Buckingham palace—which, it should be explained, is part of St. James's park—as a prime example of the conflict between pedestrians and traffic. It recommended the creation of a pedestrian place between the palace and the Queen Victoria memorial. I am pleased to say that during the course of the last year consultants have looked at traffic and pedestrian access throughout the royal parks, and have already produced proposals for achieving this recommendation. Further detailed studies have been commissioned and when these are completed consultation will take place with all concerned.

A programme of other traffic management measures is also being developed, including additional pedestrian crossings and traffic calming methods.

On a related theme, the Jenkins group recommended that car parking should be banned from Horse Guards parade, returning the area to uncluttered open space, thus restoring one of the important vistas of St. James's park. Such a proposal will obviously require consultation with several Government Departments and other bodies. Alternative solutions to providing the necessary car parking, and the other consequential problems, would have to be found. The Royal Parks Agency is examining ways in which these problems might be resolved.

For Regent's park, the Jenkins group's main theme was the need to view the park, villas and surrounding terraces as "an integral piece of urban design", reflecting its original conception. Many bodies now have management responsibilities within the area, and I accept the group's recommendation that there should ideally be a co-ordinated management strategy for the area as a whole. In this respect the important planning function of local authorities should not be overlooked. In the first stages I propose to consult colleagues in the Department of the Environment to see how the proposal can be taken forward. I also agree that a consultative mechanism between the park management and local residents and amenity groups, who value and take an interest in the park, should be developed.

The group has put forward several proposals to improve the image of the parks to the visitor, including the

introduction of suitably sited display boards, explaining features such as the heritage and wildlife of the parks, and leaflets for self-guided trails. The general signing and maps on the parks also need improvement. I welcome these ideas, together with the suggestion for increasing the parks' role in more formal education by the provision of information centres and facilities for schools. The Royal Parks Agency's design consultant has in fact already designed new map boards, and these will be installed shortly. The first leaflets have already been produced.

The group has recognised the role of royal parks in the image of London for visitors from this country and abroad, and this is reflected in its proposal for a circular walk linking all six central parks—the royal parks promenade. A leaflet showing the route and noting the important features along the way will be produced. I welcome this proposal, as does Westminster city council, which undoubtedly will have an important role to play in taking it forward. Parts of the route, such as the link through Park square and Crescent gardens, and that through Paddington, will need to be considered carefully, and several organisations will need to be consulted, if the proposal is to come to fruition.

The full cost of implementing the recommendations is not yet known as further studies are required, and we will have to consider the position of the royal parks along with other demands on the Department of National Heritage budget. The specific recommendations made in the report, to increase funding to the parks through the retention of all additional income, a special contribution from Government, to cover the cost of policing and staging national celebrations, and a contribution from the Crown Estate, will require further detailed research and discussion within the Government. Until these discussions are complete I cannot say whether the proposals in the report can, or will be, met.

I am pleased to say that considerable progress has been made towards meeting the recommendations in the group's first report on Hyde park and Kensington gardens. For example, the group felt that the Speakers' corner and Marble arch area had deteriorated, and suggested a competition for ideas to improve the area. The competition has been organised and was announced in January. In July a works management contractor was appointed and this contractor has completed a survey of all buildings and structures and drawn up a planned maintenance programme. This is the first step in reversing the deterioration in the fabric of the parks highlighted by the group. Traffic consultants have reported on traffic management within the parks and extensive consultation with local authorities and other interested parties is now taking place. The appointment of landscape architects, the establishment of the royal parks as an executive agency, and the policing of Hyde park by the Royal Parks constabulary, have been successfully completed.

The comprehensive coverage given to every aspect of the parks by the Jenkins group and the general support and constructive comment that its reports have generated have persuaded me that a review of the remaining royal parks should be carried out. I have therefore invited Dame Jennifer Jenkins to chair a group to review Greenwich, Bushey and Richmond parks. The timetable for this review is longer than that for the previous reviews; starting in March, the group's report is expected in the first half of 1995. This will allow the Royal Parks Agency time to assimilate and take action of the proposals in the first two reports.

I am most grateful for the contribution and time Dame Jennifer, and her group, have already given, and look forward to the next report.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Export Promoter Initiative

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff were seconded to his Department under the export promoter initiative on 1 April 1993, 1 October 1993 and currently; how many enterprises had been advised by such staff by each date; and how many export group visits had been organised by such staff by each date.

Mr. Needham: Total number of staff seconded to the Department under the export promoter initiative by April 1 1993 = eight; October 1 1993 = 41; currently 68.

Total number of enterprises contacted by export promoters by April 1 1993 = 54; October 1 1993 = 2,357; currently 5,467.

Export group visits include seminars organised by export promoters, trade fairs or export missions led by export promoters or accompanying Ministers: by April 1 1993 = nil; October 1 1993 = 120; currently = 195.

Approximate total number of enterprises which attended above events = 5,040.

Wind Turbines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what studies have been conducted since 1984 by his energy technology support unit on public attitudes to wind farm or wind generator cluster development in the United Kingdom; and what use he has made of any comparative studies conducted abroad.

Mr. Eggar: The following eight studies have been conducted since 1984 by the Energy Technology Support Unit on public attitudes to wind farms or wind generator cluster development. Results of relevant work conducted abroad are also noted.

Public Attitude Survey at Delabole (two studies)
Mynddy Cemmaes Windfarm Impact Assessment
Cemmaes Wind Farm Impact Study
The Visual Impact of Windfarms; Lessons from the United Kingdom NFFO
Evaluation of Local Community Reaction to a Single Wind Turbine
Public reaction to a 1 MW Wind Turbine Generator
Survey of Public Attitudes towards Three Wind Turbines.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what safety arrangements are made for the long-term storage of liquid high level radioactive waste in tanks at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc subject to the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate's views as to safety.

Colombian Coal

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what steps he has taken to verify that coal imported into the United Kingdom from Colombia has not been mined by child labour;

(2) if he will deposit in the Library the documentation he has received certifying that coal imported into the United Kingdom from Colombia is not produced with child labour;

(3) what assurances he has received directly or via PowerGen or National Power on the safety conditions in coal mines in Colombia exporting coal to the United Kingdom and on whether child labour is employed;

(4) what reports of inspections of coal mines in Colombia exporting coal to the United Kingdom have been published; and if he will give the details of publication;

(5) when was the last occasion on which he discussed the issue of Colombian coal and child labour with *(a)* officials of PowerGen and *(b)* officials of National Power;

(6) what checks have been made by his Department to confirm that no coal being mined by child labour in Colombia is being delivered to stores in that country that are used for exports of coal to the United Kingdom;

(7) if he will deposit in the Library the correspondence which has taken place between his Department and PowerGen and National Power on the issue of the importation of coal from mines in Colombia using child labour;

(8) if he will list the dates and locations of inspections which have been carried out by or on behalf of his Department of coal mines in Colombia exporting coal to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 9 February, *Official Report*, column *314*. Since then, I have met Dr. Pretelt, the president of Carbocol, who assured me that Colombian labour law, and mining law, prohibits women and under-18s from going underground, and that no Colombian coal for export is mined by children.

Energy

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the results of the research on the development and demonstration of energy technologies, undertaken by the energy technology support unit, will be published; and whether that appraisal will cover both the energy supply and the efficient use of energy.

Mr. Eggar: The Energy Technology Support Unit expects to publish its appraisal report, which will cover both energy supply and energy efficiency, within the next few weeks. My Department will publish a summary of the appraisal as an energy paper. This will not discuss energy efficiency technologies, since they are now a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Small Companies (Audit)

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the effective date for commencement of the abolition of the small companies audit requirement has been fixed.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I shall be making a statement shortly on this and other details of the relaxation of the audit requirement for small companies.

Korea

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made to the Korean Government regarding the increase in the tariff on textile imports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I have written to the Korean Ministers for Finance, and for Trade, Industry and Energy expressing the dismay of the United Kingdom Government regarding this action and pointing out that this is not the action we expect of a major trading nation.

We are discussing options for action with our European partners and the Commission. Member states agree that robust and early action is necessary and at the request of member states the Commission is evaluating ways of responding.

Ferranti

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what he now expects to be the future of Ferranti; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The receivers are discussing with a number of companies the possibility of selling the businesses which make up Ferranti International plc.

The Independent

Mr. Robert Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the possible transfer of *The Independent* newspaper.

Mr. Heseltine: I have received an application for my consent to acquire a controllong interest in Newspaper Publishing, owner of *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*. The application relates to an offer made by a consortium consisting of Mirror Group Newspapers, the Espresso group and Promotora de Informaciones, in agreement with Mr. Andreas Whittam Smith, Mr. Adrian O'Neil and Mr. Matthew Symonds. It seeks my consent without an inquiry by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under section 58(3)(a) of the Fair Trading Act 1973. This section gives me discretion to consent to a newspaper transfer without a Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry where I am satisfied that the newspaper concerned is not economic as a going concern and as a separate newspaper and that, if the paper is to continue, the case is one of urgency. I am inviting comments from interested parties by 3 March on whether I should give my consent without a Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry. I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses a note describing the main features of the proposed transaction and explaining how the newspaper merger provisions of the Act apply to this case.

I expect to make a further statement to the House announcing my decision following the period of public consultation.

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Robert Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what decisions he has made about the future of the Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Eggar: The consultation study I announced on 1 April was completed in the summer of 1993. Since then

I have held discussions with my colleagues and with AEA management and staff representatives about the way ahead. I have concluded that the business activities in the AEA's new commercial division are capable of privatisation and that privatisation represents the logical next step in the AEA's on-going commercial development. Decisions on the form of privatisation will be taken in due course, but there is no presumption that this should follow the present structure. The decisions taken will be based on performance in the market place and the extent to which the various options would meet customer requirements, enhance competition, help to improve United Kingdom competitiveness and maximise the return to the taxpayer. Legislation for privatisation will be brought forward in due course.

Ownership of, and responsibility for, the safe management of the AEA's nuclear liabilities, as well as certain other functions more appropriate to government, will remain in the public sector but contracts for decommissioning and radioactive waste management work will increasingly be put out to competition. I will be exploring how best to organise these activities in the longer term and will make further announcements when I am in a position to do so.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The following table shows the amount of grant or grant-in-aid received by executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department:

£ thousands, 1992-93 prices

Executive non-departmental public bodies	*1990-91 outturn*	*1991-92 outturn*	*1992-93 outturn*	*1993-94 estimates*	*[1]1994-95 plans*	*[1]1995-96 plans*
British Hallmarking Council	0	0	0	0	0	0
Advisory Committees on Telecommunications for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	211	221	112	129	129	129
Area Transport Users' Consultative Committees	645	620	582	1,052	Not known[2]	
Central Transport Consultative Committee	274	555	506			
Domestic Coal Consumers' Council	127	158	121	121	75	62
Gas Consumers' Council	2,562	2,527	2,767	2,828	2,525	2,517
London Regional Passengers' Committee	301	436	280	316	–(2)	–(2)
National Consumer Council	2,457	2,657	2,930	2,818	2,303	2,123
Post Office Users' National Council	455	458	448	694	576	599
Post Office Users' Councils for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	120	122	275			
Design Council	7,245	7,732	7,287	7,446	6,705	3,590
English Industrial Estates Corporation (EIEC)	18,550	0	6,000	19,370	Not known[3]	
Hearing Aid Council	—	—	—	—	—	—
Monopolies and Mergers Commission	6,330	6,400	5,540	7,070	6,870	7,290
National Enterprise Board (NEB)[4]	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Research Development Corporation (NRDC)[4]	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policyholders' Protection Board	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Simpler Trade Procedures Board	734	876	869	848	845	930
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority	0	0	0	0	0	0

[1] Planned figures are subject to change in annual PES negotiations.
[2] After 31 March 1994 the Central Transport Consultative Committee and the area Transport Users' Consultative Committees sponsorship will be the responsibility of the Office of the Rail Regulator. Sponsorship of the London Regional Passengers' Committee passes similarly to the Department of Transport.
[3] English Partnerships will take over the work of English Industrial Estates Corporation on 1 April 1994.
[4] Following the privatisation in 1992, the National Enterprise Board and National Research Development Corporation Boards' continue to carry out certain residuary functions.

HEALTH

Hospital Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many acute beds, intensive therapy unit beds and private beds there were by region in each of the last five years;

(2) if she will give the number of intensive therapy unit beds by region in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested will be placed in the Library. Intensive therapy beds are also included in the acute beds total. Private beds are those in private acute hospitals with operating theatres and are those in other private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Palliative Care

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she is taking to monitor the implementation of Department of Health circular EL(93)14 dealing with funding arrangements for specialist palliative care needs in nursing homes;

(2) if she will list the health authorities which have formally drawn up procedures to provide nursing home-owners with information about the specialist palliative care needs of individual service users; and how the health authority will ensure that such needs are met in accordance with Department of Health circular EL(93)14;

(3) what is her assessment of the progress of implementing Department of Health circular EL(93)14 relating to funding arrangements for specialist palliative care needs in nursing homes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: As circular EL(93)14 makes clear, where a person in a nursing home requires specialist palliative care, the provision of any such care which is additional to general nursing care is the responsibility of the appropriate health authority. Copies of the circular are available in the Library.

Arrangements for this need to be agreed locally between health and local authorities in order to deliver responsive care to patients. The Department does not formally monitor the detail of such agreements.

Last September's national community care monitoring exercise showed that collaboration between health and social services authorities is generally improving, although there is scope for some further clarification of local arrangements. Since then, as a precondition of local authorities' community care special transitional grant, we have again required them to submit evidence that they have reached agreement with health authorities over their respective responsibilities for continuing care.

Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of net and gross hospital and community health service capital and net and gross national health service capital expenditure for each year since 1973-74 expressed in 1993-94 prices, adjusted by *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator and *(b)* changes in input unit costs.

Mr. Sackville: The precise information is not available in the format requested. Hospital and community health service gross current expenditure figures will be placed in the Library from 1976-77, the first year for which these figures are available. Expenditure estimates adjusted for input unit costs are not yet available at 1993-94 prices.

Market Testing

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance she has issued on market testing for clinical services to ensure the quality of services in the clinical setting;

(2) what assessment she has made as to the extent to which recommended Government guidelines for market testing were complied with in respect of the tendering process for awarding a private contract for the pathology services for the North Hertfordshire trust.

Mr. Sackville: The document "Market Testing in the National Health Service (Revised Guidance)", which set out the principles and methods to achieve quality in any service being market tested, was issued in June 1993. Copies of the document are available in the Library. The market testing of pathology services in the North Hertfordshire trust was already in train at that time. Chief executives are responsible for the proper conduct of market testing exercises in their trusts.

Electro-convulsive Therapy

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has for banning the use of electro-convulsive therapy on children;

(2) how many children received electro-convulsive therapy in the last year for which figures are available;

(3) how many hospitals currently use electro-convulsive therapy as part of their programme for treating mentally disturbed children.

Mr. Bowis: Treatment in any particular case is a matter for local clinical decision by the medical practitioner or practitioners involved who are familiar with the particular case and complexities of the condition. Information on the use of electro-convulsive therapy is collected not on a hospital basis but by hospital episode. According to the latest unpublished figures available, no patient under the age of 15 received ECT in 1991-92. An unpublished survey in 1992 by the child and adolescent psychiatry section of the Royal College of Psychiatrists recorded that ECT was used very rarely on those under 18 and only where patients were very ill.

Pathology Services

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she received from the independent assessors nominated by the Royal College of Pathologists on awarding the private contract for pathology services for the North Hertfordshire trust; and what action was taken as a result of that advice.

Mr. Sackville: The advice of the assessors nominated by the Royal College of Pathologists was given in confidence to the North Hertfordshire trust. We understand that the trust has found the advice valuable in its discussions on the detail of the service to be provided under contract.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her review of pathology services; when her report is due to be published; and what is the implication for her review of a decision to award a contract for pathology services to a private company before it is completed.

Mr. Sackville: The strategic review of pathology services is due to report to the Department in June. The Department will then consider the content of strategic guidelines for the national health service on the maintenance and development of high quality, cost-effective clinical services responsive to the needs of patients and users. The review is not intended to delay progress on local initiatives.

Psychiatric Wards

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she proposes to take to ensure that women who are admitted to psychiatric hospital are guaranteed the choice to be treated on a women-only ward if they so wish.

Mr. Bowis: The patients charter requires health authorities to provide services which respect patients' privacy, dignity and religious and cultural beliefs. In line with this the "Mental Health Key Area Handbook" advises health authorities that one of women's particular concerns is the choice of a single-sex ward or single-sex area.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many incidents of serious assault have been reported by women who are patients in mixed psychiatric wards for each year since 1989.

Mr. Bowis: Health authorities are responsible for ensuring there is secure accommodation for all patients and incidents should be monitored locally.

Hospital Catering

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and which hospital trusts operate two standards of catering for patients, one of which requires a payment by the patient.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not held centrally.

Hearing Aids (Children)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which agency is responsible for monitoring the provision and maintenance of hearing aids for *(a)* pre-school children, *(b)* children at school and *(c)* young people aged 16 years and above who are in full-time education; and what plans there are to change the present arrangement;

(2) which agency monitors the provision of insurance on hearing aids for children and young people; and what plans there are to change the present arrangement;

(3) if she will list the conditions under which children and young people are entitled to be provided with the most appropriate hearing aid whether or not this is part of the national health service range of hearing aids.

Mr. Bowis: Hearing aids are available under the national health service for anyone who needs one. It is for the clinician concerned to decide which aid is most appropriate in each case, whether it is from the standard range or purchased by hearing aid centres from a commercial source. As hearing aids are provided on loan there is no requirement for the patient, or in the case of a child under 16, the child's parent to insure the device. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Hospitals

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region *(a)* the hospitals that have closed since 1990 and *(b)* the hospitals that have opened since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: Decisions on opening or closing facilities are for local management. The Department requires formal notification only where proposed closures are contested by the community health councils.

NHS Buildings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will undertake and publish a survey of the state of maintenance of buildings and plant of NHS hospitals in England, in order to identify any shortfalls leading to danger to patients.

Mr. Sackville: No. Since the removal of Crown immunity from the national health service in 1991, all NHS bodies are required to meet their statutory duties to make safe any hazardous buildings or plant.

Smear Tests

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women in each region were found to have been misdiagnosed as a result of the improper administration of pre-cancer smear tests in 1993.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she has taken to ensure that no further problems arise in the cervical smear testing system.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

In 1993 there were a few isolated instances where women were recalled for further tests because of inadequacies within the screening programme. These were addressed locally. The chief medical officer has recently announced a package of initiatives to strengthen quality within the programme and copies of press release 94/37 detailing these are available in the Library.

Suicide

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region the number of suicides for each year since 1990; and if she will publish the available data on their employment status.

Mr. Bowis: The number of suicides, including undetermined deaths, in each region for the years 1990 to 1992 are shown in the table. Information on employment status at the time of death is not routinely recorded on death certificates.

Region	*Year* 1990	1991	1992
Northern	345	341	362
Yorkshire	432	428	437
Trent	515	520	526

Region	Year 1990	1991	1992
East Anglian	261	251	245
North West Thames	403	445	401
North East Thames	445	443	379
South East Thames	493	466	474
South West Thames	326	325	349
Wessex	346	359	350
Oxford	293	264	284
South Western	416	389	419
West Midlands	584	533	555
Mersey	250	244	216
North Western	485	559	544
England	5,594	5,567	5,541

Voluntary Organisations

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications have been received for section 64 funding from April 1994; how many have already been processed; and how many have been refused.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 8 February at col. *197.*

School Catering

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the application of the Welfare Food Amendment Regulations 1992 to schools catering for under-fives.

Mr. Sackville: The policy intention was that the 1992 amendment regulations should simply delete references in the Welfare Food Regulations 1988 to the Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948, insert appropriate references to the Children Act 1989 and incorporate other changes to harmonise with the 1989 Act. There was no intention to change any entitlement under the regulations. However, we have received legal advice that the unintended effect of the amendment regulations was to remove the possibility of schools running classes for under-fives from participating in the welfare food scheme. This means that an estimated £3·3 million including £0·52 million in Scotland and £0·18 million in Wales paid between April 1992 and April 1994 will have been paid on a basis which is incorrect on the strict interpretation of the law. In addition, a number of schools have been registered under the scheme without statutory authority. We intend to continue registering new applicants and making payments on an extra-statutory basis to ensure that schools may participate in the welfare food scheme so as to provide free milk to children under five in line with the policy intention. Appropriate statutory authority will be obtained as soon as possible. The total amount to be paid on this basis, initially estimated at a cost of £150,000 per month in England, £22,000 in Scotland and £13,000 in Wales will be reported in notes to the relevant Departments' appropriation accounts for 1993-94. There is no possibility of any child losing entitlement under the welfare food scheme as a result of the above arrangements.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population covered by the Winchester district health authority live in the county of Hampshire.

Mr. Sackville: The latest population estimates relate to mid-1992. At that time 99·2 per cent. of the population covered by the Winchester district health authority lived in the county of Hampshire.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the total annual budget of the Winchester district health authority;

(2) what was the total annual budget of the Basingstoke and North Hampshire district health authority;

(3) what was the total annual budget of the Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire district health authority;

(4) what was the total annual budget of the Southampton and South West Hampshire district health authority.

Mr. Sackville: Revenue expenditure in 1992-93 of these authorities was:

Authority name	Total revenue expenditure (£)
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire DHA	177,799,025
Southampton and South West Hampshire DHA	149,568,600
Winchester DHA	70,717,287
Basingstoke and North Hampshire DHA	74,965,717

Source: Annual accounts of health authorities (England) 1992-93.
Notes: The figures are provisional.
The figures shown include an amount for capital charges.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population covered by the Basingstoke and North Hampshire district health authority live in the county of Hampshire.

Mr. Sackville: The latest population estimates relate to mid-1992. At that time 99·9 per cent. of the population covered by the Basingstoke and North Hampshire district health authority lived in the county of Hampshire. Following enlargement of the authority on 1 April 1993 this proportion was still 99·9 per cent.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population covered by the Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire district health authority live in the county of Hampshire.

Mr. Sackville: The whole of the population covered by the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire district health authority lives in the county of Hampshire.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population covered by the Southampton and South West Hampshire district health authority live in the county of Hampshire.

Mr. Sackville: The latest population estimates relate to mid-1992. At that time 99·9 per cent. of the population covered by the Southampton and South West Hampshire district health authority lived in the county of Hampshire.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total sum of the budgets of those general practitioner fundholders who practice in the county of Hampshire.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional health authorities are responsible for managing the general practitioner

fundholding scheme in their areas and only regional information is available centrally. For local information the hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Alastair Service, chairman of the Wessex regional health authority.

Family Health Services, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total budget for Hampshire family health services authority in the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: Budgets are not set for family health services authorities as most elements of expenditure are demand-led and funded accordingly. Budgets for FHSA cash-limited expenditure are issued by regional health authorities and are not recorded centrally.

Wessex RHA

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the percentage of population covered by Wessex regional health authority who live in the county of Hampshire.

Mr. Sackville: The latest population estimates relate to mid-1992. At that time 48·1 per cent. of the population covered by Wessex regional health authority lived in the county of Hampshire. Following enlargement of the authority on 1 April 1993 this proportion became 50·5 per cent.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total annual budget for Wessex regional health authority for 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The current cash limit for the Wessex region in 1993-94 is £1,328,000,000.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the English local authorities which currently have a policy of charging for personal social services other than residential care; and if she will specify which authorities charge for *(a)* day care, *(b)* home care and *(c)* other services.

Mr. Bowis: Local authorities are not required to inform the Department of their policies for charging for day and domiciliary services.

Bed Bureaux

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health authorities had bed bureaux in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1994; and if she will list them.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for individual health authorities. The information is not available centrally.

Meningitis

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the cost has been thus far of the national publicity campaign on meningitis.

Mr. Sackville: The figure is £55,318.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the national publicity campaign on meningitis and septicaemia planned for February is going ahead.

Mr. Sackville: Yes. The chief medical officer wrote to all doctors on 3 February with an example of the new public information leaflet on meningitis and septicaemia. Further copies of the leaflet have been sent to all general practitioners to be made available to the public. Leaflets will also be issued in April to college students and there will be a further wider student distribution in September. Supplies of leaflets have also been provided for the National Meningitis Trust and Meningitis Research. Further steps are under consideration. Copies of the leaflet will be placed in the Library.

Private Treatment

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice or guidance has been issued regarding hospital staff advising patients to pay for private treatment because health authority contracts have been completed or because the waiting lists are long.

Mr. Sackville: None. The national health service will remain available to all on the basis of clinical need, not the ability to pay.

Stanley Royd Hospital

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will seek a report from the mental health task force regarding the steps that are being taken to close Stanley Royd hospital, Wakefield; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Wakefield was one of 20 district health authorities visited recently by the mental health task force to see how purchasers and providers were approaching the replacement of the large hospitals and to draw out good practice.

The task force will issue an overview report shortly. The reprovision of the facilities at Stanley Royd is being monitored by the task force along with all the other long-stay mental illness hospitals.

Wakefield health authority and the Pontefract and Wakefield community trust are working closely with other local organisations to develop a range of residential facilities, day care, community units for the elderly and acute facilities which will enable the residents of Stanley Royd hospital to be cared for within the community and for the hospital to close in 1995. There was full consultation on the reprovision of mental illness services last year.

Family Health Services Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff have been employed by FHSAs for every year since their creation *(a)* in total and *(b)* by region.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 31 January 1994]:* The numbers of staff employed are shown in the table.

Family Health Service Authorities (FHSA) Staff by Region as at 30 September 1990-92

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
Northern	320	370	420
Yorkshire	420	450	440
Trent	420	520	620
East Anglia	220	280	280
North West Thames	280	540	570
North East Thames	380	580	600
South East Thames	390	340	500

	1990	1991	1992
South West Thames	390	420	450
Wessex	280	320	330
Oxford	310	270	290
South Western	310	340	370
West Midlands	720	640	670
Mersey	190	340	320
North Western	510	520	610
Total	5,130	5,930	6,470

Source of Data:
[1] For 1990 the Department of Health Non Medical Workforce Census.
2. For 1991 and 1992 the Department of Health Non Medical Workforce Census and KM49 return.
Notes:
1. All figures are rounded to the nearest 10 whole time equivalents (wte)
2. Totals may not add due to the effect of rounding.

EDUCATION

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the capital cost of fitting out, furnishing and decorating the premises in York formerly used by the National Curriculum Council.

Mr. Robin Squire: These costs were incurred in 1989-90 at the time the National Curriculum Council moved into the premises. The costs are not identifiable from the National Curriculum Council's published accounts but the Department's records indicate that they amounted to some £0·5 million.

Further Education Funding Council

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total annual budget of the Further Education Funding Council for the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Boswell: The Further Education Funding Council's total grant for 1993-94, including recurrent and capital grant, is £2·701 billion. This includes £24·9 million for the council's own running costs.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of the Further Education Funding Council's budget supports institutions in Hampshire.

Mr. Boswell: The Further Education Funding Council's recurrent funding allocations to institutions for 1993-94 covered the period 1 April 1993 to 31 July 1994 and amounted to £3·201 billion. Allocations to institutions in Hampshire amounted to £100 million or about 3·1 per cent. of the total.

Grant-maintained Schools, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total budget for each grant-maintained *(a)* primary school and *(b)* secondary school in Hampshire for the year 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: Total budgets for grant-maintained schools in Hampshire for the year 1993-94 are as follows:

	Total budget £
(a) *Primary Schools*	
Abbotswood GM Middle School	1,063,488
Ashley Junior School	412,452
Blackfield Junior School	708,049
Calmore GM Middle School	680,246
Front Lawn Middle School	538,515
Hordle CE Primary School	321,215
Lyndhurst Middle School	[1]248,715
Mill Rythe County Infant School	[1]111,572
The Priory School	449,363
St. Joseph's RC Primary School	725,609
St. Paul's RC Primary School	446,334
St. Peter's CE Junior School	[1]131,535
St. Peter's RC Primary School	392,168
(b) *Secondary Schools*	
All Hallows RC School	2,621,982
Applemore School	1,188,404
The Arnewood School	2,594,778
Bay House GM School	3,345,885
Bohunt School	2,414,511
The Burgate School	1,674,107
Cams Hill School	[1]689,689
City of Portsmouth Boy's School	2,284,162
Crofton School	2,732,703
Hardley School	1,982,987
Oaklands RC Comprehensive School	1,444,983
Purbrook Park School	859,604
Ringwood School	1,807,935
St. Edmund's Catholic School	[1]671,235
St. George Catholic School	774,246
Testbourne Community School	849,834
Testwood School	2,065,880

Note: The amount shown for total budget includes Annual Maintenance Grant, Special Purpose Grants for Restructuring, Development, Premises, VAT, Transitional Grants and Capital Grants payable to the schools in 1993-94.
[1] Became GM on 1 January 1994 hence AMG amount included is provisional.

Nursery Education

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what evidence Her Majesty's Government have come to the conclusions that equal benefits can be obtained from nursery education and other forms of pre-five-year-old provision; if he will list the sources which he has considered and which evidence *(a)* supports and *(b)* does not support his conclusions; and what are his reasons for considering that the evidence in *(a)* above is of greater weight than that in *(b)* above.

Mr. Robin Squire: Evidence on the educational benefits of nursery education and other forms of pre-school provision comes from a wide variety of sources. A summary commissioned in 1985 by the then Secretary of State was published in 1988 in "Children Under Five: Educational Research and Evidence" by Margaret Clark. The findings of these and subsequent investigations are not conclusive, but overall the evidence suggests that good quality pre-school education can benefit children wherever it takes place.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received concerning the changing of the spending formula in section 11.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

We have received many representations from local authorities and associations, teacher unions, ethnic minority communities and other interested parties about the reductions in section 11 funding which we regret it has been necessary to make. Among these, there has been widespread support for the approach, which we have announced we are adopting from 1994-95, of paying grant in the form of an annual budget to each grant recipient, instead of as a fixed percentage of actual costs.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* the Law Officers' Departments and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each one the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

The Attorney-General: During the current financial year the Crown Prosecution Service launched a regional public awareness campaign. The objective of the campaign is to inform the public about its role and responsibilities, as recommended by the Home Affairs Select Committee. The effectiveness of the campaign will be measured against the amount of editorial coverage in newspapers, radio and television. There have been no other advertising or promotional campaigns in the Law Officers Departments, including the Government Property Lawyers Agency, in the current year. No campaigns costing over £10,000 are at present planned for 1994-95.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 17 December, *Official Report*, column *981*, whether any of the Treasury Solicitor's staff engaged in assisting the Scott inquiry exercised any function in respect of, or were directly or indirectly party to, the advice offered to Government witnesses, or related witness statements in the Matrix Churchill case.

The Attorney-General: No. The two members of the Treasury Solicitor's staff who are assisting the inquiry, Mr. Christopher Muttukumaru and Ms Helen Duffy, had no involvement in the Matrix Churchill case either when serving in the Treasury Solicitor's Department or, in the case of Mr. Muttukumaru, when seconded to my Department between December 1988 and September 1991.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 17 December, *Official Report*, column *981*, whether any of the Treasury Solicitor's staff engaged in assisting the Scott inquiry exercised any function in respect of, or were directly or indirectly party to, the giving of advice, or the receiving of information in connection with the Treasury Solicitor's shareholding in International Military Services Ltd.

The Attorney-General: No.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many visits abroad the Solicitor-General made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

The Attorney-General: The Solicitor-General made one visit abroad during 1993. The cost to public funds was £467·51. The purpose of the visit was to discuss bilateral legal issues with the French Minister of Justice.

Treasury Solicitors

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Attorney-General whether it is usual for Treasury Solicitors to suggest amendments to witness statements of Government service employees giving evidence on behalf of the Government; what internal guidance on the giving of such advice or suggestions exists; and if he will place a copy of such advice in the Library.

The Attorney-General: Advice provided by the Treasury Solicitor's Department to its clients may include advice in relation to witness statements. No internal guidance exists on this subject.

Mr. Gordon Foxley

Mr. Straw: To ask the Attorney-General what action the Director of Public Prosecutions has taken to inquire into the circumstances in which the convicted Mr. Gordon Foxley has remained on bail and unsentenced for three months.

The Attorney-General: The granting of bail is a matter for the court. However, I understand that following his convictions on 3 November 1993 the court granted Mr. Gordon Foxley conditional bail pending sentence.

On 7 February 1994 the judge adjourned sentence to a date to be fixed due to Mr. Foxley's medical condition.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

EC Overseas Development Council

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decisions have been taken by the Overseas Development Council of the European Community under the new powers provided by article 130 and 130A of the treaty on European Union.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The powers of the Development Council are not affected by articles 130 and 130A of the treaty on European Union, both of which refer to the internal policy of the Community.

Malaysia

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the value of Overseas Development Administration support for the Malaysian water supply projects undertaken by Biwater for each year since 1985 and the percentage this represents for the year involved of *(a)* water and sewerage project beneficiaries and *(b)* total Overseas Development Administration-aided projects;

(2) what projects undertaken by the Biwater group of companies have had Overseas Development

Administration assistance since 1983; and if he will list the value, location and nature of the projects involved, the tendering process involved for each, and the percentage of Overseas Development Administration assistance each has represented for each year involved.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answers 8 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 14 February, column *568*. Of the projects listed in that reply, the Cairo Wastewater project was won after competitive tendering, and the two ATP projects for Malaysia and Sri Lanka were negotiated contracts.

The table below gives the percentage of the gross United Kingdom aid programme these three projects represented for each year involved:

Financial year	*Expenditure (£m)*	*(of which Malaysia)*	*Percentage of aid programme*	*(of which Malaysia)*
1986-87	48·610	(48·610)	3·82	(3·82)
1987-88	5·425	(5·425)	0·41	(0·41)
1988-89	3·145	(1·944)	0·21	(0·13)
1989-90	4·232	(3·475)	0·27	(0·22)
1990-91	0·169	0	0·01	0
1991-92	0·002	0	0·0001	0
1992-93	0·637	0	0·03	0
1993-94	0·702	0	0·04	0

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *136*, what was the date of the first letter after 27 June 1988 from Her Majesty's Government to the offer of civil aid for the Pergau project to the Malaysian Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* On 10 November 1988 Her Majesty's Government indicated in a letter to the Malaysian Government that they were prepared to consider aid and trade provision support for the Pergau project, subject to appraisal. The formal written offer of support was sent to the Malaysian Government on 17 April 1989.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Stationary Cars

Mr. Cox: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he will give instructions that stationary cars that are parked in the precincts of the House of Commons are not, while they are parked, to be left with their engines running.

Mr. Michael M. Martin: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms, who I understand is taking action to ensure the co-operation of all drivers in keeping the exhaust emissions from their vehicles to the minimum while they are within the precincts.

Blackawton Bitter

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee how many gallons of Blackawton bitter brewed in South Hams has been supplied to the House in the last 28 days; and how much of it has been consumed.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: I shall ask the Director of Catering Services to reply to the hon. Member.

Electrical Appliances

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what is the estimated cost of labelling each electrical appliance on the parliamentary estate with a portcullis and an appliance number on a non-destructible tag; what are the reasons for labelling each of these appliances; and how many such appliances there are.

Mr. Ray Powell: These are matters for the Director of Works.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bosnian Muslim Seventh Brigade

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the activities of the Bosnian Muslim Seventh Brigade; and if he can list the countries from which its participants come.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The brigade is believed to be near Vitez in central Bosnia. We understand that it mainly consists of Bosnians displaced by the war. There are foreign volunteers, but it is not possible to give precise information about their countries of origin.

South Africa

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs; pursuant to the answer of 26 January, *Official Report*, column *308*, whether the Government are now in a position to give advice and assistance to South Africa on the creation of a multi-racial peacekeeping force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are helping the national peacekeeping force by providing the co-ordinator of the Commonwealth peacekeeping assistance group together with six military advisers and four police officers. Their role will be to advise on, and monitor, curriculum and training methods.

Morocco

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken by Her Majesty's representative in Morocco to inquire of the whereabouts of the missing Sahrawi people; and if he will give a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We regularly take up human rights issues with the Moroccan Government, both bilaterally and with our European partners. They are aware of the importance we attach to respect for human rights. A clause requiring a satisfactory human rights performance will be an important element of the new agreement which the European Union plans to negotiate with Morocco.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the number of regular Croatian forces engaged in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations estimated on 31 January that between 3,000 and 5,000 Croatian Army troops were deployed in Bosnia. The United Nations Secretary General has been requested to report further to the Security Council on 17 February.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the conclusion of the UNPROFOR report concerning the artillery attack on the bread queue in Sarajevo on 21 August 1992 in respect of responsibility for the attack.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We understand that the United Nations was unable to draw any conclusions from its investigation into this incident.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those *(a)* British aid workers and *(b)* British military personnel who have been killed in Bosnia-Herzegovina to date; and if he will indicate which of the factions are thought to be responsible in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg:

(A)
Mr. Gulam Soobiah
Mrs. Christine Wincutt
Mr. Paul Goodall

(B)
Lance Corporal Wayne Edwards

It is impossible to determine with certainty who was responsible for these tragic deaths.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the number of regular Serbian forces engaged in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have seen no evidence that regular Serbian troops are engaged in Bosnia. But we believe that Belgrade continues to give support to the Bosnian Serbs by recruiting personnel and providing equipment.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made to establish responsibility for the murder of the British aid worker, Paul Goodall, in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Bosnian Government are actively investigating the case and are providing us with progress reports.

Caribbean Countries

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what study he has made of the effect on the Caribbean economies of a collapse in their banana exports and the possibility of the illegal drugs trade filling the vacuum.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Some countries, particularly in the eastern Caribbean, are heavily dependent for foreign earnings upon their banana exports. A sudden decrease in exports would be damaging to those countries. This is one of the factors we have always borne in mind in determining our policy towards the Caribbean and towards trade in bananas.

There are problems in parts of the Caribbean related to trade in illegal drugs and we have given what assistance we can to eradicate these. We will continue to do so in the future.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what advice his officials have given Caribbean Commonwealth Governments on the introduction of election expense laws and the threat to their democracies from illegal drug money;

(2) what steps he has taken following the correspondence from the hon. Member for Isle of Wight on the lack of rules about election expenses in the constitutional or electoral laws of Commonwealth states in the Caribbean.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No advice has been given to Caribbean Commonwealth Governments on the introduction of election expense laws since none has been sought. At least one of the countries concerned, Barbados, already has such legislation in place.

The laundering of illegal drugs profits represents a serious threat to the financial and economic stability of the Caribbean. We attach much importance to removing the profits from drug trafficking, and continue to urge dependent territories and independent Caribbean countries to pass legislation to trace, freeze and confiscate these profits.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met Dame Eugenia Charles of Dominica; and if he discussed her views on the drug trade in the Caribbean and the collapse of the banana exports.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last met Dame Eugenia Charles in September 1992. More recently she paid calls on myself and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development during a short visit to London from 4 to 10 February. On both occasions we discussed at length various issues relevant to Dominica's banana industry.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conclusions he has drawn from the lack of a limit on election expenses in the laws of the Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean and the effect of drugs dealing money on their parliamentary elections.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Each of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries is independent and it is therefore for each of them to determine its own laws, including those relating to election expenses.

Although the drugs trade represents a serious threat to the economic and political stability of the Caribbean, we have no substantive evidence that drugs money is being used in parliamentary elections. We continue to give assistance to deal with the illegal drugs trade and to promote sound principles of good and democratic government in the region.

Poland

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Polish Government in order to secure the re-establishment of direct flights between London and Warsaw; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We remain concerned at the suspension of air services between Britain and Poland and want to see the situation resolved as soon as possible.

There have been a number of contacts with the Polish Government at official and ministerial level in an attempt to resolve the current difficulties. I hope there will be an early resumption of services.

We are anxious to secure a settlement which will be in the interests both of the airlines involved and the travelling public, and be consistent with the principles which govern aviation in the European Union.

Hong Kong

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the names mentioned in telegram 152 from Hong Kong to his Department dated 17 January 1985 and the teleletters from BHCM to his Department dated 18 and 23 January 1985 in connection with an arrangement made in Hong Kong between Sir John Bremridge, deputy governor of Hong Kong and Chooi Mon Sui, a representative of the Malaysian Government on 17 January 1985; and if he will place those telexes and telegrams in the Library;

(2) if he will list the names mentioned in telegrams 781 and 794 from his Department to Hong Kong dated 16 August 1983 and telegram 246 from his Department to Hong Kong dated 18 August 1983 in connection with the murder of Jalil Ibrahim in Hong Kong; and if he will place those telegrams in the Library;

(3) if he will list the names mentioned in *(a)* telegrams 313 BHCM to his Department and 1214 Hong Kong to his Department dated 16 August 1983, *(b)* telegrams 1220 Hong Kong to his Department and 315 BHCM to his Department dated 17 August 1983, *(c)* telegrams 1225 Hong Kong to his Department and 321 BHCM to his Department dated 18 August 1983 and *(d)* telegram 246 BHCM to his Department dated 19 August 1983 in connection with the murder of Jalil Ibrahim in Hong Kong on 18 July 1983; and if he will place those telegrams in the Library;

(4) if he will list the names mentioned in telegram 322 BHCM to his Department dated 17 August 1983 and telegram 328 BHCM to his Department dated 22 August 1983 in connection with the murder of Jalil Ibrahim in Hong Kong on 18 July 1983; and if he will place those telegrams in the Library;

(5) if he will list the names mentioned in the telegram to his predecessor on 17 January 1985 from the deputy political adviser in Hong Kong; and if he will place that telegram in the Library.

Mr. Goodlad: No. It would not be in the public interest to disclose the contents of classified documents concerning the international relations of the United Kingdom.

Russia (Jews)

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to President Yeltsin about the plight of Jews wishing to emigrate from Russia; what reply he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: We regularly raise with the Russian authorities the plight of Jews who have been refused permission to emigrate from Russia. A commission has been set up by President Yeltsin to review outstanding cases of Jews and others refused permission to leave. As far as we are aware, in all the cases reviewed so far the applicants have been given permission to leave the country.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received *(a)* on behalf of the Begun family of Mosow and *(b)* from Jews being refused exit visas for emigration from the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Hurd: We have received a number of representations on behalf of the Begun family and other Jews who are unable to emigrate from Russia. We have raised their cases with the Russian authorities.

GEC-Malaysia

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions Tan Sri Arumugam, joint managing director, GEC-Malaysia has visited his Department in the past three years; and if he will list the occasions.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Russian Federation

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to acquire premises in London to be made available for the residence of the ambassador of the Russian Federation; and on what basis the title of the premises will be held.

Mr. Goodlad: The premises at 13 Kensington Palace gardens have been made available for the residence of the ambassador of the Russian Federation. 13 Kensington Palace gardens remains part of the Crown Estate, but, as a corporation sole, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has taken a lease of the premises from the Crown Estate Commissioners on the basis of powers under section 2 of the Commissioners of Works Act 1852 and section 122 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. My right hon. Friend the then Prime Minister signified her consent in 1986 to the exercise of these powers by the Foreign Secretary for the purpose of acquiring premises to be made available to the then Government of the USSR. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has granted a 99-year underlease of the premises to the Government of the Russian Federation.

The premises at 14 Sofiskaya embankment in Moscow have been made available for the residence of Her Majesy's ambassador on a concurrent 99-year lease.

WALES

Public Bodies

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for the last convenient date the names of the members of non-departmental public bodies in Wales, noting the political balance for each body based on political affiliations on appointment.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 14 February, column *648-50*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to place in the Library a copy of the curriculum vitae of each person he appoints to a quango, trust or similar public body in Wales; and if he will take steps to ensure such curricula vitae record membership or active support for political parties.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* No.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the curriculum vitae of each person appointed to a position on a quango or other similar public body in Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* I already make available, in the Library of the House, a list of all those currently appointed by me to NDPBs in Wales. The list shows the current members of each body, giving for each person their name, occupation, place of residence, the period of their appointments, the remuneration receivable in respect of their appointment and an estimate of the time commitment involved.

I also publish a press notice, at the time when each appointment is made, giving a brief note on the background of the people concerned.

The list is published quarterly: the current version relates to the situation at 1 December 1993.

Information is not available in a similar form for each of the last five years, and could be gathered only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what proposals he has to determine and publish the political affiliations of persons appointed to quangos in Wales;

(2) if he will list the chairperson of each quango, trust or similar appointed public body in Wales; and what information he currently has as to the political affiliation of such persons.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 14 February, column *648-50.*

Welsh Language

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many students have qualified to teach Welsh at secondary school level at each of the relevant colleges in Wales for each year since 1988.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers of students who completed an initial teacher training course where the subject of study was Welsh are given in the following table. Details relating to courses completed at University College Swansea in the years prior to 1990-91 are not available.

Numbers of United Kingdom students who successfully completed an Initial Teacher Training course, where the subject of study was Welsh, at higher education institutions in Wales[1]

	Academic year				
	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Colleges of Higher Education					
Cardiff Institute of Higher Education	0	0	0	0	11
University of Wales					
Aberystwyth	7	4	8	9	12
Bangor	9	5	5	14	11
Swansea	N/a	N/a	3	10	7

[1] Information supplied by the higher education institutions between October 1993 and February 1994.
n/a=Not available.

Regional Funding

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications under objective 3 for European funding for retraining have been submitted on behalf of areas of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Applications under objective 3 for European funding for Great Britain are submitted to the Department of Employment. Until the negotiations on the objective 3 plan to use European social fund resources throughout Great Britain have been concluded, it is not possible for the Department of Employment to approve any application for 1994.

Selar Grasslands (Opencast Mine)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he has received from the Countryside Council for Wales regarding an application to establish an opencast mine on the Selar grasslands site of special scientific interest; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Countryside Council for Wales has requested the Secretary of State to call in for his own decision the planning applications for an opencast site including the Selar farm grasslands site of special scientific interest. This request is now being considered.

Pharmacists

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met leaders of the pharmaceutical profession in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has not yet met any leaders of the pharmaceutical profession in Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many pharmacists in Wales operate retail outlets.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are 712 pharmacies in Wales where the pharmacist is contracted with the NHS to provide pharmaceutical services. There are, in addition,

some pharmacies which do not provide pharmaceutical services under the NHS, but the Welsh Office has no record of their numbers.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioners practices operate their own pharmacies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 24 May 1993, columns *467-68.*

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policies concerning pharmaceutical services in the national health service.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Our aim is to ensure that the public are provided with reasonable access to the full range of pharmaceutical services, and to take account of the cost to the taxpayer of providing pharmaceutical services.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local pharmaceutical committees he has met.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has not yet met any local pharmaceutical committees in Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many pharmaceutical centres there are in the hospitals of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are 40 hospitals in Wales with their own pharmacy departments.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to assist existing retail pharmacies in Wales to remain open and profitable.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 26 May 1993, column *639.*

Wepre Pharmacy, Deeside

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit the Wepre pharmacy, Deeside, Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has no plans to do so.

Further Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those who responded to the consultation paper of the Further Education Funding Council for Wales on the funding of further education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for the Further Education Funding Council for Wales. I have asked the chief executive of the funding council to let the hon. Gentleman have the information he requires.

Cadw

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who are the members currently appointed to Cadw.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Cadw, Welsh Historic Monuments, has an advisory committee whose role is to advise on the agency's policy, strategy and performance. The membership of the committee is as follows:

Mr. George Craig *(Chairman)*
Principal Establishment Officer, Welsh Office
Mr. Thomas Lloyd
Chairman, Historic Buildings Council for Wales (ex-officio)
Professor Glanmor Williams
Chairman, Ancient Monuments Board for Wales (ex-officio)
Mr. Tony Lewis
Chairman, Wales Tourist Board (ex-officio)
Mr. Clifford Evans
President, Wallace Evans and Partners

Road Tolls

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to charge tolls on the proposed third River Dee crossing and Deeside relief road; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am aware of no such proposals. This is a matter for Clwyd county council as the responsible local highway authority.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will clarify the legislative basis on which his Department made the statement in a letter of 21 January to the chairman of Gwynedd education committee, that the primary responsibility for the provision of speech therapy services lies with health authorities; in which guidelines these responsibilities are placed on health authorities; and what steps he takes to monitor health authority performance of such responsibilities.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The general provision of speech therapy services is the responsibility of health authorities under the National Health Service Act 1977. The level of provision is a matter for health authorities to determine in the light of local need, competing demands and resources available. The performance of health authorities is monitored during the annual review process.

In the case of a child who has a statement of special educational needs, his/her local education authority must secure any special educational provision which is required to meet those needs and is specified in the statement. Where such special educational provision includes speech therapy, this must be provided in accordance with the statement.

Learner Drivers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what dates he consulted the Welsh Language Board on the issue of allowing the use of the letter D as a symbol for learner drivers in Wales; on what date he received a response from the board; and when he expects to be in a position to make a statement on this matter.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My officials have had frequent informal discussions with officials of the Welsh Language Board since I announced last November that this matter is being reviewed. We will announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

School Children

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the recent reports which have been compiled on the average attainment levels in Welsh school children between the ages of 11 and 13 years whose first language is English; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Pupil attainment arising from the 1992 pilot assessment exercise for end of key stage 3—14-year-olds—assessment in mathematics and science has been reviewed. A review of the attainments resulting from the 1993 tests for 14-year-olds was not possible because of the boycott by teachers. The outcome from this summer's statutory assessment for seven and 14-year-olds and the voluntary pilot exercise for 11-year-olds will provide information on pupil attainment in English, Welsh, mathematics and science.

School Governors

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the total estimated cost of the survey of school governors currently being undertaken by Touche Ross management consultants on behalf of the Welsh Office; how many forms have been sent out; and for what purpose the information is being sought;

(2) when he intends to publish the information gathered through the survey of school governors undertaken by his Department; and whether each subsection and possible answer will be comprehensively included in the publication;

(3) if he will make it his policy that no disciplinary action will be taken against any school governor in Wales who refuses to fill in the survey of school governors questionnaire.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The cost of the survey of school governors in Wales is in the region of £40,000. Some 26,000 forms have been distributed to governing bodies in Wales. The survey will provide information on the background, experience, and work load of governors and will be of help to both the Welsh Office Education Department and local education authorities.

The results of the survey should be available in the summer. The exact form in which the results will be published has yet to be decided.

There is no question of any sanction whatsoever being taken against schools or governors who do not participate in the survey. Clearly the value of the survey is increased if as many governors as possible participate.

Porthmadog Bypass

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated date of commencing work on the Porthmadog bypass on the A487 trunk road; and what is the target date for opening this road.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The scheme is shown in the 1993 supplement to "Roads in Wales" as unlikely to begin before April 1999. It will take about two years to complete. My right hon. Friend is reviewing strategic road needs in Wales and is considering the scope for bringing forward the more important improvements.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase annual payments to farmers in the existing environmentally sensitive areas in Wales; and what plans he has to deregulate the amount of capital grant available for conservation works in the environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Redwood: I will be announcing the revised scheme arrangements and payment rates for the Cambrian mountains extension and Lleyn peninsula ESAs shortly. Payment rates in these ESAs will be reviewed in 1996. The Cambrian mountains original ESA was revised in 1992 and will be subject to a payment review later this year. These payment reviews will include an assessment of the capital grant arrangements.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the proposed new environmentally sensitive areas in Wales to be launched; when the first agreements will start; when the first payments will be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The new ESA schemes in Preseli and the Clwydian range will be open for application shortly. The first payments to farmers will be made six months after the signing of the first management agreements.

Planning Policy Guidance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on planning policy guidance note 6: "Town Centres and Retail Developments"; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Three.

School Playing Fields

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce his decisions concerning the sale of school playing fields.

Sir Wyn Roberts: As I have already indicated, the consultation exercise has been completed and I hope to announce the outcome in the near future.

Countryside Council for Wales

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase funding, in grant-in-aid, for the Countryside Council for Wales for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Countryside Council for Wales grant in aid for 1994-95 is £20·635 million, which represents a 4 per cent. increase on last year's provision.

Green Barriers and Belts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to announce his policies concerning green barriers and green belts.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is currently considering the advice of the Assembly of Welsh Counties on strategic planning guidance in Wales, including that on green barriers and belts.

Wrexham to Bidston Railway Line

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail concerning the long-term future of the Wrexham to Bidston railway line; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

SCOTLAND

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Lang: The details are:

1993-94

Children's Panel Recruitment

Press (£80,000): Objectives—to attract caring, responsible adults, particularly men, from all socio-economic groups to apply to become panel members. Effectiveness measure—by number of responses received.

Electoral Registration

Television/Press (£46,000): Objectives—to advise adults over 18 years and those who will come of age to complete the Electoral Registration Forms, and to encourage voters, particularly 18-year-olds and those who have moved home, to check for their names on the draft Electoral Registers. Effectiveness measure—by number of registrations in the annual autumn canvas.

Further and Higher Education Charter

Press, radio, outdoor posters (£86,000): Objectives—to raise awareness of the Charter and to promote its take-up among students, particularly in the 16-20 year-old age group. Effectiveness measure—demand for copies; research on response to be undertaken later this year.

Accessibility to the Scottish Office

Press (£150,000): Objectives—to promote easy accessibility by members of the public to The Scottish Office through an enquiry telephone line. Effectiveness measure—pre- and post-campaign qualitative research into awareness of The Scottish Office and new telephone number.

Teacher Recruitment

Press (£27,000): Objectives—to promote teaching as a profession, to recruit graduates and post-graduates, particularly in shortage subjects. Effectiveness measure—by response through a freepost coupon.

Drugs and Solvent Misuse

Television, booklet (Scottish element £130,000): Objectives—to encourage parents to discuss the dangers of drugs and solvents with their children and to publicise a confidential helpline and advice booklet. Effectiveness measure—pre-campaign qualitative research, number of responses to helpline and booklets issued.

Fire Prevention

Television (£125,000): Objectives—to alert householders to the dangers of failing to maintain smoke alarms. Effectiveness measure—qualitative research to assess awareness of the commercial and response triggered to be carried out when campaign ends.

Organ Donors

Television (63,000): Objectives—to urge carriers of the donor card to advise their families of their wish to donate. Effectiveness measure—research undertaken with the Scottish transplant community.

Road Safety

Television (£250,000): Objectives—to reduce child pedestrian road casualties by encouraging children to be more responsible and more safety-conscious. Effectiveness measure—qualitative research into campaign awareness.

Right to Buy

Television, Press (£300,000): Objectives—to inform public sector tenants of the house purchase schemes available. Effectiveness measure—response for information booklet triggered by freephone number and coupon.

National Continence Week

Press, Bus interiors (£11,000): Objectives—to publicise National Continence Week and to encourage those suffering from incontinence to contact the helpline. Effectiveness measure—response to the telephone helpline.

Offshore Europe exhibition

Exhibition stand (£35,000): Objectives—to promote Government schemes of financial assistance and advice available to existing and potential exporters to stimulate and support business growth in Scotland. Effectiveness measure—number of visitors to the stand and resultant follow-up enquiries.

Europartenariat Scotland

Exhibition stand (£40,000): Objectives—to assist in business transactions between Scottish companies and visiting international representatives, and to promote Government assistance to Scottish companies. Effectiveness measure—number of visitors to the stand and resultant follow-up enquiries.

Details of the advertising campaign programme for my Department for 1994-95 have not yet been finalised.

Agencies

HISTORIC SCOTLAND

Promotion of Properties

Television, Bus Sides, printed material (£260,000): Objectives—to increase the number of visitors to Historic Scotland's properties and to increase the income raised from visitors and from the hiring out of properties for functions, events and filming. Effectiveness measure—achievement of targets set within the overall advertising and marketing strategy.

Details of the advertising initiatives for 1994-95 have not yet been finalised.

Wind Turbines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many planning applications for wind turbines have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected since 1984; and how many wind turbines are currently in operation in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Staff

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the total number of staff employed by his office and the total amount of public spending administered by his office for the latest date available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Details of staff employed and public expenditure administered by my Departments are contained in my 1993 departmental report, "Serving Scotland's Needs" Cm 2214, a copy of which is available in the Library. My departmental report for 1994 will be published shortly.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number of staff employed and public spending administered by his office on each of three functions which would currently not be administered by the Secretary of State for Wales within Wales for the latest convenient date available; what is the total of each of these figures; and what proportion these figures are of the total staff employed and total public spending administered by the Scottish Office.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally by my Department and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many visits abroad the Solicitor-General for Scotland made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Solicitor-General for Scotland made two visits abroad during 1993. The first was to Cyprus for the Xth Commonwealth law conference from 3 to 8 May and the second was to Switzerland on 22 June for an informal meeting of the European Ministers of Justice. The cost to public funds was £1,936·15 for the Xth Commonwealth law conference and £739·00 for the informal meeting of European Ministers of Justice.

Rents

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each Scottish local authority *(a)* the current average weekly rent and *(b)* the rent change in monetary and percentage terms for each of the last 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the tables.

Average Standard Local Authority Rent 1993-94

	£ per dwelling per week
Berwickshire	23·60
Ettrick and Lauderdale	21·09
Roxburgh	27·62
Tweeddale	22·44
Clackmannan	25·23
Falkirk	22·90
Stirling	29·14
Annandale and Eskdale	28·10
Nithsdale	25·66
Stewartry	28·40
Wigtown	29·34
Dunfermline	24·91
Kirkcaldy	26·22
North East Fife	24·50
Aberdeen	21·55
Banff and Buchan	23·17
Gordon	27·05
Kincardine and Deeside	25·63
Moray	24·40
Badenoch and Strathspey	26·80
Caithness	27·13
Inverness	29·09
Lochaber	29·83
Nairn	27·22
Ross and Cromarty	30·99
Skye and Lochalsh	31·77
Sutherland	30·09
East Lothian	22·99
Edinburgh	32·13
Midlothian	18·13
West Lothian	21·27
Argyll and Bute	29·36
Bearsden and Milngavie	28·60
Clydebank	28·06
Clydesdale	23·58
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	25·63
Cumnock and Doon Valley	24·35
Cunninghame	24·31
Dumbarton	29·90
East Kilbride	25·18
Eastwood	21·73
Glasgow	30·78
Hamilton	25·39
Inverclyde	25·94
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	20·83
Kyle and Carrick	26·28
Monklands	25·66
Motherwell	23·43
Renfrew	24·41
Strathkelvin	25·11
Angus	18·88
Dundee	32·06
Perth and Kinross	22·94
Orkney Islands	27·60
Shetland Islands	29·76
Western Isles	33·38

Annual average rent increase

£ per dwelling per week

Authorities	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Berwickshire	1·20	1·02	0·63	0·95	1·52	1·10	1·09	2·01	1·44	1·11
Ettrick and Lauderdale	2·22	(0·08)	0·00	0·74	0·70	0·96	0·93	2·35	1·39	0·86
Roxburgh	1·02	1·28	1·67	0·48	1·22	1·71	0·93	3·23	2·22	1·44
Tweeddale	(0·05)	0·06	1·35	0·44	1·13	(0·20)	1·43	2·33	1·73	2·88
Clackmannan	0·96	0·46	1·20	1·47	1·91	2·64	2·28	1·77	1·86	0·44
Falkirk	0·51	0·93	0·93	1·35	1·36	1·79	1·93	0·84	1·47	1·62
Stirling	0·01	2·26	2·08	1·44	1·03	2·37	2·21	2·52	2·11	3·84
Annandale and Eskdale	1·22	0·95	1·37	1·26	1·61	1·25	2·61	2·21	1·82	2·10
Nithsdale	0·90	0·98	1·66	0·72	1·59	1·52	1·79	2·39	2·06	2·46
Stewartry	1·31	0·13	1·36	1·00	1·61	1·45	1·24	3·77	2·36	1·51
Wigtown	2·19	1·62	0·90	0·01	0·87	0·85	0·48	4·57	3·60	2·26
Dunfermline	0·49	0·00	1·30	1·25	1·94	1·29	1·56	2·04	1·36	2·02
Kirkcaldy	1·15	0·99	1·25	1·47	1·69	1·65	1·95	1·76	2·10	1·74
North East Fife	(0·05)	1·14	2·05	1·20	1·09	2·63	0·29	2·26	0·18	0·98
Aberdeen	0·98	2·32	1·34	2·14	1·27	1·95	1·57	1·32	(0·20)	0·95
Banff and Buchan	1·17	1·37	1·18	0·63	1·66	1·70	1·04	1·16	0·92	1·08
Gordon	0·50	1·73	1·27	0·20	0·95	1·65	1·33	4·26	1·40	2·34
Kincardine and Deeside	1·28	1·21	0·84	0·49	0·70	0·03	2·05	1·84	2·66	4·01
Moray	1·29	1·94	0·45	1·63	1·59	2·16	1·35	0·01	1·50	2·12
Badenoch and Strathspey	1·04	0·94	1·85	(0·02)	1·59	(0·13)	(0·85)	2·94	3·26	4·67
Caithness	2·08	0·90	1·04	1·15	1·71	1·52	1·75	2·38	2·40	2·53
Inverness	0·74	1·91	0·83	1·94	1·95	2·35	1·33	2·77	2·70	2·03
Lochaber	0·92	0·70	1·31	1·74	1·11	1·95	2·08	2·52	2·82	3·33

Authorities	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Nairn	0·92	1·38	1·15	1·11	1·63	1·86	0·06	4·61	2·96	0·31
Ross and Cromarty	1·24	0·74	1·99	1·13	1·65	2·09	1·70	3·79	3·54	2·36
Skye and Lochalsh	1·94	1·89	1·97	0·24	0·93	1·14	2·21	3·60	4·71	2·04
Sutherland	1·06	0·97	1·37	0·26	1·37	1·46	2·43	3·25	4·53	2·62
East Lothian	0·86	1·29	0·97	1·35	1·57	1·60	2·11	2·13	0·52	0·36
Edinburgh	1·25	(0·18)	0·03	1·84	1·93	4·12	3·52	4·31	1·43	1·60
Midlothian	0·87	1·07	0·92	0·96	1·01	1·09	0·00	0·11	0·21	2·00
West Lothian	0·50	0·80	0·85	0·90	1·40	1·80	1·02	1·07	0·92	1·55
Argyll and Bute	(0·15)	2·03	(0·01)	0·49	1·56	1·74	2·35	1·92	2·88	3·09
Bearsden and Milngavie	0·58	0·72	2·06	2·35	1·40	1·74	2·12	2·61	3·23	0·94
Clydebank	1·00	2·15	2·85	2·02	1·94	3·75	2·81	1·56	(0·51)	1·46
Clydesdale	1·01	1·45	0·87	0·83	1·75	1·74	1·36	2·18	1·30	1·41
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0·49	2·13	2·01	1·67	1·50	1·85	1·35	1·94	0·91	1·66
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0·50	0·72	1·04	1·46	1·06	1·66	1·36	2·60	2·26	1·79
Cunninghame	0·01	0·00	1·65	2·51	1·78	1·63	1·93	1·92	1·85	2·18
Dumbarton	0·81	0·01	2·29	2·93	3·46	3·08	2·85	1·77	2·21	1·93
East Kilbride	1·01	1·05	2·06	0·98	0·93	2·09	2·06	1·01	1·74	0·82
Eastwood	0·50	0·48	0·44	0·50	1·46	1·19	1·49	1·51	2·96	0·67
Glasgow	0·01	1·02	1·96	2·02	2·55	3·98	2·86	2·78	1·85	2·13
Hamilton	0·70	0·92	1·85	2·06	0·79	2·25	1·47	1·68	2·20	2·15
Inverclyde	0·77	2·21	1·11	0·92	1·05	2·48	2·32	2·27	2·49	2·01
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0·51	1·01	1·83	1·43	0·63	1·74	1·29	1·88	0·07	1·38
Kyle and Carrick	0·81	1·76	1·19	1·01	1·27	0·91	2·17	1·49	1·00	5·06
Monklands	0·00	2·02	2·35	1·82	1·45	1·83	1·47	2·56	0·86	2·00
Motherwell	1·00	1·35	1·20	1·64	0·93	2·26	1·31	1·11	1·33	2·40
Renfrew	0·48	1·00	1·69	1·49	0·92	2·81	1·97	1·98	1·77	1·96
Strathkelvin	0·88	1·05	2·57	1·12	1·93	0·88	1·33	1·87	1·55	2·23
Angus	0·97	0·96	1·11	0·80	(0·10)	1·28	1·04	1·07	(0·11)	1·11
Dundee	0·73	1·02	1·81	1·98	3·50	4·08	4·06	2·96	2·23	1·62
Perth and Kinross	0·00	1·16	1·00	0·95	0·75	1·21	2·33	1·61	2·34	0·82
Orkney Islands	0·88	2·16	1·33	1·50	1·07	3·34	2·21	3·00	2·38	(0·40)
Shetland Islands	(0·05)	2·91	1·53	0·96	2·28	0·87	1·61	4·34	3·87	0·87
Western Isles	1·84	0·59	1·02	1·03	1·44	0·75	2·75	6·57	1·85	2·49

Note: Rent reductions shown in brackets.

Annual average rent increase (expressed as a percentage increase on previous year)

Authorities	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Berwickshire	10·4	8·0	4·6	6·6	9·9	6·5	6·1	10·5	6·9	4·9
Ettrick and Lauderdale	20·2	(0·6)	0·0	5·6	5·1	6·6	6·0	14·3	7·4	4·3
Roxburgh	8·2	9·5	11·3	2·9	7·2	9·4	4·7	15·6	9·3	5·5
Tweeddale	(0·4)	0·6	11·9	3·5	8·6	(1·4)	10·2	15·0	9·7	14·7
Clackmannan	9·4	4·1	10·3	11·5	13·3	16·3	12·1	8·4	8·1	1·8
Falkirk	5·0	8·7	8·0	10·8	9·8	11·7	11·3	4·4	7·4	7·6
Stirling	0·1	24·3	18·0	10·6	6·8	14·7	12·0	12·2	9·1	15·2
Annandale and Eskdale	10·5	7·3	9·9	8·3	9·7	6·9	13·5	10·1	7·5	8·1
Nithsdale	9·4	9·3	14·4	5·5	11·5	9·8	10·5	12·8	9·8	10·6
Stewartry	10·3	0·9	9·6	6·5	9·8	8·0	6·4	18·2	9·6	5·6
Wigtown	18·2	11·4	5·7	0·1	5·2	4·8	2·6	24·2	15·3	8·4
Dunfermline	4·2	0·0	10·7	9·3	13·2	7·8	8·7	10·5	6·3	8·8
Kirkcaldy	11·0	8·6	9·9	10·6	11·1	9·7	10·4	8·5	9·4	7·1
North East Fife	(0·4)	8·9	14·8	7·6	6·4	14·5	1·4	10·7	0·8	4·2
Aberdeen	12·3	26·0	12·0	17·0	8·7	12·2	8·8	6·8	(1·0)	4·6
Banff and Buchan	10·4	11·0	8·6	4·2	10·7	9·8	5·5	5·8	4·4	4·9
Gordon	4·4	14·5	9·4	1·4	6·3	10·3	7·5	22·4	6·0	9·5
Kincardine and Deeside	12·1	10·3	6·4	3·5	4·9	0·2	13·6	10·8	14·0	18·5
Moray	12·4	16·7	3·3	11·6	10·1	12·5	7·0	0·1	7·2	9·5
Badenoch and Strathspey	9·0	7·5	13·7	(0·2)	10·4	(0·8)	(5·0)	18·4	17·3	21·1
Caithness	21·5	7·6	8·2	8·4	11·5	9·2	9·7	12·0	10·8	10·3
Inverness	7·0	17·0	6·3	13·9	12·2	13·1	6·6	12·8	11·1	7·5
Lochaber	8·1	5·7	10·1	12·2	6·9	11·4	10·9	11·9	11·9	12·6
Nairn	8·2	11·4	8·5	7·5	10·3	10·7	0·3	23·9	12·4	1·2
Ross and Cromarty	11·6	6·2	15·7	7·7	10·4	11·9	8·7	17·8	14·1	8·3
Skye and Lochalsh	17·5	14·6	13·2	1·4	5·4	6·3	11·5	16·8	18·9	6·9
Sutherland	9·9	8·2	10·7	1·8	9·5	9·2	14·1	16·5	19·8	9·5
East Lothian	8·4	11·6	7·8	10·1	10·7	9·8	11·8	10·6	2·4	1·6
Edinburgh	10·2	(1·3)	0·3	13·7	12·7	24·0	16·6	17·4	4·9	5·2
Midlothian	8·8	9·9	7·8	7·5	7·4	7·4	0·0	0·7	1·3	12·4
West Lothian	4·8	7·2	7·2	7·1	10·3	12·0	6·1	6·0	4·9	7·8
Argyll and Bute	(1·1)	15·3	0·0	3·2	9·9	10·0	12·3	9·0	12·3	11·8
Bearsden and Milngavie	5·3	6·3	16·9	16·5	8·4	9·7	10·7	11·9	13·2	3·4
Clydebank	11·1	21·5	23·4	13·4	11·4	19·7	12·3	6·1	(1·9)	5·5
Clydesdale	10·5	13·5	7·1	6·3	12·7	11·2	7·9	11·7	6·2	6·3
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4·9	20·0	15·8	11·3	9·2	10·3	6·8	9·2	3·9	6·9
Cumnock and Doon Valley	5·1	6·9	9·4	12·0	7·8	11·3	8·3	14·7	11·1	7·9

Authorities	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Cunninghame	0·1	0·0	18·6	23·9	13·7	11·0	11·8	10·5	9·1	9·9
Dumbarton	9·5	0·1	24·4	25·1	23·7	17·0	13·5	7·4	8·6	6·9
East Kilbride	8·8	8·5	15·3	6·3	5·6	12·0	10·5	4·7	7·7	3·4
Eastwood	4·7	4·4	3·8	4·2	11·7	8·5	9·9	9·1	16·4	3·2
Glasgow	0·1	10·6	18·4	16·0	17·4	23·1	13·5	11·6	6·9	7·4
Hamilton	7·5	9·2	16·8	16·1	5·3	14·4	8·2	8·7	10·4	9·2
Inverclyde	9·3	24·4	9·8	7·4	7·8	17·2	13·8	11·8	11·6	8·4
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	5·6	10·5	17·2	11·5	4·6	12·0	7·9	10·8	0·3	7·1
Kyle and Carrick	8·5	16·9	9·8	7·6	8·8	5·8	13·1	7·9	4·9	23·9
Monklands	0·0	21·7	20·8	13·3	9·3	10·8	7·8	12·6	3·8	8·4
Motherwell	11·3	13·6	10·6	13·2	6·6	15·0	7·6	6·0	6·7	11·4
Renfrew	5·8	11·3	17·2	13·0	7·1	20·2	11·8	10·6	8·6	8·7
Strathkelvin	9·1	9·9	22·1	7·9	12·6	5·1	7·3	9·6	7·3	9·8
Angus	9·0	8·2	8·8	5·8	(0·7)	8·8	6·6	6·4	(0·6)	6·3
Dundee	9·1	11·6	18·4	17·0	25·8	23·8	19·1	11·7	7·9	5·3
Perth and Kinross	0·0	10·7	8·4	7·3	5·4	8·3	14·7	8·8	11·8	3·7
Orkney Islands	8·7	19·7	10·1	10·4	6·7	19·6	10·8	13·3	9·3	(1·4)
Shetland Islands	(0·5)	27·7	11·4	6·4	14·3	4·8	8·4	21·0	15·5	3·0
Western Isles	14·1	4·0	6·6	6·2	8·2	4·0	13·9	29·3	6·4	8·1

Note: Rent reductions shown in brackets.

Cornton Vale Prison

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to close Cornton Vale prison.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no plans to close Cornton Vale prison.

Assisted Places

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much the Scottish Office has spent on the operation of the assisted places scheme in each year since 1981; how many pupils have been covered by the scheme in each year since 1981; and what overspend occurred on the budget allocated in each of these years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information for school years 1981-82 to 1992-93 is as follows:

School sessions	Total cost (£)	Number of assisted pupils
1981-82	799,023	790
1982-83	1,718,485	1,450
1983-84	2,454,386	1,900
1984-85	3,298,461	2,265
1985-86	4,217,234	2,620
1986-87	4,861,150	2,626
1987-88	5,310,061	2,680
1988-89	5,758,542	2,695
1989-90	6,681,213	2,841
1990-91	7,641,895	2,861
1991-92	[1]8,716,185	[1]2,916
1992-93	[1]9,811,185	[1]3,043
1993-94	[1]10,099,167	[1]3,024

[1]Provisional—Final claims still to be submitted.

The Assisted Places Scheme in Scotland is cash limited and there were no overspends in budget provision for the scheme in financial years 1981-82 to 1992-93.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what level of fees was charged by each institution covered by the assisted places scheme in Scotland in the current academic year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Fees charged to the assisted places scheme by each school vary according to the income levels of individual parents whose children benefit under the scheme.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what safeguards are available to the Scottish Office to ensure that schools covered by the assisted places scheme meet recognised educational standards.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Before a school can participate in the assisted places scheme in Scotland it requires to satisfy certain criteria, including certain standards of achievement, breadth of curriculum and teachers' qualifications. The schools are also subject to inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the schools in Scotland which had pupils under the assisted places scheme for each academic year since 1989; how many pupils have been supported at each institution in each year; and how much it has cost the Scottish Office to provide this support in each year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

School	1988-89		1989-90		1990-91		[1]1991-92		[1]1992-93		[1]1993-94	
	Number of assisted pupils	Amount paid £	Number of assisted pupils	Amount paid £	Number of assisted pupils	Amount paid £	Number of assisted pupils	Amount paid £	Number of assisted pupils	Amount paid £	Number of assisted pupils	Amount paid £
Aberlour	—	—	5	17,501	8	27,331	7	27,865	10	35,082	11	35,870
Albyn	16	31,116	20	41,376	23	51,747	20	55,279	18	52,377	17	55,571
Ardvreck	—	—	1	2,777	2	5,785	3	9,180	3	12,017	5	21,819
Beaconhurst	—	—	3	3,756	6	11,676	6	18,589	10	30,475	11	34,588
Belhaven	—	—	4	11,989	3	8,484	3	9,798	2	7,921	1	4,862
Belmont	18	36,917	21	46,918	20	49,083	23	60,329	23	68,170	26	76,102
Blairmore	—	—	2	5,948	5	15,058	4	11,202	3	5,931	School closed	
Butterstone	—	—	2	6,348	4	12,624	5	18,283	2	8,297	3	13,433
Cargilfield	—	—	3	10,425	4	17,547	4	19,128	4	19,557	4	18,002
Cliftonhall	—	—	6	11,312	7	18,637	7	22,755	8	28,546	6	24,437
Craigclowan	—	—	6	10,839	9	16,225	9	20,000	9	22,000	12	25,256
Craigholme	31	51,317	39	67,548	39	85,924	37	96,643	38	109,527	44	128,506
Crawfordton	—	—	8	13,420	6	19,219	6	22,456	6	25,225	5	22,238
Croftinloan	—	—	4	13,350	4	15,278	5	16,359	6	20,500	6	20,471

School	1988-89 Number of assisted pupils	1988-89 Amount paid £	1989-90 Number of assisted pupils	1989-90 Amount paid £	1990-91 Number of assisted pupils	1990-91 Amount paid £	1991-92 Number of assisted pupils	1991-92 Amount paid £	1992-93 Number of assisted pupils	1992-93 Amount paid £	1993-94 Number of assisted pupils	1993-94 Amount paid £
Daniel Stewart and Melville Coll. and Mary Erskine	542	1,089,782	291	647,807	274	686,814	276	766,689	282	840,210	296	883,974
Dollar	63	115,546	63	130,540	68	145,185	59	150,044	71	182,827	72	203,044
Drumley House	—	—	6	12,828	5	15,116	3	10,049	3	10,790	2	9,259
Edinburgh Academy	43	113,014	46	134,944	48	166,508	50	191,777	52	209,884	56	227,475
Fernhill	40	63,937	28	46,687	29	55,159	30	63,846	34	79,573	34	84,084
Fettes	26	101,191	32	134,472	32	151,610	33	174,548	40	199,763	39	209,031
Fort Augustus Abbey	38	107,450	34	105,345	33	134,983	34	170,400	28	139,717	School closed	
George Heriots	226	427,484	237	486,666	236	531,754	247	596,848	247	656,167	256	689,744
George Watsons	Included in DSME		240	506,852	243	575,268	238	639,740	245	717,925	236	681,386
Glasgow Academy	41	74,168	42	89,605	37	107,175	89	301,839	98	346,458	99	346,172
Glenalmond	36	143,697	34	145,745	30	166,502	33	190,588	33	215,022	38	241,406
Gordonstoun	23	91,513	24	108,155	26	124,412	29	144,094	28	160,425	28	170,862
Hamilton College	—	—	11	12,591	12	15,725	14	22,101	15	27,653	14	25,036
High School of Dundee	164	330,043	174	387,281	182	454,337	180	462,132	197	552,324	193	580,250
High School of Glasgow	46	87,364	40	71,268	38	82,074	39	102,007	45	127,101	49	136,969
Hutchesons Grammar	143	223,351	135	255,370	133	301,004	138	356,361	152	415,271	146	436,454
Keil	60	129,698	71	152,685	66	174,156	67	198,819	66	223,879	64	229,599
Kelvinside	54	121,290	58	137,390	58	161,317	67	213,982	80	266,852	85	304,930
Kilgraston	57	114,354	52	120,210	51	142,624	53	164,519	59	185,757	51	193,287
Kilquhanity	19	39,002	18	41,146	18	41,398	18	46,218	20	50,548	20	54,729
Lathallan	—	—	6	16,874	5	17,536	5	19,869	6	25,720	6	27,102
Laurel Bank	63	151,674	59	160,687	54	161,490	53	173,919	53	167,453	58	202,029
Lomond	42	97,986	43	105,236	39	101,807	44	133,431	49	158,944	56	183,036
Loretto	24	94,012	29	118,549	31	139,628	33	159,046	35	186,283	33	198,181
Merchiston Castle	50	180,744	56	218,085	60	249,586	62	281,393	65	315,586	65	319,636
Morrisons Academy	166	295,408	177	339,309	164	347,790	172	416,876	162	434,381	157	432,788
New Park	—	—	3	7,888	3	10,017	3	10,944	4	14,000	5	18,250
Oxenfoord Castle	—	—	5	11,987	11	25,838	13	38,622	12	41,626	School closed	
Park Lodge	—	—	1	1,809	—	—	1	2,598	1	621	—	—
Park School	63	147,616	61	152,808	72	192,881	68	217,964	68	238,977	67	244,675
Ranoch	26	77,343	27	101,463	28	119,766	30	139,248	31	158,770	35	173,990
Robert Gordons	61	94,486	58	116,513	63	128,557	64	150,951	63	169,147	65	183,112
Rudolf Steiner	60	110,877	61	127,413	56	136,397	57	159,714	59	179,420	57	182,188
St. Aloysius	139	259,995	154	295,900	160	330,424	166	380,134	165	433,125	170	443,938
St. Columbas	36	80,870	40	95,467	32	83,327	42	115,778	39	121,144	36	122,860
St. Dennis and Cranley	25	56,241	28	76,908	30	91,509	28	99,836	31	120,775	29	122,162
St. Georges	18	37,227	17	40,371	20	52,130	25	64,959	29	85,210	31	92,536
St. Leonards	23	63,324	24	75,795	31	113,765	35	131,000	37	147,826	36	168,406
St. Margarets (Aberdeen)	13	24,235	18	33,545	19	41,987	22	42,501	22	53,678	20	56,823
St. Margarets (Edinburgh)	59	121,628	65	154,491	68	182,386	70	213,688	72	241,220	66	245,883
St. Marys	—	—	2	6,030	4	9,936	1	2,100	2	7,602	2	7,652
Strathallan	35	136,720	41	187,165	42	215,432	42	243,000	46	272,640	47	287,146
Wellington	43	84,849	49	108,121	48	129,636	44	144,149	55	183,265	54	197,928
Westbourne	63	151,073	57	137,705	60	172,304	Amalgamated with Glasgow Academy					

[1] Provisional figures.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual cost to the Scottish Office of publicising and administering the operation of the assisted places scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The estimated cost to the Scottish Office of administering the assisted places scheme in 1993-94 financial year is £44,000. This total includes the cost of producing the "Brief Guide for Parents" advice booklet for 1993-94 school session of £655.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment the Scottish Office has made of the assisted places scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The aim of the assisted places scheme is to widen the range of educational opportunity for children by allowing them to attend independent schools which would normally be beyond the reach of their parents' financial circumstances. The Scottish Office carries out regular audit and monitoring procedures to ensure that the scheme meets the criteria set for it.

In November 1992, published results from an independent survey commissioned jointly by the Scottish Office Education Department and the Scottish Council of Independent Schools confirmed that the main policy objectives of the scheme were being achieved.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average yearly cost of educating a pupil in each of the secondary schools in the Ayr division of Strathclyde regional council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Strathclyde Region Air Division	Running cost per pupil (£)
Ardrossan Academy	2,307
Arran High School	3,160
Auchenharvie Academy	2,974
Auchinleck Academy	2,562
Ayr Academy	2,986
Belmont Academy	2,225
Carrick Academy	2,887
Cumnock Academy	2,593
Doon Academy	3,628
Garnock Academy	2,409
Girvan Academy	2,409
Grange Academy	2,561
Greenwood Academy	2,356
Irvine Royal Academy	..
James Hamilton Academy	3,247
Kilmarnock Academy	2,236
Kilwinning Academy	2,387
Kyle Academy	2,430
Largs Academy	2,430
Loudoun Academy	2,388
Mainholm Academy	3,531
Marr College	2,263
Prestick Academy	2,469
Queen Margaret Academy	2,905
St. Andrew's Academy	2,801
St. Conval's High School	4,240
St. Joseph's Academy	2,848
St. Michael's Academy	2,512
Stewarton Academy	2,430

.. No entry.

Notes

The figures given are derived by dividing the total budgeted running cost by the school roll, where the school roll is the number of pupils on the roll

at the time of the annual school census in September 1992, including pupils of any special unit, and the total budgeted school running costs are as specified by the School Board regulations in respect of the period 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994.
No entry is given for Irvine Royal Academy because of special circumstances following a local rationalisation.

Shipping (Tariff Rebates)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list for each year from 1986-87 the amount paid under the tariff rebate subsidy scheme to each shipping company operating within the scheme;

(2) if he will list for each year from 1986-87 the shipping operators who did not reach the capping level for subventions under the tariff rebate subsidy scheme and the amount of shortfall in each case;

(3) if he will list for each year from 1986-87 the shipping operators who reached a capping level for subvention payments under the tariff rebate subsidy scheme.

Mr. Lang: Individual bulk shipping operators' TRS allocations are treated as being commercially confidential.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in any year since 1986-87, any shortfall in the amount of payments to a shipping operator under the tariff rebate subsidy scheme has been reallocated to another participating operator.

Mr. Lang: Yes.

Prison Cells

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each prison in Scotland the total number of cells, the number of cells without sanitation and the number of prisoners presently held.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Stephen Byers, dated 15 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about prisoner accommodation and prisoner numbers.

The latest available information—reflecting the position as at Friday 4 February—is set out in the table below:

Establishment	*Design capacity*	*Cells in use*	*Cells in use without access to night sanitation*	*Prisoner population*
Aberdeen	152	147	—	143
Barlinnie	935	833	829	995
Castle Huntly	144	124	—	74
Cornton Vale	217	183	—	156
Dumfries	146	146	146	134
Dungavel	147	128	—	74
Edinburgh	527	527	378	640
Friarton	57	57	—	73
Glenochil	496	348	—	336
Glenochil YOI	179	154	—	141
Greenock	179	179	4	230
Inverness	87	80	—	100
Longriggend	185	185	—	197
Low Moss	400	400	—	330
Noranside	137	137	—	127
Penninghame	82	82	—	61
Perth	453	435	410	454
Peterhead	272	210	200	207
Polmont	418	340	324	378
Shotts	533	190	—	474
Totals	5,746	5,185	2,291(44%)	5,324

The difference between "Design Capacity" and "Cells in Use" reflects the fact that a number of cells are not available because of redecoration or damage repair work, refurbishment (including in some cases, to provide night sanitation) or for other policy reasons (eg being retained in the event of an emergency).

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending each year from 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year of the national health service bodies (Scotland) as listed in "Public Bodies 1993."

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The information is set out in the table. The figures have been adjusted to 1992-93 prices using the GDP deflator and have been taken from NHS (Scotland) summarised accounts.

Health Body	*1990-91 (£000)*	*1991-92 (£000)*	*1992-93 (£000)*	*1993-94 (£000)*[1]
Common Services Agency	128,141	142,535	157,829	160,709
Health Boards	3,210,418	3,492,667	3,767,893	3,799,638
Health Education Board for Scotland[1]	—	5,525	6,422	6,411
Mental Welfare Commission	776	828	900	872

Health Body	1990-91 (£000)	1991-92 (£000)	1992-93 (£000)	1993-94 (£000)[4]
NHS Trusts[2]	—	—	—	—
Scottish Council for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education	2,298	2,357	2,303	4,126
Scottish Hospital Trust[3]	—	—	—	—
State Hospital, Carstairs	12,260	13,303	16,178	17,394

[1] The Health Education Board for Scotland was part of the Common Services Agency in 1990-91.
[2] NHS Trusts are funded by Health Boards.
[3] The Scottish Hospital Trust is not Government funded.
[4] Estimate.

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* A variety of minor items are periodically reported missing. The following more substantial items have been formally recorded since 1990 as losses to the Scottish Office which are attributable to theft.

Year and Item	Approximate value £
1990	
Furniture	1,595
1991	
Video equipment	749
1992	
Video equipment	359
Motor car	2,650
Computer equipment	3,500

NHS Trusts

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospital trusts have been approved in the Lothian health board area; and if he will list all the individuals he has appointed to these trusts with any relevant details of their experience available to him.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 7 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *53*. All those appointed have skills or experience relevant to the strategic management of major service providing bodies.

Nurses

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of *(a)* whole-time equivalent registered nurses, *(b)* whole-time equivalent unregistered nurses and *(c)* whole-time equivalent nurses in training in Scotland for each year from 1988 onwards.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* The information is set out in the table.

Nursing staff employed by the NHS in Scotland: at 30 September

Whole time equivalent

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	[1]1993
Qualified[2]	35,589·8	36,224·8	36,258·6	36,449·9	36,304·2	35,992·1
Unqualified[3]	17,395·6	17,325·0	16,911·1	17,071·3	17,374·3	17,347·9
In training[4]	10,797·5	10,906·3	10,516·1	9,981·7	9,376·4	8,677·4

[1] Provisional.
[2] Includes both registered and enrolled nurses.
[3] Includes auxiliaries, assistants and nursery nurses.
[4] Includes students and pupil nurses, qualified nurses undergoing further training and, from 1992 onwards, Project 2000 students.

Limb Defects

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration was given during the recent investigaton of the incidence of limb defects within the Ayrshire and Arran health board area undertaken by the health board, to the incidence of brain tumours occurring within the Ayrshire and Arran, and Dumfries and Galloway health board areas.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* The investigation took account of a 1992 review of brain tumours in the health board area during the period 1975-90 and concluded that there was no evidence of a common factor linking cases of brain tumour with cases of upper limb reduction defect. Both studies related exclusively to the Ayrshire and Arran health board area.

EMPLOYMENT

Foreign Nationals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve the working conditions of foreign nationals brought into the country as personal servants on restricted entry conditions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In general, conditions of work are a matter for negotiation and agreement between employers and their employees, without Government intervention. This applies whatever the nationalities of the parties. Domestic workers from overseas have the same employment protection rights as resident United Kingdom employees. The criteria under which these workers are admitted to the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, but I understand that overseas domestic

work s receive a leaflet explaining their rights in the United Kingdom and where to get help before they enter the country.

Hampshire TEC

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total budget of Hampshire training and enterprise council for the year 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: The total sum of money available to the Hampshire training and enterprise council, for the performance of its contract with the Secretary of State in the year 1993-94, is £39,197,414.

Restart

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many restart interviews have so far been conducted; what numbers were referred to each menu option; what numbers actually took up their referral; what numbers were referred to the unemployment benefit service for non-attendance at an interview; what numbers were referred to the unemployment benefit service for non-availability; what numbers were referred to the unemployment benefit service for the refusal of suitable employment; and if he will express the numbers also as a percentage.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Field, dated 17 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about how many Restart interviews have so far been conducted; what numbers were referred to each menu option and how many took up their referral; how many were sanctioned for non-attendance at interview, non-availability and refusal of suitable employment; and if the numbers can also be expressed as a percentage.

Unfortunately the information you request is not available in the level of detail you require. The reason for this is that following a review of data collected by the Employment Service (ES) we decided that the amounts of information collected about the Restart programme could be reduced, lessening the burden throughout the organisation and producing savings in administration costs. Consequently we do not now collect information on the numbers of referrals made to each menu option. Also, information about the number of Restart clients who actually took up their referral is not available separately for each menu option, but is shown "as total starts on Employment Department (ED) programmes".

The information we have available for the current year is shown in the attached table.

These figures reflect only the direct results of Restart. We do not know how many people subsequently take up a job or a place on an employment or training programme as a result of the guidance given to them at their interview.

Sign-offs, as a direct result of Client Adviser action, include: entering full-time education, starting training (not an ED programme), Youth Training, as a result of benefit disallowed, for pension purposes (no need to sign for NI credits), or those covered by home responsibilities protection (no need to sign for NI credits).

They do not include sign-offs for: found work cases, for fraud intervention, failed to sign, clients transferring their claim to another office, or any other reasons not listed above.

Starts on Employment Department programmes include Jobclub, Restart Course, Jobplan Workshop, Job Review Workshop, Training for Work, Learning for Work, Community Action, Work Trials, Business Start-Up Scheme and Job Interview Guarantee.

Similarly, we do not now collect information about the numbers of people invited to Restart interviews who were subsequently referred to adjudication authorities because of a doubt raised at their interview about their entitlement to benefit. Consequently I am unable to provide the number you requested in the final part of your question or to indicate the percentage of claims this represents. However, information about the total number of adjudication officers' decisions irrespective of source of referral is collected on a regional basis and is summarised quarterly. A copy of each summary entitled "Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions" is placed in the Library of the House.

I hope this is helpful.

1993-94 Operational Year: (to end of December 1993 rounded to 100s)

Number of Restart Interviews	2,400,000	
Outcomes		*Outcomes as percentage of Interviews*
Started work	27,800	1·1
Took up other benefit	45,000	1·9
Signed off as a direct result of Client Adviser action	55,700	2·3
Starts on Employment Department Programmes	526,500	21·9

ENVIRONMENT

Biodiversity Action Plan

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his definition of the satisfactory progress referred to in paragraph 8(2) of the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan.

Mr. Atkins: Satisfactory progress will have been made when we judge there to be reasonable safeguards in support of our concerns that donor countries should retain the right to determine their financial contribitions under the biodiversity convention.

Government Car Service

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of his Department regarding motor vehicles belonging to the Government car service being left with their engines running when parked; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: GCS drivers are instructed to keep the running of their vehicles' engines while parked to a minimum consistent with passenger and security requirements.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on giving preference to British-made cars in purchasing official and ministerial cars.

Mr. Baldry: The Department's official and ministerial vehicles are purchased through call-off contract arrangements which comply with EC and GATT requirements. The current vehicles are sourced from three United Kingdom-based car manufacturers. The procurement policy is kept under review.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the rules and regulations relating to the use of Government cars.

Mr. Baldry: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) on 28 January, *Official Report*, column *415*, to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett).

Condensing Boiler Grant

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the Energy Saving Trust's condensing boiler grant scheme following the Director General of Ofgas's decision on the E-factor.

Mr. Atkins: The future of the condensing boiler grant scheme is a matter for the Energy Saving Trust Ltd. and British Gas plc, and its continued funding through the E-factor is a matter for the Director General of Gas Supply.

Climate Change Convention

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what papers or proposals were submitted by the United Kingdom delegation to the intergovernmental negotiating committee for a framework convention on climate change at its meeting in Geneva that began on 7 February.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom submitted the climate change programme as its report under article 12 of the framework convention on climate change, making it the first country to do so.

Ultraviolet Radiation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will issue daily bulletins on levels of ultraviolet radiation from National Radiological Protection Board monitoring stations in the United Kingdom, and issue guidance to the public if levels become enhanced due to thinning of the ozone layer.

Mr. Atkins: The National Radiological Protection Board restarted its weekly bulletins on levels of ultraviolet radiation in the United Kingdom on 8 February 1994. UV levels are so low during this period of the year that NRPB sees no need for more frequent bulletins. My Department issues weekly bulletins on the levels of ozone over the United Kingdom and copies are placed in the Library of the House. Guidance to the public on avoiding excessive exposure to solar UV radiation is available from the Health Education Authority and the NRPB.

Women's Aid Refuges

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the women's aid refuges funded directly or indirectly by his Department that have been closed in each region since 1990.

Sir George Young: My Department funds some women's aid refuges indirectly through the Housing Corporation. I am not aware of any refuges supported in this way which have closed since 1990.

Incinerators

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the sulphur dioxide emission limits for power stations and incinerators of different types: and what is the frequency of monitoring undertaken of emissions of sulphur dioxide from them;

(2) if he will list the different types of incinerator according to the severity of their regulatory regimes and the criteria used for distinguishing each category.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has issued statutory guidance, PG notes, to local authorities on the emission limits and monitoring frequency they should specify in individual authorisations for processes subject to air pollution control under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has issued guidance, IPR notes, to his inspectors covering emission limits and monitoring frequency for processes subject to integrated pollution control under the 1990 Act. The following guidance notes relate to power stations and incinerators and are all in the Library of the House:

PG1/3(91) boilers and furnaces 20-50MW net rated thermal input
PG1/4(91) gas turbines 20-50MW net rated thermal input
PG5/1(92) clinical waste incineration processes under 1 tonne an hour
PG5/3(91) animal carcase incineration processes under 1 tonne an house
PG5/4(91) general waste incineration processes under 1 tonne an house
PG5/5(91) sewage sludge incineration processes under 1 tonne an house
IPR1/1 combustion processes with an aggregate net rated thermal input of 50MW or more
IPR1/2 gas turbines with an aggregate net rated thermal input of 50MW or more
IPR5/1 merchant and in-house chemical waste incineration
IPR5/2 clinical waste incineration
IPR5/3 municipal waste incineration
IPR5/4 animal carcase incineration
IPR5/11 sewage sludge incineration

IPR1/2 is under review and I am placing a copy of the latest consultation draft of proposed revisions in the Library. The Secretary of State has directed the chief inspector of HMIP to include in authorisations for new large combustion plant conditions which give effect to the emission limits contained in Council directive 88/609/EEC on the limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from large combustion plants.

Almost all incinerators are controlled under part I of the Environmental Protection Act. The Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991, SI472, as amended, lay down the criteria for determining whether an incinerator falls to integrated pollution control or air pollution control. A waste disposal licence under part I of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 is required for some aspects of an incineration process falling under air pollution control, as provided by the Disposal of Controlled Waste (Exceptions) Regulations 1991, SI 508, and for incinerators exempt from air pollution control. For incinerators not subject to integrated pollution control, any discharges to controlled waters require the consent of the National Rivers Authority under the Water Resources Act 1991.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the substances which are safe for disposal in land.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's Waste Management Paper No. 26 gives guidance on the suitability of different types of waste for landfilling. A copy is available in the Library. The Department is currently reviewing policy in this area, taking account of the best practicable environmental option for the disposal of particular waste types, and will be issuing revised guidance in due course.

Dangerous Materials

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what differences there are between the regulations governing the transport of dangerous and hazardous materials and dangerous and hazardous wastes.

Mr. Atkins: The various modal—road, rail, air and sea—regulations referring to the transport of dangerous goods are intended to ensure that dangerous goods are classified, packaged, labelled and transported safely during national and international journeys. Waste products are classified under their appropriate class of dangerous goods as set out in the UN classification system.

The 1980 special waste regulations provide a national tracking procedure, based on consignment notes, for the movement of the most harmful wastes and are intended to ensure proper disposal. In addition all who handle waste are subject to a statutory duty of care.

Council Tax

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of appeals against council tax *(a)* received, *(b)* conceded, *(c)* rejected and *(d)* outstanding by valuation district since the introduction of the tax.

Mr. Baldry: I am placing in the Library a table which sets out, by valuation office region, and by billing authority, the number of proposals to alter the valuation list which were received by the end of the initial appeal period on 30 November 1993, the number settled by 31 January 1994, and the number outstanding. Details of the number of settlements in each area which were reached by agreement and the number of proposals which were withdrawn are not collected centrally.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the number of appeals received month by month since April 1993, *(b)* the total number of appeals allowed, *(c)* the total number of appeals rejected, *(d)* the total number of appeals outstanding and *(e)* the estimated time needed to clear the outstanding appeals in respect of council tax valuations in Doncaster.

Mr. Baldry: The numbers of proposals to alter the council tax valuation list received in respect of dwellings in the Doncaster billing authority area in 1993-94 are as follows:

	Number
April	1,025
May	230
June	93
July	73
August	55
September	77
October	88
November	320
December	10
January	20
	1,991

A total of 517 cases have been resolved by agreement and 87 have been withdrawn. The remaining 1,387 are unresolved. Those which are not settled by agreement or are not withdrawn will need to be decided by the local valuation tribunal.

As I announced on 11 January, nationally we expect four out of five appeals to be dealt with before the end of 1994 and the remainder to be settled as rapidly as possible thereafter.

Homelessness (Code of Guidance)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidance to local authorities concerning the housing provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, issued as a supplement to the current edition of the homelessness code of guidance for local authorities.

Sir George Young: I have placed in the Library of the House today a copy of the supplement to the homelessness code of guidance to local authorities which has been issued by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales under section 71 of the Housing Act 1985. The supplement explains local authorities' responsibilities towards asylum seekers who apply to them for assistance under the homelessness legislation, in the light of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993. The supplement also clarifies the duties of local authorities which receive applications under the homelessness legislation from persons who have entered the United Kingdom illegally, following the Court of Appeal's judgment in the case of R v. Secretary of State for the Environment ex parte the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Copies of the supplement are being sent to all local housing authorities in England and Wales and to the main organisations which responded to last year's consultation about a draft of this supplement.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times, and at which sites, the World Health Organisation one-hour air quality guideline for sulphur dioxide was breached in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1992 and *(d)* 1993; and what evaluation his Department has undertaken of the potential effect of regulations to ban the sale of high sulphur solid fuel and to control the sale of unauthorised fuels in smoke control areas, to reduce levels of sulphur dioxide to meet World Health Organisation one-hour guidelines.

Mr. Atkins: The potential effect of regulations to ban the sale of high sulphur solid fuels and to control the sale of unauthorised fuels in smoke control areas has been considered against the statutory air quality standards for smoke and sulphur dioxide under the EC directive 80/779/EEC, and provisions of the Clean Air Act 1993. Since 1990, only one site in the United Kingdom has breached the directive's limit value for sulphur dioxide. Over the same period, exceedances of the lower World

Health Organisation one-hour guideline, which is a management indicator, not a statutory limit, were as follows:

Number of hours > 122 parts per billion

Site	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*[1]1993*
Stevenage			1	1
Central London	1			
Cromwell Road, London	26	15	16	8
Bridge Place, London	2	6	15	7
Ladybower, Derbyshire	7	12	12	
Belfast, East	173	271	213	146
Bircotes, Nottinghamshire	27	15		
Featherstone, W. Yorkshire	8	18		
Rugeley, Staffordshire		28	34	
Barnsley		75	166	213
Sunderland			5	1
Bloomsbury, London			9	11
Edinburgh				4
Cardiff			2	1
Belfast, Centre			53	73
Birmingham			5	6
Newcastle			6	1
Leeds				8
Bristol				1
Liverpool				19

[1]Provisional data.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* basic credit approvals, *(b)* supplementary credit approvals and *(c)* capital grants for housing, transport, education, personal social services, other services, protective services and urban programmes for each authority and for England for each year from 1990-91 to 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: Basic credit approvals, supplementary credit approvals and capital grants are issued by a number of Government Departments. The total amounts of credit approvals and capital grants for the various services for local authorities in England are published annually by HM Treasury at the conclusion of each public expenditure survey. Outturn information for the years 1990-91 to 1993-94 and the latest plans for 1994-95 will be published at the end of this month in the public expenditure statistical supplement to the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95".

My Department issues basic credit approvals to most local authorities in England and those for 1990-91 to 1994-95 are set out in documents which are available in the Library of the House of Commons. In addition, the Department of Transport issues basic credit approvals to passenger transport authorities and the Home Office to joint fire and civil defence authorities.

Information about the supplementary credit approvals issued by my Department to individual authorities for the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 is also available in the Library.

Information for individual authorities about supplementary credit approvals issued by other Departments and about capital grants is not held centrally and could be collated only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the allocation within Liverpool's standard spending assessment, on a per capita basis, for children at risk, during the next financial year; what is the allocation for the City of Birmingham; on what basis this formula operates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The children's personal social service element for 1994-95 for Liverpool is £55 per head of resident population, that for Birmingham is £62. The formula uses a "client-group" approach where the client group is the estimated number of children at risk. Cost adjustments are made to reflect the increased costs associated with social conditions and differences in the costs of provision between areas. The formula for the children's PSS element, along with the formulae for other SSA elements, has been revised in the light of the SSA review. It is set out fully in the local government finance report, approved by the House on 3 February.

Energy Saving Grants

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Director General of Gas Supply on his views on funding for energy saving grants; and what assessment he has made of whether the reduction or abolition of these grant schemes would affect the Government's environmental target following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Atkins: I have not met the Director-General of Gas Supply, as the funding of energy-saving expenditure through the E factor is a matter for her and British Gas plc. The Government are fully committed to the Energy Saving Trust, and the target for reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 2000.

Homelessness

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria by which an individual may be classified as homeless.

Sir George Young: The criteria for determining whether a person is homeless for the purposes of part III of the Housing Act 1985 are set out in section 58 of that Act.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total budget of the Southern region of the National Rivers Authority for the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Atkins: The total budget for the southern region of the National Rivers Authority for the financial year 1993-94 was £45,372,000.

Housing Expenditure, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total expenditure in Hampshire by the Housing Corporation in the financial year 1993-94.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation's latest forecast is that in 1993-94 its total expenditure in Hampshire will be £46,990,974.

Local Government Finance, Essex

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what housing capital receipts are held by each district council in Essex as at 31 March 1993.

Mr. Baldry: Information on total usable capital receipts held at 31 March 1993 is given in the tables. No comparable information is available for housing receipts alone, since local authorities are not required to account separately for such receipts.

	£'000
Basildon	88
Braintree	889
Brentwood	582
Castle Point	12
Chelmsford	15
Colchester	2,118
Epping Forest	5,749
Harlow	1,730
Maldon	425
Rochford	417
Southend-on-Sea	6,425
Tendring	2,066
Thurrock	nil
Uttlesford	1,513

Source: Local authority returns.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the financial reserves held by each district council in Essex as at 31 March 1993.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available information as returned by local authorities is as follows:

Estimated reserves as at 31 March 1993

District Council	*(£000s)*
Basildon	3,101
Braintree	3,591
Brentwood	6,349
Castle Point	–2,693
Chelmsford	4,227
Colchester	5,925
Epping Forest	5,500
Harlow	3,476
Maldon	1,145
Rochford	1,768
Southend-on-Sea	11,520
Tendring	2,843
Thurrock	10,654
Uttlesford	1,448

Planning Inquiries

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take concerning his powers to recover from local planning authorities the costs of inspectors he appoints to hold their development plan inquiries.

Mr. Curry: The statutory provisions for local plan inquiries were originally introduced by the Town and Country Planning Act 1968. It has always been our practice to charge local planning authorities for the provision of planning inspectors to hold development plan inquiries for them. Questions have recently arisen over the legal basis for this practice. We have considered this issue very carefully, and decided that we should put the matter beyond doubt, by introducing early legislation providing powers for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to recover from local planning authorities the cost of supplying planning inspectors to hold such inquiries. Such legislation would be retrospective in order to validate payments already made and to secure fair treatment of all local planning authorities, irrespective of the timing of their local plan inquiries. The legislation would extend to Scotland.

We share the concerns of local authorities about the high level of costs associated with local plan preparation, in which the local plan inquiry is just one stage. We therefore commissioned research to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of development plan inquiries, taking into account the costs involved. We published the executive summary of the research findings and recommendations in November 1993 and invited comments from those likely to have an interest. We will be publishing the final report shortly, together with our own reaction to the recommendations in the report.

We are anxious to achieve full local plan coverage, as required by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as soon as possible. We therefore look forward to discussing proposals for improving the process with representatives of the local authorities and others, with a view to identifying the best way forward.

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* The information requested is not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Social Services

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list in rank order those local authorities that have budgeted to spend on social services less than the standard spending assessment for social services during 1993-94, showing their standard spending assessment for social services, their budget figure for spending on social services, the amount of the planned underspend and the percentage that the planned spending is below the standard spending assessment for social services;

(2) if he will list in rank order those local authorities whose actual spending on social services was less than their standard spending assessment for social services during 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 showing their standard spending assessment for social services, their actual spending on social services, the sum underspent and the percentage that actual spending is below the standard spending assessment.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* I have placed in the Library tables showing the requested information. It is for each local authority to determine its spending priorities between services in the light of local circumstances.

Birds of Prey (Protection)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of current legislation protecting British birds of prey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 British birds of

prey are protected against taking, killing, injuring or removal from the wild in any other way, except under licence. I am satisfied that this legislation is required and appropriate. Many birds of prey, both native and non-native, are also subject to the registration and ringing requirements of section 7 and schedule 4 to the Act if held in captivity. A consultation paper was issued by the Department last April inviting comments on possible changes to these requirements. Consultation on detailed proposals affecting registration and ringing of certain hawks and other species should begin very shortly.

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* During the period 1 April 1991 to the 31 January 1994 there were 85 reported thefts of equipment. The total estimated value of these stolen items was £117,256·24.

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on providing in full the information sought by hon. Members in parliamentary questions.

The Prime Minister: Except for matters which are confidential or on which successive Governments have refused to answer questions upon grounds of public policy, or when a reply is not given on grounds of disproportionate cost, answers should give the information sought and should be accurate and truthful and not misleading.

Ministerial Functions (Wales)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will transfer the functions of the Home Secretary in Wales to the Secretary of State for Wales.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish a list of all functions of Government whose administration in respect of Wales is vested in Ministers other than the Secretary of State for Wales; which Minister is responsible in each case; and what total amount of public spending is attributable to each of those functions in Wales.

The Prime Minister: The responsibilities of each Minister of the Government are set out in the list of "Ministerial Responsibilities", of which all Members have a copy. Where responsibility for matters in Wales does not lie with the Secretary of State for Wales, Ministers in charge of other Departments exercise their responsibilities in respect of England and Wales, or the United Kingdom, as appropriate.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 February.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Russia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Russia.

The Prime Minister: I visited Russia from 14 to 16 February as part of the regular practice of bilateral summits established by the partnership treaty which President Yeltsin and I signed in 1992. The Foreign Secretary accompanied me.

In Moscow I had talks with President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, and met a number of other Ministers, including Foreign Minister Kozyrev and Defence Minister Grachev. I talked to a cross-section of the newly elected parliamentarians. I also met British and Russian business men. I visited the city of Nizhny Novgorod, and announced new know-how fund projects.

President Yeltsin and I signed an agreement on the detargeting of nuclear missiles. We also agreed to hold military exercises, focused on peace-keeping, in the United Kingdom and Russia. My right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Russian Foreign Minister signed agreements on double taxation and on cultural exchanges.

President Yeltsin and I agreed that we should build on the partnership between our two countries which is now based on shared democratic values. President Yeltsin has accepted my invitation to visit the United Kingdom this year. I have separately invited Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. I shall be recommending to Her Majesty the Queen that she should take up President Yeltsin's invitation to visit Russia.

An important purpose of my visit was to give practical and polital support to reform. President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Chernomyrdin assured me that economic reform would continue. But they did not underestimate the scale of the task which they face. It was clear that difficult decisions lie ahead.

I discussed a range of international issues with President Yeltsin, including Bosnia. These discussions underlined how important it is to maintain a close political dialogue with Russia. I told President Yeltsin that I would support closer political consultation between the Group of Seven and Russia.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the citizens charter panel of advisers.

Mr. Waldegrave: The members currently appointed to the citizens charter panel of advisers are Sir James Blyth, chairman, Sir Christopher Bland, Angela Heylin, the Right Hon. the Baroness Perry of Southwark, Dr. Madsen Pirie, Nick Rawlings, Christopher Swan and Lady Wilcox.

Open Government

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the Treasury on the implications of the recent report of the Committee on Public Accounts for open government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government will be responding to the Public Accounts Committee report in due course.

Duchy Council

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many meetings of *(a)* the Duchy Council and *(b)* the Trustees of the Benevolent Fund were held in each year since 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave:

	Date	
(a)	1988	2 meetings (January and May)
	1989	3 meetings (January, May and October)
	1990	3 meetings (January, May and October)
	1991	3 meetings (January, May and October)
	1992	2 meetings (January and May)
	1993	3 meetings (February, May and November)
		In addition to formal meetings of the full Council there were additional meetings with individual members of the council
(b)		The benevolent fund was constitued as a charity in September 1993 and the trustees have met once since then. Prior to that date, advice on donations has been given at council meetings as above.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the venues of meetings of the Duchy Council held since 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Council meets in the Duchy of Lancaster office.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much members of the Duchy Council are paid; and how much each has received for travel and expenses for each year since 1987 or from the date of their appointment, if later.

Mr. Waldegrave: Members of the Duchy Council receive no remuneration as council members.

The total paid to council members for expenses incurred in visiting estates or attending meetings since 1987 has been:

Year	*£*
1988	1,174
1989	573
1990	337
1991	699
1992	1,228
1993	649

Records of individual payments have not been maintained and it would entail disproportionate cost to research these items.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster after what period of time minutes of the meetings of the Duchy Council are made public.

Mr. Waldegrave: Minutes of meetings of the Duchy Council are not made public.

Duchy Affairs

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many hours per week he allocates to Duchy affairs.

Mr. Waldegrave: I spend approximately 5 per cent. of my time on Duchy affairs.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Appeals

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals against decisions of child support officers have been registered by the Independent Tribunal Service; and how many have been heard, broken down by area.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is the responsibility of its chief executive, Ros Hepplewhite. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 17 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Paliamentary Questions asking about the number of appeals against Child Support assessments.

I understand from the Independent Tribunal Service that, to the end of January 1994, a total of 611 appeals had been lodged. Of these, 82 cases had been heard by the Child Support Appeal Tribunal. I attach a breakdown of these figures below:

	Number
Midlands	11
North East	17
North West	8
Scotland	14
South East	26
Wales and South West	6

I hope you find this reply useful.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the average time taken by the Child Support Agency to perform reviews when the client disagrees with the original child support officer's decision, broken down by area CSAC;

(2) how many parents with care have applied to the Child Support Agency pursuant to *(a)* section 4 and *(b)* section 6 of the Child Support Act 1991;

(3) of the child maintenance assessments completed to date by the Child Support Agency what proportion are *(a)* nil or *(b)* minimum assessments, and what proportion are interim assessments;

(4) what is the average time being taken by the Child Support Agency to perform reviews of assessments following a change of circumstances broken down by area CSAC.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is the responsibility of its chief executive, Ros Hepplewhite. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 17 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions about the Child Support Agency's operations.

In the period 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993, the Agency issued 711,000 maintenance application forms. Of these, 686,000 were issued in cases where the parent with care was in receipt of income support, family credit, or disability working allowance, and 25,000 were issued in cases where the parent with care was not receiving benefit.

In the period from 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993, the Agency completed 121,600 maintenance assessments, of which 41,000 were interim assessments, and 28,800 were nil assessments, or assessments where the absent parent is liable to pay the minimum amount of £2·20.

You have also asked for a breakdown of the time taken to perform a review where there has been a change of circumstances, and where a client disagrees with the original child support officer's decision. During the first months of the Agency's operations, the volume of work in these areas was relatively low. Although volumes have risen in recent months, it is too early for reliable information to be available.

I hope you find this reply useful.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will instruct the Child Support Agency not to telephone its clients at work without prior consent.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my right hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Paul Channon dated 16 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the Child Support Agency telephoning clients at work.

Normally, the Agency will only telephone a client at work without prior consent where there has been no response to written correspondence and all other methods of communication have failed.

We are very aware of the sensitive nature of our work and I can assure you that staff who deal directly with the public are fully trained and equipped with the necessary skills to handle such calls with sensitivity and tact.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Case Papers

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the practice in the Benefits Agency about destroying case papers; and if he will issue guidance requiring that case papers should not be destroyed while active inquiries into a case are going on.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my right hon. Friend.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paul Channon, dated 16 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the practice within the Benefits Agency (BA) for destroying casepapers.

The BA policy on destruction of documents requires all Income Support (IS) cases to be examined at certain times and unnecessary documents to be destroyed. This policy represents an attempt to balance the needs of customers against the administrative expense of keeping all the documents indefinitely. There is no legal basis to the policy as the Agency, like other public bodies, is only legally required to retain samples of cases to conform with the Public Records Act.

New working methods, particularly computerisation, led to the need to review the Benefits Agency's document retention policy and a study was commissioned to consider the retention and storage of documents; the outcome of this study was to issue new guidance to all BA District Offices at the end of January 1994. This guidance reaffirms that IS casepapers are retained, as before, for a minimum of 18 months after the claim becomes dormant. It also provides clear and specific instructions to staff that casepapers should not be destroyed while active enquiries into the case are ongoing.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the average value of benefit to those in receipt of invalidity benefit in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and Wales.

Mr. Scott: On 4 April 1992, the latest date for which information is available, the average weekly amount of invalidity benefit for recipients in Wales was £75·43[1]. Information for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney is not available.

Note: [1] Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of existing recipients of invalidity benefit in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney who will be disqualified under the new capacity test.

Mr. Scott: Numbers cannot be reliably estimated at this stage, but our current estimate is that around 200,000 of the people who initially transfer to incapacity benefit from invalidity benefit may fail to satisfy the test within the first two years. This estimate has not been broken down by district.

Laryngectomy

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to recognising those who suffer from laryngectomy as having a disability; if he will assess sufferers' special heating requirements; if he will treat them as disabled people for purposes of VAT heating relief; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The disability living allowance advisory board is currently considering including in the "Disability Handbook" specific guidance on the care and mobility needs of people who have had a laryngectomy. Such people may be entitled to receive any of the wide range of social security benefits, including disability living allowance and attendance allowance, which are available, subject to individual circumstances. Details of the extra help in respect of VAT on domestic fuel were given in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on 30 November 1993 at columns *437-438*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Sea Fish Industry Authority.

Mr. Jack: The members currently appointed to the Sea Fish Industry Authority are as follows:

Mr. Eric Davey (Deputy Chairman)
Mr. Cecil Thomas Finn MBE

Mr. John Kelly
Mr. Duncan MacInnes JP
Mr. Ian McFadden OBE
Mr. Andrew Pepper
Ms Elizabeth Stevenson
Mr. David Vickers
Mr. Colin Warwick
Mr. Frank Ledwidge OBE FCA
Professor Mike Haines

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Apple and Pear Research Council.

Mr. Jack: Members currently appointed to the Apple and Pear Research Council are:
Professor Sir C. R. W. Spedding, CBE, Chairman
Mr. A Burbridge
Mrs. C. Clive
Professor D. M. Conning, OBE
Dr. O. Doubleday
Mr. A. Jackson
Mr. B. D. Neame, CBE
Mr. C. Rose
Mr. N. Stangroom

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal.

Mr. Jack: The following were appointed as members of the Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal in 1991:
Lord Grantchester *(chairman)*
Sir Michael Kerry *(deputy chairman)*
Mrs. J. Bell
Mr. B. Boot
Mr. A. D. Drummond
Mr. J. M. Evans
Mr. T. M. Evans
Mr. W. E. Evans
Mr. R. Harris
Mr. H. Humphreys-Jones
Mr. J. Jenkin
Mr. T. H. Jones
Mr. J. Lethbridge
Mr. C. Muddiman
Mr. J. Nelson
Mr. P. Phillips
Mr. J. Richards
Mr. A. Webb
Mr. B. Youngman

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the National Food Survey Committee.

Mr. Jack: The current membership of National Food Survey Committee is listed in the table:
Mr. R. E. Mordue
Dr. W. H. B. Denner
Dr. P. J. Lund
Mr. R. U. Redpath
Dr. J. J. Wiseman
Dr. J. A. Beaumont
Dr. C. Bolton-Smith
Professor A. D. Chesher
Professor C. Ritson
Dr. R. G. Whitehead
Dr. L. Yeomans
The membership list is published annually in the report "National Food Survey", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Committee on Agricultural Valuation.

Mr. Jack: The members of the Committee on Agricultural Valuation are:
Mr. J. R. Mathias *(chairman)*
Mr. C. H. Arkell
Mr. F. Grounds
Mr. T. Hammett
Mr. J. H. Harris
Mr. H. B. Knight
Mr. K. R. McDiarmid
Mr. J. A. Pallister
Mr. T. W. Sale
Mr. T. G. Shearman
Mr. R. V. Stone
Mr. R. Thomas
Mr. G. T. Williams

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Board of Horticulture Research International.

Mr. Jack: They are:
Mr. Terry Pryce *(chairman)*
Mrs. Valerie Boakes
Professor Donald Boulter
Dr. Peter Bunyan
Professor James Callow
Professor Timothy Flowers
Mr. Michael Holmes
Mr. Anthony Mitchell
Dr. Richard Pugh
Miss Sally Smith

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Plant Varieties and Seeds Tribunal.

Mr. Jack: The current chairmen and members of panels of the plant varieties and seeds tribunal are as follows:

CHAIRMEN
England and Wales—Mr. D. E. M. Young QC
Scotland—Mr. W. C. Galbraith QC
Northern Ireland—Mr. J. D. McSparran QC

PANEL MEMBERS

General Agriculture
Professor G. R. Dickson
Mr. C. J. Beynon
Mr. J. R. Gill
Dr R. C. F. Macer
Mrs. S. Ward

General Horticulture
Professor G. R. Dixon
Mr D. J. Fuller
Professor H. J. Gooding

Apples and Pears
Mr. B. F. Self

Cereals
Professor D. Gareth Jones
Professor J. C. Holmes
Dr. R. T. Plumb

Chrysanthemums
Dr. K. E. Cockshull

Forest Seeds
Mr. A. T. Wood

Forestry
Dr. P. S. Savill

French Beans
Dr. J. Smartt

Fruit
Mr. B. F. Self
Dr. C. J. Wright

Glasshouse Crops
Dr. J. G Atherton
Mr. D. J. Harrison

Grasses and Legumes
Dr. J. S Brockman
Dr. D. Wilman
Professor D. Wilson

Narcissus
Dr. A. R. Rees

Peas
Dr. P. D. Hebblethwaite
Mrs. C. M. Knott

Potatoes
Mr. P. M. Harris
Dr. P. D. Jenkins
Mr. P. H. Lamin

Roses
Mr. J. A. Steele

Seed Industry
Mr. N. Bark
Mr. D. F. R. George
Dr. P. R. Dawson
Mr. C. R. Alderton
Dr. R. M. Eckersall

Trees, Shrubs and Ornamentals
Dr. P. G. Alderson
Mr. J. Fraser

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to each of the regional panels.

Mr. Jack: The present members of the Department's nine regional panels are as follows:

ANGLIA REGION
Chairman
Mr. J. Wallace

Members
Mr. P. Allenson
Mr. D. Barker
Mr. A. Bowes
Miss C. Chivers
Mrs. W. Long
Miss M. Macrae
Mr. D. Moore
Mr. R. Paynter
Mr. J. Shropshire
Mrs. M. Skinner
Mr. M. Thomasin-Foster
Mr. R. Torrance

EAST MIDLANDS REGION
Chairman
Mr. W. S. Hemington

Members
Mr. P. Atkinson
Mr. R. Bealby
Mrs. P. Broadhurst
Dr. J. Carmichael
Hon. D. Legh
Mr. C. Matts
Dr. J. Owen
Mrs. P. Perkins
Mr. R. Southgate
Mr. J. Taylor
Mr. R. Thomas
Mr. R. Watts

NORTH EAST REGION
Chairman
Mr. P. Coverdale

Members
Mr. D. Avery
Mrs. J. Bell
Mrs. B. Binns
Mr. T. Bromfield
Mr. J. Cooke
Mrs. A. Cowan
Mr. D. Howard
Mr. J. Howard
Mr. M. Pollard
Mr. J. Stephenson
Professor R. Ward
Mr. S. Wharton

NORTHERN REGION
Chairman
Mr. A. Jackson

Members
Mr. J. Carr
Mr. R. Grove-White
Mr. J. Howson
Mr. P. Lansdale
Miss C. Ridley
Mr. A. Sanderson
Dr. R. Smith
Mrs. M. Storer
Mr. A. Walling
Mr. A. Wannop
Mr. A. Watson
Mr. B. Webster
Mr. G. Wilson

NORTH MERCIA REGION
Chairman
Mrs. A. Williams

Members
Mr. A. Ayres
Mr. B. Boot
Mr. T. Bulmer
Mr. J. Frost
Mr. P. Gray
Mr. F. Gribble
Mr. J. Hunter
Mr. N. Moore
Mr. T. Prince
Mr. D. Roberts
Mr. W. Snelson

SOUTH EAST REGION
Chairman
Mr. D. Browning

Members
Mr. C. Boswell
Mr. D. Brazier
Mr. G. Butler
Mr. J. Jenkinson
Mr. R. Jones
Mr. P. Lowater
Mr. M. Lowry
Mr. D. Monnington
Mr. H. Oliver-Bellasis
Mr. A. Redsell
Hon. L. Sandys
Dr. P. Sharma
Mrs. E. Stanton

SOUTH MERCIA REGION
Chairman
Mr. D. Harper

Members
Mr. C. Briscoe

Mrs. J. Goodman
Mr. C. Harvey
Dr. D. Lambton
Mr. R. Law
Mr. J. Marsden
Mrs. E. Morgan
Mr. G. Revill
Mr. D. Smith
Mr. R. Vines
Mr. A. Webb

SOUTH WEST REGION
Chairman
Mr. P. Lethbridge

Members
Mrs. R. Berry
Mrs. G. Cobley
Mr. R. Hanbury-Tenison
Mr. D. Hills
Mr. R. Holland
Mrs. M. Horrell
Mr. J. Jordan
Mrs. D. Lavery
Mr. A. May
Mrs. A. Petch
Mr. V. Turton
Mr. J. Whetman

WESSEX REGION
Chairman
Mr. R. Lawton

Members
Mrs. J. Banks
Mr. R. Bernays
Ms H. Browning
Mr. E. Cameron
Mrs. L. Cook
Mr. P. Feilden
Mr. J. Hughes
Mr. R. Martin
Mrs. A. Streatfield
Mr. G. Trehane

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes.

Mr. Soames: The membership of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes is listed in the table:

Professor Derek Burke, CBE, BSc, PhD, HonLLD *(Chairman)*
Professor G. E. Adams, BSc, PhD, DSc, FACR
Professor A. T. Atkinson, BSc, PhD
Dr. A. C. Baird-Parker, OBE, BSc, PhD
Professor E. Cocking, BSc, PhD, DSc, FIBiol, FRS
Professor H. M. Dick, MD, FIBiol, FRCP, FRCPath, FRSE
Dr. Michael J. Gasson, PSc, PhD
Professor W. P. T. James, MA, MD, DSc, FRCP, FRCP (Edin), FRSE
Professor V. Marks, DM, FRCP, FRCPath
Mrs. H. Millar, MA, FRSA
Professor B. E. Moseley, MSc, PhD
Rev. J. Polkinghorne, MA, PhD, ScD, FRS
Professor P. Richmond, BSc, PhD, DSc, CPhys, FInstP
Dr. P. J. Rodgers, MA, DPhil
Professor J. E. Smith, BSc, MSc, PhD, DSc, FIBiol, FRSE
Professor D. A. T. Southgate, BSc, PhD, MIBiol
Professor R. Walker, BSc, PhD, FRSD, CChem, FIFST
Professor H. F. Woods, BSc, BM, BCh, MRCP, DPhil, FFPM, FRCP

Hens

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the grants made available for the 25 projects currently receiving funding from her Department in order to carry out research into the welfare problems associated with laying hens in intensive systems, naming the project and giving the amount of funding for each; what grants have been awarded to Horizon Farms by her Department over the last five years; and what was the size of each grant.

Mr. Soames: Projects funded by this Department and of relevance to laying hens in intensive systems address the following topics:

Subject	*1993-94 costs £000*
Effects of handling methods, production systems and nutrition on bone strength and bird damage in laying hens	197
Effects of battery cage design on bird condition, feather loss and bone damage	195
Welfare aspects of current husbandry practices for caged hens	17
Bird welfare in non-cage systems	233
The principles underlying motivation, cognition and learning in poultry	46
The application of motivation, cognitive and learning principles to behavioural and environmental questions relating to poultry	84
Improvement of welfare in poultry husbandry systems, housing and transport by understanding environmental and behavioural interactions	138
Electrophysiological, neuro-anatomical and behavioural studies into the perception of pain, injury and stress by poultry	177
The physiological principles causing the elicitation, assessment and reduction of fear and distress in poultry	104
Causation and consequences of stress related behaviours in poultry	126
Skeletal integrity in laying hens	100
The preslaughter transportation of poultry by road	66
Avian welfare during handling	31
Depopulation of laying hens	36
Survey of broken bones in end of lay battery hens	35
Depopulation of alternative laying systems	37
Trauma in end of lay hens	27
Destructive pecking and cannibalism in laying hens	29
Behavioural assessment of hens in improved battery cages	18
Causes of broken bones and trauma in end of lay hens	18
Mechanised handling of laying hens	96
Hen injury in alternative egg laying systems	16

In the last five years Horizon Farms has received only one grant from this Department. In November 1993 it was awarded £298,750 by the EC Commission under EC regulation 866/90 together with £59,750 from this Department towards the cost of a new egg grading and packing plant near Corby.

Agricultural Assistance

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list her Department's current proposals for the assistance of British agriculture in the next 12 months.

Mr. Jack: British agriculture is supported by the mechanisms of the common agricultural policy. In the forthcoming negotiations to set CAP prices for 1994-95, my right hon. Friend will press for a settlement which takes full account of British farmers' interests.

British farming will in addition continue to benefit from the wide range of Ministry grant and subsidy schemes and

from schemes to encourage effective marketing of agricultural products, as well as from our continuing drive to remove unnecessary regulation. Information on all these departmental activities is available in the House Library.

Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what statistics she has showing net investment from retained income categorised by farm business size for *(a)* 1981-82 and *(b)* 1991-92; and what other data are published by her Ministry relating investment to farm business size.

Mr. Jack: Information on net investment in agricultural assets is collected annually from a sample of farms in the farm business survey. The net investment, including both investment from retained profits and new funds introduced, is shown as the difference between cash income and cash flow from the farming business. Estimates of these measures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are published by type and economic size of farm in appendix 1 of "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom 1991-92". The following table shows the averages for 1991-92 by farm business size group. Figures for 1981-82 are not available on a comparable basis.

Estimated Average Net investment (1) (£'000 per farm)

Farm size group	*Average of all types of farm*
Small	4·2
Medium	9·7
Large	27·6

(1) Net investment represents investment net of sales of assets using both retained profits and funds introduced from outside the farming business.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has relating farm size to participation in environmental schemes operated by her Ministry.

Mr. Jack: Farms of a wide range of sizes participate in our environmental schemes. For example, the average size of farms participating in those environmentally sensitive area schemes in which we require the whole farm to be entered into agreement currently ranges from 33 hectares in West Penwith to 487 hectares in the North Peak. I would also refer the hon. Gentleman to the environmentally sensitive area reports of monitoring 1991 and 1992, available in the Library of the House.

Poultry

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on relative welfare standards for poultry in the United Kingdom and eastern Europe.

Mr. Soames: No information is available on welfare standards for poultry in eastern Europe. However, Slovenia has become a contracting party to the Council of Europe convention on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, which contains general principles for safeguarding the welfare of such animals. Other eastern European countries may attend the meetings of the standing committee set up under the convention but have yet to become contracting parties to the convention.

Nuclear Waste (Dumping at Sea)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *494*, whether Her Majesty's Government have yet reached a decision on whether to accept the recent London convention decision to introduce a permanent ban on the disposal of radioactive waste at sea; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: The United Kingdom will accept the formal ban on dumping low and intermediate-level radioactive waste at sea, which was adopted at the consultative meeting of the London convention in November 1993. We are already committed to a moratorium on sea dumping until 2008 under the OSPAR convention, and we have not carried out any dumping since 1983.

The United Kingdom's firm view is that decisions on disposal of waste should be taken on scientific and economic grounds. At the meeting of the London convention, the UK therefore argued against an indefinite ban, in view of the scientific and economic arguments in favour of sea dumping for certain categories of radioactive waste.

The scientific evidence shows that dumping at sea, carried out under controlled conditions, causes no harm to the marine environment and poses no threat to human health. This has been confirmed by careful monitoring over many years and studies have shown it to be the best practicable environmental option for the disposal of certain types of radioactive waste.

Nevertheless, the United Kingdom recognises that the weight of international opinion on this matter means that such dumping is not, in any event, a practical proposition. We have, therefore, decided to accept the ban.

We shall continue our own programmes of monitoring and research, and will contribute actively to the scientific re-evaluation to be carried out under the convention after 25 years. The United Kingdom will be ready to reopen discussions in the convention at any time should the weight of opinion change in favour of accepting the scientific conclusions.

Milk Marque

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made in changing the Milk Marketing Board into Milk Marque; and when a decision is expected.

Mr. Jack: The Milk Marketing Board submitted amendments to its reorganisation scheme on 9 February. We shall be issuing a further consultation document as soon as we are in a position to do so. If the reorganisation scheme were to be approved the existing milk marketing scheme would come to an end on 1 November 1994.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she expects to make a decision on the schemes of reorganisation for the Milk Marketing Board; what are the outstanding issues relating to the scheme of reorganisation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry issued a press release on 24 January which set out the position reached in discussions on the Milk Marketing Board's reorganisation scheme. On

9 February the MMB submitted amendments to its scheme, on the basis of which the Ministry and the Welsh Office are preparing a further consultation document. It will be necessary to allow interested organisations a period of four weeks in which to respond, following which my right hon. Friends the Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales will consider the board's application having regard to all the circumstances, as required under the provisions of the Agriculture Act 1993. The timing of their eventual decision cannot be predicted with certainty but is unlikely to be before the end of April.

Kew Gardens

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many living and preserved plant collections at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, are currently fully documented on computer; and when is the planned completion date for the capture of data from existing holdings of preserved plants.

Mr. Gillian Shephard: The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew estimates that some 200,000 of its living and preserved plant accessions are now documented on computer. There is currently no overall project or completion date for computerising information from its vast numbers of preserved plant specimens but emphasis is placed on the parts of the collection where active collaborative research programmes are being undertaken.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Residential Nursing Care

10. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about the financial interests of families whose elderly relatives have moved into residential nursing care.

Mr. Ancram: The only representation my noble Friend has received about this matter concerned the disposal of a small farmholding by a family to meet the nursing home costs of an elderly father.

Security

11. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in the Province.

13. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were charged with terrorist-related offences in Northern Ireland last year.

Sir John Wheeler: Since I answered a similar question on 20 January 1994 there have been three deaths, all of civilians, as a result of terrorist attacks in Northern Ireland. In addition, there have been 27 separate shooting attacks and 28 bombings and mortar attacks, all of which were intended to kill or maim, and many of which have resulted in horrific injuries to both civilians and security forces.

I resolutely condemn violence from whichever source it comes, whether from so-called loyalists or the provisional IRA. I can assure the House that the security forces will continue to pursue those responsible for these atrocities with unrelenting determination. Evidence of their continuing success is the fact that over 50 people have been charged already this year with terrorist-type offences. In 1993, 368 people were charged with serious terrorist offences, 196 firearms and 60 rocket or mortar launchers were recovered, some 6,561 kg of explosives were neutralised and 3,944 kg of unprimed explosives were also found.

Investment

14. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about the level of future investment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: In the course of my duties I receive representations from many parties within and outside Northern Ireland on the subject of future investment in the Province. They include Members of this House, local elected representatives, trade and industry associations, trade unions, voluntary and charitable institutions, professional and technical consultants and academics.

Joint Declaration

15. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about developments in security acceptance of the British-Irish joint declaration.

26. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress on the Downing street declaration.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and for Neath (Mr. Hain).

Inter-party Talks

16. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the recent meetings that have been held with representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland and on his new framework of ideas for a polital settlement.

17. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the recent meetings that have been held with representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland and on discussions he has had with the Irish Government.

23. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the talks he has had with the parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government relating to Northern Ireland.

27. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make proposals for political development.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress towards the resumption of constitutional talks and his most recent discussions with the Northern Ireland parties and the Government of the Republic of Ireland on this process.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche).

22. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects his political initiative on Northern Ireland's future to lead to further negotiations.

Mr. Ancram: The talks process has been continuing in recent months in the form of bilateral discussions with three of the four main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland and discussions with the Irish Government. My right hon. and learned Friend is meeting the leaders of the three parties concerned and discussing ideas with them for giving direction to further bilateral discussions, across all three strands. Contacts will therefore continue, in the form of bilateral meetings, for the immediate future. Our objective is to return to multilateral talks covering all three key sets of relationships and involving the two Governments and the four main constitutional parties.

Electoral System

18. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last had discussions with the chief electoral officer for Northern Ireland to discuss changes to the electoral system.

Mr. Ancram: My predecessor, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), met the chief electoral officer for Northern Ireland on 3 February last year. After that meeting my hon. Friend wrote to Northern Ireland's main political parties concerning electoral matters which had been raised at the meetings on 15 December 1992 and 5 January 1993 with the parties.

Owner-occupation

19. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the level of owner-occupation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: By the end of December 1992 the total number of owner-occupied properties was 363,500 or 66 per cent. of total occupied stock. Nearly 57,000 owner-occupiers have bought their houses from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive under its sales scheme while a further 12,400 have entered home-ownership through the co-ownership scheme operated by the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association.

Health Care

20. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next intends to discuss with representatives of the health service in Northern Ireland matters relating to the organisation of health care.

Mr. Ancram: My noble Friend Baroness Denton is taking forward a review of the way in which the Government's new purchasing arrangements for health and personnel social services are carried out in Northern Ireland. This review should be completed by the end of May 1994.

As part of the review there is consultation with a wide range of health and social services representatives.

Cross-border Co-operation

21. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic.

Sir John Wheeler: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan).

Fine Defaulters

24. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he intends to take to provide an alternative to a prison sentence for fine defaulters in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: I have already announced my intention to introduce legislation to reinforce the requirement on courts to ascertain and take account of offenders' means when imposing fines. I believe that this will help to reduce the extent of fine default in Northern Ireland.

I am also looking at measures to reduce the use of imprisonment when fine default does occur. Various alternatives are under consideration, but I shall wish to be satisfied that they are likely to prove both practical and cost-effective.

It remains the Government's view, however, that it is necessary for imprisonment to be retained as the ultimate sanction for fine default.

Peace Representations

25. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about the future prospects of peace in Northern Ireland from residents of Great Britain.

Mr. Ancram: The Government continue to receive a great number of letters and a number of petitions from individuals interested in the prospects for peace in Northern Ireland. In the period since the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach signed their joint declaration on 15 December last year, my right hon. and learned Friend and the Prime Minister have received almost 700 letters from residents of Great Britain on this issue. The vast majority of this correspondence expresses a heartfelt desire for peace in Northern Ireland, and a hope that the joint declaration can pave the way for that peace.

Devolved Government

28. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on devolved government and a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Government hope that the political talks involving the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland and the two Governments will continue. Issues such as devolved government for Northern Ireland, and a Bill of Rights, fall within the remit of those talks described in my predecessor's statement of 26 March 1991.

Intergovernmental Council

29. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the next meeting of the intergovernmental council is to be held; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: There are no plans at present to hold a meeting at ministerial level under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental council, although a working group of officials dealing with education and culture is due to meet before the summer.

Health and Social Services

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to each of the health and social services boards.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of each of the four health and social services boards are as follows:

EASTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

Chairman:
N. G. D. Ferguson

Non-executive members:
J. C. Morton
D. J. McGuiness
Mrs. G. M. Loughran
Professor R. W. Stout
P. J. McLachlan
one vacancy

Executive members:
P. Kinder—*Chief Executive*
Miss A. Paisley—*Director of Finance*
Ms A. Lynch—*Director of Planning*
E. McCullough—*Director of Operations*
R. Moore—*Director of Social Services*
Vacant—*Director of Public Health*

NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

Chairman:
R. J. Hanna

Non-Executive members:
Lady J. Brett
D. J. Clement
J. D. McMullan
M. A O'Connor
Mrs. N. P. O'Loan
Mrs. A. V. Smyth

Executive members:
D. D. Smyth—*General Manager*
Miss S. Irwin—*Director of Social Services*
Dr. J. D. Watson—*Director of Public Health*
A. Hamilton—*Director of Finance*
Miss E. McNair—*Director of Quality Assurance and Nursing Services*
S. MacDonnell—*Director of Planning and Information*

SOUTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

Chairman:
J. D. Thompson

Non-Executive Members:
Mrs. G. Donaghy
W. F. Gillespie
Mrs. J. Power
C. A. J. Quinn
D. J. Ryan
S. R. P. Wright

Executive Members:
Dr. P. Kilbane—*Chief Executive*
R. Blair—*Director of Social Services*
B. P. Cunningham—*Director of Finance and Information*
M. Doris—*Director of Planning*
Dr. A. M. Telford—*Director of Public Health*
F. A. Rice—*Director of Human Resources and Nursing*

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W. S. Donaghy
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T. J. Frawley—*General Manager*
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S. Cuddy—*Director of Finance and Information*
Dr. W. McConnell—*Director of Public Health (Acting Director of Health Care)*

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many visits abroad each Minister of State made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Sir John Wheeler: Ministers of State at the Northern Ireland made nine visits abroad at a total cost of just under £27,900.

The visits were:

(a) Mr. Mates
Meeting with EC Commissioner in Brussels.
An Intergovernmental Conference meeting in Dublin with other Ministers.

(b) Sir John Wheeler
Meeting in Dublin.

(c) Mr. Atkins
A transport and air exhibition in Hamburg.
A rugby international in Dublin.
A North South environmental and housing conference in Dublin.
Le Bourget air show in Paris.
Anuga Food Festival in Cologne.
A cross border trade conference in Dublin.

Driver Safety

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the review into new driver safety will be extended to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: I welcome the Secretary of State for Transport's proposals for ensuring the safety of newly qualified drivers. These proposals are already being considered by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland in consultation with the Department of Transport with a view to their possible introduction in Northern Ireland.

Cars (Anti-theft Devices)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will launch a public awareness campaign in order to encourage motorists to fit anti-theft devices to their vehicles.

Sir John Wheeler: The Government have taken a number of initiatives against car crime in Northern Ireland in recent years.

In 1991 the Northern Ireland Office launched a crime prevention campaign titled "Stopping Crime Starts With You". A key part of the campaign was the distribution of a free handbook providing advice on, inter alia, how to safeguard motor vehicles.

The Northern Ireland Office has also recently given its support to a new car-crime initiative in Northern Ireland known as "Sold Secure—The Partnership Against Car Theft", which I was pleased to help launch at the Northern Ireland motor show on 14 February. The initiative offers motorists an opportunity to obtain advice on a range of car

security products which have been tested against strict criteria. The initiative is supported by the RUC and the local motor retail industry. A free leaflet is available of participating retailers.

Religious Education

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on religious education in Northern Ireland schools.

Mr. Ancram: All schools are required to provide religious education for all pupils of compulsory school age. In schools under the control of the education and library boards, such education must be undenominational and based on the holy scriptures. In voluntary schools religious education is under the control of the school managers. A compulsory core syllabus, entirely Christian in content, has been approved by all the main churches in Northern Ireland and is being introduced into all grant-aided schools on a phased basis.

Emergency Provisions

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements he has made to review the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Mr. John Rowe QC has accepted my invitation to prepare a report on the operation in 1993 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. As with previous reviews, the intention is that the report should enable both Houses of Parliament to discharge effectively their responsibility to scrutinise the operation of the Act on the occasion of the annual debates on the Continuance Order, and to determine whether any of the Acts temporary provisions could be allowed to lapse on 15 June 1994.

I have asked Mr. Rowe to submit his report in sufficient time to facilitate the Houses' consideration of the Act.

Paramilitaries

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many loyalist paramilitaries have been apprehended in each of the last three years;

(2) how many republican paramilitaries have been apprehended in each of the last three years.

Sir John Wheeler: The number of persons arrested in Northern Ireland under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act and the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act is as follows:

	Number
1991	1,788
1992	1,846
1993	[1]1,671

[1] Figures for arrests under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act are only available up to 30 June 1993.

Information on how many of these individuals were members of loyalist or republican groups is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The number of persons thought to be members of loyalist or republican groups who were charged with terrorist offences during each of these years is as follows:

	1991	*1992*	*1993*
Loyalist	152	191	230
Republican	239	214	137

Note:

Statistics on charges are kept according to the most serious offence with which an individual has been charged.

If the same individual is arrested or charged on more than one occasion, he/she will be added to the statistics each time.

TRANSPORT

Bicycle Loan Scheme

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the introduction by his department of a bicycle loans scheme for the central Department.

Mr. Key: Advances of salary towards the purchase of bicycles were made available in the central department on 4 January 1994. Advances, to a maximum of £350, are available to all permanent staff with over two months' service. The bicycle must be used during the journey between home and office. Advances are also available to staff in all our agencies.

44-tonne Lorries

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safeguards he is introducing to ensure that lorries of 44 gross tonnes are travelling to or from rail heads when in commercial use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The higher weight limit will apply only to vehicles carrying containers or swap-bodies—loading units—to or from railheads in combined road/rail operations. No conventional road vehicles will be able to operate legitimately at 44 tonnes. In order to operate at 44 tonnes, documentary evidence will have to be carried in the vehicle to show that the loading unit has travelled, or is destined for travel, by rail.

DEFENCE

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by the Ministry of Defence and his agencies *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Steam Ships

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of marine engineering artificers currently serving in the Royal Navy are qualified to operate *(a)* gas turbine and *(b)* steam propulsion; how many steam ships are in service in the Royal Navy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Records readily available do not show the proportion of marine engineering artificers qualified to operate gas turbine or steam propulsion systems. Records of general service marine engineering artificers serving on the trained strength in the surface fleet, however, show that 44 per cent. are qualified to operate gas turbine machinery and 26 per cent. are qualified to operate steam main propulsion machinery. Those qualified to operate steam main propulsion machinery would require further training to qualify them to operate gas turbine machinery. The Royal Navy currently operates four steam-propelled surface ships.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many visits abroad the Minister of State for the Armed Forces made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Hanley: During 1993, my predecessor—until 27 May—and subsequently I undertook 10 official overseas visits. The cost and purpose of each were as follows:

Date	*Destination*	*Purpose*	*Approximate cost* £
February			
5-7	Bosnia	To visit British Forces	6,820
April			
5-9	Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria Bilaterals		10,128
May			
13-15	Germany	To visit British Forces	4,647
19	Rome	WEU Ministerial Meeting	869
July			
26	Luxembourg	WEU Ministerial Meeting	1,727
28-30	Germany	To visit British Forces	3,910
September			
13-16	Italy, Bosnia and Croatia	To visit British Forces	7,283
20-29	Belize	Visit British Forces and meet Prime Minister and members of Belizean government	5,417
	US/Florida	Visit West Indies Guard ship on deployment and discussions with US officials	
	US/Washington	Meetings with members of US administration	
October			
12-14	Hungary	Bilaterals	5,625
November			
15-18	Gibraltar	To visit British Forces and meet Chief Minister	
	Cyprus	Visit British Forces	
	Sardinia	RAF Briefing	15,098

Note:
Figures are based on the cost of the Royal Air Force and civil flights involved. Accommodation is normally provided free by Her Majesty's ambassador or high commissioner, or other Government representative, or by the host Government.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many visits abroad the Minister of State for Defence Procurement made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Aitken: The Minister of State for Defence Procurement has made 11 official visits abroad in 1993. The cost to public funds and the purpose of each visit were as follows:

Overseas visits made by Minister (DP) in 1993

Date	*Destination*	*Purpose*	*Approximate cost* £
5-12 January 1993	Kuwait Saudi Arabia		17,850
12-15 February 1993	Abu Dhabi		2,400
17-19 February 1993	Germany	Anglo/German Seminar	5,150
5 April 1993	Germany		1,500
28 June 1993	Netherlands		1,450
16 September 1993	Poland	Representing HMG at reinterment of General Sikorski	See note 3
8 October 1993	Kuwait		3,150
6-7 November 1993	Dubai		2,600
18 November 1993	Germany		2,450

Date	Destination	Purpose	Approximate cost £
15-17 December 1993	Saudi Arabia		3,150
20-22 December 1993	Bosnia	Visit to British Troops in Bosnia	8,950

Note:
1. The purpose of these visits unless otherwise stated was to promote defence exports or to discuss defence procurement issues.
2. Figures are based on the cost of the Royal Air Force and/or civil flights involved. Accommodation normally provided by HM ambassador or high commissioner, or other Government representative, or by host.
3. Accompanying HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. Negligible additional cost to public funds.

Radioactive Samples

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when radioactive samples have been sent by scheduled airline flights after British nuclear tests since 1964; if he will list the number of occasions and by what carriers such samples were sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Air transport of radioactive materials by scheduled carrier is a routine practice, conducted under the well-established international regulations of the International Air Transport Association. Since 1964, there have been 21 occasions when radioactive samples were sent by scheduled British airline flights after British nuclear tests in the United States of America. On each occasion the samples were accompanied by staff from the Atomic Weapons Establishment.

Ferranti

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's involvement in the future of Ferranti; and when he now expects this to be resolved.

Mr. Aitken: Officials of my Department continue to have regular meetings with the receivers of Ferranti International to discuss our current and future business with the company.

I understand that the receivers have been having discussions with prospective purchasers of all or parts of the company. Which bid or bids to accept will be a matter for the receivers. Bids will then be considered under competition legislation, and my Department will be consulted in the normal way. I am unable to say how long this process may take, but I naturally hope that a satisfactory outcome will be achieved without undue delay.

Britannia Naval College (Dogs)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the dogs kept at Britannia naval college, Dartmouth, are used for purposes other than security; and what are the number for each of those purposes.

Mr. Hanley: All dogs owned by my Department at Britannia royal naval college are used for security purposes only. A number of privately owned dogs are, however, separately accommodated at the college at no cost to public funds.

GEC-Malaysia

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions Tan Sri Arumugam, joint managing director, GEC-Malaysia has visited his Department in the past three years; and if he will list the occasions.

Mr. Aitken: Mr. Arumugam has visited my Department on three occasions over the past three years, twice in 1992 and once in 1993.

Malaysia (Bank Loans)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what compensation has been offered to United Kingdom banks which provided the Malaysian Government with loans at concessionary rates under the terms of the memorandum of understanding of 27 September 1988.

Mr. Aitken: All defence purchases by Malaysia under the 1988 MOU have been made on a cash basis. The need for finance at concessionary interest rates has not arisen.

Reserve Forces

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to complete his review of the Reserve Forces Act 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I will shortly be writing to hon. Members concerning the responses received during the consultation period, but we are unlikely to be in a position to announce final proposals until later in the year.

Minesweeping Awards

Dr. Blackburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will define the criterion for the award of the minesweeping 1945-51 clasp to the naval general service medal—1915-62; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The criterion for the award of the minesweeping 1945-51 clasp to the naval general service medal—NGSM—was defined in 1952 as "for minesweeping service afloat" in a number of qualifying areas between 3 September 1945 and a variety of terminal dates appropriate to the areas. The time qualification was defined as being six months—180 days. Time spent in home, Atlantic and Mediterranean waters between 9 May 1945 and 2 September 1945 could also be counted towards the qualifying period of six months.

The transfer of the Royal Navy's medal issuing task from Bath to Gosport in the 1970s appears to have resulted in the loss of records associated with the criterion for the issue of this clasp to the NGSM. Consequently, a new interpretation evolved, possibly based on the stricter criterion for the award of the bomb and mine clearance clasp to the NGSM for service ashore which was authorised at the same time as the minesweeping clasp: it became the practice to issue the minesweeping clasp only to claimants who could be proved to have carried out 180 days of actual minesweeping and, although it was in some cases possible to determine eligibility by reference to payment of minesweeping allowance, this did not cover minesweeping activities in far eastern waters.

The interpretation of the criterion used in recent years has been challenged by disappointed minesweeping veterans and a comprehensive investigation into their complaints has therefore been undertaken. It has proved impossible to establish how the criterion came to be redefined as requiring 180 days of actual minesweeping and it has now been decided to revert to the original 1952 criterion of six months—180 days—of minesweeping service afloat in the prescribed qualifying areas between the appropriate dates. Minesweeping service afloat is taken to mean service, in any capacity, aboard a vessel commissioned for mine counter-measure duties.

Any naval minesweeping veteran who has not previously received this award but believes he is eligible should write to the Ministry of Defence, HMS Centurion —NPP(Acs)—Grange road, Gosport, Hants., PO13 9XA. Awards will also be issued posthumously, once eligibility is confirmed, in response to applications from next of kin.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 18 February 1994

ENVIRONMENT

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much grant *(a)* Coventry city council, *(b)* Solihull metropolitan borough, *(c)* Walsall metropolitan borough, *(d)* Wandsworth borough council and *(e)* Westminster city council will receive this year as a result of homelessness being a factor in the standard spending assessment settlement.

Mr. Baldry: Indicators of homelessness contribute the following amounts to the specified authorities' standard spending assessments for 1994-95:

Authority	*£ million*
Coventry city council	−1·483
Solihull metropolitan borough	−0·155
Walsall metropolitan borough	−3·091
London borough of Wandsworth	−2·296
Westminster city council	−4·218

Homelessness is one of a large number of indicators that are included within composite indices in the personal social services and the all other services service blocks.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he received from *(a)* the Association of District Authorities, *(b)* the Association of County Councils and *(c)* the Association of Metropolitan Authorities about the use of nature of tenure as a proxy for disadvantaged for the purpose of standard spending assessment distribution.

Mr. Baldry: Since my right hon. Friend announced details of the provisional revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95, none of the local authority associations listed has made representations on the use of nature of housing tenure as an indicator in standard spending assessments.

Indicators of the nature of housing tenure are used in the personal social services and all other services standard spending assessments. We discussed these assessments with representatives of each of the local authority associations as part of the review of standard spending assessments for 1994-95.

School Maintenance and Equipment, Yorkshire

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many administrative staff were employed for school maintenance and equipment at *(a)* county hall and *(b)* elsewhere in the education department of North Yorkshire county council in each year since 1989.

Mr. Baldry: The information is not available centrally.

Energy Saving Grants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to recent comments by the Director General of Gas Supply on funding for energy saving grants; and what assessment he has made of the effect of reduction or abolition of these grant schemes on the Government's target for carbon dioxide reductions.

Mr. Atkins: I have not responded to the Director General of Gas Supply's recent comments as the funding of energy saving expenditure through the "E" factor is a matter for her and British Gas plc. The Government are fully committed to the Energy Saving Trust, and the target for reducing carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000.

Condensing Boiler Grant

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the effect of uncertainty about the continuation of the Energy Saving Trust's condensing boiler grant scheme on new equipment and installation orders; and if he will make a statement regarding future funding for the scheme.

Mr. Atkins: I have received a number of representations about the funding of the Energy Saving Trust Ltd's condensing boiler grant scheme. This is a matter for the trust, British Gas plc and the Director General of Gas Supply.

Sunderland (Public Works)

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many council homes in Sunderland his Department estimates to have had the kitchen gas combustion air provision blocked off by fitted kitchen furniture;

(2) how many complaints were *(a)* lodged and *(b)* substantiated against Sunderland public works department in each year between 1983 and 1993.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not collected by the Department.

City Challenge

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department has taken since 1992 to extend city challenge.

Mr. Baldry: A second round of city challenge was held in 1992—there were 20 winners bringing the total number of partnerships to 31. From April 1994 city challenge will become part of the single regeneration budget. Bids for support from the single regeneration budget will be invited in April.

Derelict Land

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress his Department has made in setting up an urban regeneration agency in order to clear up and develop derelict land since 1992.

Mr. Baldry: Following enactment of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993, the Urban Regeneration Agency was launched, under the name

of English Partnerships, on 10 November 1993. At that point, it took over responsibility for the city grant programme. On 1 April 1994, it will also incorprate the derelict land grant scheme and the existing programmes of English Estates. These initiatives will in due course be combined within English Partnerships' unified financial regime.

Natural Gas Fires

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are used when determining the return air zones when drilling ventilation holes through the front doors of council homes in the north-east for the purpose of ensuring adequate combustion in natural gas fires.

Mr. Baldry: The Building Regulations 1991 require heat-producing appliances to be so installed that there is an adequate supply of air to them for combustion and for the efficient working of any flue-pipe or chimney. Where combustion appliances are not room-sealed, the provision of an appropriately sized ventilation opening in the room or space containing the combustion appliance will satisfy the requirement. Where the opening is to an adjoining room or space, this should have an opening of the same size direct to external air. Ventilation openings should not be in fire-resisting walls. A fuller explanation of what provisions are satisfactory is given in approved document J which accompanies the regulations.

Clothes Drying Compartments

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council homes in the north-east his Department estimates to have clothes drying compartments lined with unsealed amosite.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available centrally and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Urban Regeneration

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department has taken since 1992 to support urban development corporations in their task of urban regeneration.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have provided urban development corporations in England with a total of £895·8 million in grant in aid in the years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

UDCs have completed over 24,400 homes, more than 4,800,000 m^2 of non-housing floorspace, created nearly 140,000 job opportunities, and have attracted £12·6 billion in private investment since inception to 31 March 1993. To the end of December 1993, UDCs had added to these achievements nearly 2,200 homes, over 315,000 m^2 of non-housing floorspace, almost 14,000 jobs, and a further £368 million of private investment[1].

Two new UDCs have been established in partnership with the local authorities: at Birmingham Heartlands, to take over redundant inner-city sites in central Birmingham, including part of the former Leyland DAF site; and at Plymouth, where the principal challenge is the productive use of the Royal William yard.

UDCs have been prominent in promoting the private finance initiative: for example, they have invited joint ventures for four further schemes in addition to those at Birmingham and Plymouth. London Docklands is promoting the establishment of a combined heat and power development and a housing-led mixed development for the royal docks; Bristol UDC is seeking developers for Quay Point city centre site adjacent to Temple Meads station; and Central Manchester UDC is seeking partners for commercial or residential development of a grade 2 listed Victorian warehouse.

The Department has clarified administrative arrangements with the UDCs by issuing a "Management Statment" setting out the respective responsibilities of the UDC board, Ministers, the accounting officers and the Department.

[1] Figures included for 1993-94 are provisional.

Council Tax

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households his Department estimate to be made up solely of a mixture of full-time students and people in receipt of income support or unemployment benefit; and how much his Department estimates such households contributed to local government through the payment of council tax.

Mr. Baldry: My Department does not collect statistics on household composition and has made no such estimates.

Inner-city Programmes

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department has taken since 1992 to bring together resources for targeted inner-city programmes into a single budget.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend announced to the House on 4 November 1993, *Official Report*, columns 515-25, details of the single regeneration budget which will bring together 20 inner-city and other programmes for regeneration and development from April 1994. On 10 November 1993 he launched English Partnerships, a new public body under the chairmanship of Lord Walker, which will unify three initiatives which benefit urban and other areas: English Estates, city grant and derelict land grant. The resources for English Partnerships will form part of the single regeneration budget. The budget will be worth some £1·4 billion in 1994-95. Details of the single regeneration budget and English Partnerships have been placed in the Library of the House.

Local Authority Housing (Wandsworth)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of how local authority housing in Wandsworth was disposed of other than through the right-to-buy in the last 10 years.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* Wandsworth council has reported to us the following disposals of council dwellings since 1983-84:

	Built for sale	*Improved for sale*	*To sitting tenants (RTB)*	*Other*	*Total*
1983-84	0	0	812	521	1,333
1984-85	128	16	1,065	591	1,800
1985-86	12	0	649	1,141	1,802
1986-87	7	0	724	703	1,434

	Built for sale	Improved for sale	To sitting tenants (RTB)	Other	Total
1987-88	2	0	1,334	635	1,971
1988-89	0	0	1,788	529	2,317
1989-90	9	0	1,625	628	2,262
1990-91	0	3	627	420	1,050
1991-92	0	0	517	323	840
1992-93	0	0	338	334	672

Local authority statistical returns on the sale of their housing do not enable us to provide an accurate breakdown of what is included in the "Other" category of disposals. More detailed information on such sales would have to be obtained from the local authority itself.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to extend the scope of legal aid to allow council tenants to gain an independent survey of the safety of their homes when the tenants find themselves in dispute with the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I will write to the hon. Gentleman about this matter shortly.

Arachnoiditis

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the effect of changes in legal aid provision on the ability of arachnoiditis sufferers with a history of treatment with Myodil to pursue claims for compensation against the manufacturers of the dye; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No separate assessment has been made of the effect of the legal aid eligibility changes on litigants pursuing claims against the manufacturers of Myodil. The financial eligibility of any applicant for legal aid depends on his or her income and the expenses which may be allowed against it. The financial limits for pesonal injury actions remain higher than those for other categories of civil proceedings.

Solicitors

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to introduce statutory regulation for solicitors.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Solicitors are regulated by the Solicitors Act 1974, the Administration of Justice Act 1985, and the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. The Government have no plans to extend any of this legislation at the present time.

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many complaints his Department has received concerning the solicitors complaints bureau; and if he will make a statement about its future.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The figures are not centrally available, and could be acquired only at a disproportionate cost. The Law Society has the statutory powers to deal with complaints about solicitors, and in 1986 it delegated its powers in this respect to the solicitors complaints bureau. The future of the bureau is therefore for the Law Society to consider.

Law Society

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many complaints he received each year about the Law Society's regulatory function.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The figures are not centrally available, and could be acquired only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his assessment of the effectiveness of the self-regulatory system for solicitors.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Self-regulation is the most effective way of maintaining standards in professional life in general. It is particularly important that citizens with disputes, against other citizens, institutions or the state, have access to a completely independent legal profession. The Government are thus committed to the principle that in the first instance the maintenance of professional standards among solicitors should be the responsibility of the Law Society. To reinforce public confidence, the Government have also established the Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman, to provide independent scrutiny of the way the Law Society carries out its duties, and who may advise on the effectiveness of its complaints-handling procedures. His 1993 annual report contains a summary of recommendations.

Debt Repayments

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many applications a debtor may make to pay a debt by instalments following a county court judgment ordinary payment.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A debtor may make as many applications for an instalment order as he wishes unless he is debarred—disqualified—from doing so by the court.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to amend the law relating to county court judgments, small claims and debt and the number of applications a debtor may make to pay debts by instalment.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are currently no proposals to change the law in respect of any of the areas mentioned. A package of major changes to county court procedures was introduced in July 1991 and amendments to the small claims procedure came into effect in October 1992. Following evaluation of the 1991 changes and subject to public consultation, some minor amendments to debt recovery procedures are planned for later this year.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are proposed to protect people who live alongside existing railway lines to the channel tunnel from the effects of additional noise arising from international freight trains.

Mr. Freeman: As well as taking steps to reduce the effects of the international freight trains by the introduction of new locomotives and rolling stock, and continuously welded rail, British Rail has agreed jointly funded schemes with Kent and Surrey county councils and the London borough of Bromley for the provision of acoustic barriers alongside existing tracks at locations expected to be most affected at night. Kent county council has decided also to offer double glazing for certain isolated properties which cannot be protected by noise barriers.

Supplementary credit approvals have previously been allocated to Surrey and Kent. I have now agreed to provide further credit approvals of £375,000 to Kent, to cover the balance of their costs, and £336,000 to the London borough of Bromley.

I and my colleagues will be prepared to consider TPP applications for resources in 1995-96 from other authorities in London which agree appropriate schemes with BR. Such applications will be considered on their merits and in the light of the resources available.

Vehicle Registration Offices

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by date and place all internal management meetings held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to discuss the vehicle registration office review.

Mr. Key: There have been two meetings of the steering group set up to oversee the review and a third has been scheduled. Details as follows:

13 December at DVLA's London enforcement office
28 January at DVLA's Birmingham vehicle registration office
21 February at 123 Buckingham Palace road, London

In addition, a workshop meeting of DVLA management representatives was held on 24 January at DVLA's Bristol vehicle registration office.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who are the members currently appointed to the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment.

Mr. Key: The current membership of the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment is as follows:

Chairman:
Mr. D. Wood QC
principal of St. Hugh's college, Oxford

Vice Chairman:
Mr. R. H. Stewart
independent planning consultant

Members:
Dr. P. B. Goodwin
director of the transport studies unit, university of Oxford

Professor P. J. Hills
professor of transport engineering, university of Newcastle upon Tyne

Mr. P. J. Mackie
senior lecturer in economics, university of Leeds

Miss A. M. Lees
environmental adviser, Formerly controllor of transportation and development for the Greater London council

Dr. D. Coombe
Director, the MVA Consultancy

Mr. D. A. Hutchinson
county surveyor, Dorset county council, Dorchester

Mr. M. E. G. Taylor
independent road haulage consultant

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the purpose of the visit of the chief executive of the DVLA to the Department of Transport headquarters at Marsham street on 12 January.

Mr. Key: On 12 January, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I met departmental officials, including the chief executive, to discuss enforcement issues.

WALES

European Centre, Brussels

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on the future of the Wales European centre at Brussels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Wales European centre is supported by a consortium of public bodies in Wales. I have no present plans to change it.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many students are currently training in Wales for speech therapy qualifications; and how many of these are Welsh speaking.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There were 76 students in further and higher education establishments in Wales including the University of Wales, whose subject of study was speech therapy, for the academic year 1992-93.

The number of these students who speak Welsh is not recorded.

Source: "Further Education Student Record"—FESR—and "University Statistical Record"—USR.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed in Wales in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* at the latest available date in (i) the NHS, (ii) the civil service, (iii) HM forces, (iv) local government and (v) the police services.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is shown in the table.

Industry	Number of employees in Wales 1979	1993	Source
National Health Service[1]	66,100	76,700	National Health Service payroll
Civil Service[2]	40,700	30,535	Civil Service Statistics, HM Treasury
HM Forces[3]	6,300	5,200[4]	Ministry of Defence[4]
Local government[5]	148,600	140,500	Joint Staffing Watch Local Government Management Board
Police services[6]	8,300	9,300	Joint Staffing Watch Local Government Management Board

[1]Includes directly employed national health service staff and practitioners—general medical practitioners and their support staff, general dental practitioners and opticians. These figures are approximate and most are as at 30 September/1 October.
[2]Includes non-industrial and industrial staff. Figures are full-time equivalents. Part-time staff are counted as half units. Figures are as at January 1979 and April 1993.
[3]United Kingdom Regular forces at 1 July each year.
[4]1992 figure.
[5]Numbers of staff employed in general services only—including education—in local authorities. This excludes police, staff of magistrates courts and probation services. Figures are as at June each year.
[6] Includes police—all ranks—traffic wardens, cadets and civilians. Figures are as at June each year.

Contracting out has affected the totals for the civil service and local government.

Retail Sales

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy regarding out of town retail stores being established on green field sites; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Government policy on retail development is set out in planning policy guidance note 6, "Town Centres and Retail Developments". Local planning authorities shall determine applications for retail development and, where feasible, propose sites in their local plans taking into account the needs of the community, the likely effect of any development on the vitality and viability of existing town centres and whether access provides a choice of transport modes.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive the comments of the Cardiff Bay development corporation on his Department's quinquennial review into the corporation's financial and management policy.

Mr. Redwood: The board of the corporation considered the draft report on 4 February.

I am accordingly placing a copy of the report's conclusions and recommendations in the Library of the House today.

Arts Council for Wales

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce the chairman of the Arts Council of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am pleased to announce that my right hon. Friend has appointed Sir Richard Lloyd Jones as chairman designate of the new Arts Council of Wales from 1 April 1994.

Sir Richard has held a wide range of posts in the civil service, culminating as permanent secretary at the Welsh Office between 1985 and 1993. He has a strong personal interest in the arts and will provide a sound leadership for the council.

I also pay tribute to the current chairman of the Welsh Arts Council, Mr. Mathew Prichard CBE, who is retiring on 31 March 1994. Mr. Prichard has held that office since 1 April 1986 and has made a valuable contribution to the arts in Wales. I am grateful to him for his sterling work.

I intend to announce the rest of the membership of the Arts Council of Wales shortly.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Mr. Waldegrave: Guidance on the assessment of pensions arrangements offered by external bidders during the conduct of a market test is set out in paragraph 5.18 of "The Government's Guide to Market Testing", which was published in August 1993. Copies were placed in the Library of the House.

Consultants

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on which occasion since 1979 his Department has employed the services of external consultants; and if he will give details of the purposes for which they were employed and the cost of employing them.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is not held centrally in the form requested and is available only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Service (Fast Stream Entry)

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the review of the civil service fast stream entry recommended by the career management and succession planning study is yet under way.

Mr. Waldegrave: A review of the civil service fast stream entry is now under way as recommended by the "Career Management and Succession Planning Study"—the Oughton report. The review team has been asked to report by the end of June 1994.

The team will consider whether the fast stream entry should continue and, if so, whether the arrangements need

to be revised to ensure that sufficient people with the right qualifications and aptitudes are attracted to the civil service, and how far these arrangements need to be adapted to reflect the more explicit criteria being developed for the senior open structure—the top three grades in the civil service.

Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has begun his review of the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency.

Mr. Waldegrave: A review of the agency status of Recruitment and Assessment Services—RAS—is now under way. As a next steps agency the performance of RAS will be evaluated and RAS activities will be subjected to the normal prior options tests set out in the 1993 "Next Steps Review"—Cm 2430.

This work will take into account the further review of the civil service fast stream entry which has been set up following the Oughton report, "Career Management and Succession Planning Study" and on which I am announcing progress today. In addition, the review team will consider the appropriate relationships between the civil service recruitment services, the role of the civil service commissioners, and the recruitment responsibilities of Government Departments.

Comments and contributions from those with an interest in RAS and its work would be welcome and should be sent by 25 March 1994 to David Clark, recruitment studies team, Cabinet Office, Office of Public Service and Science, room 69A/2, Horse Guards road, London, SW1P 3AL.

Science (Postgraduate Training)

Mr. Trend: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is being made on implementing the policies for postgraduate training announced in the White Paper "Realising our Potential: A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology".

Mr. Waldegrave: The Office of Science and Technology, with the help of the research and funding councils, has prepared a consultation document seeking views on how best to implement the White Paper's policy that research students supported by the research councils should normally complete a Master's year. The document is being circulated to higher education institutions, companies, professional and learned bodies, and I have placed copies in the Library. Consultation will last until the end of April.

PRIME MINISTER

Data Protection Registrar

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Prime Minister who is to be the new Data Protection Registrar.

The Prime Minister: I am pleased to announce that Her Majesty the Queen has approved the appointment of Mrs. Elizabeth France as the new Data Protection Registrar, on the retirement of Mr. Eric Howe later this year.

Mrs. France is currently head of information systems and pay services division of the Home Office. She is expected to take up her duties as registrar in the summer.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Northern Gas

Mr. Rendel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints were *(a)* lodged and *(b)* substantiated against Northern Gas in each year since 1983.

Mr. Eggar: The number of complaints lodged against British Gas Northern is a matter for the Director General of Gas Supply.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which body is responsible for investigating complaints against Northern Gas.

Mr. Eggar: Responsibility for investigating complaints against British Gas Northern lies with the Office of Gas Supply.

Regional Innovation Grants

Mr. Rendel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures his Department has taken since 1992 to make inner-city task force and city challenge areas eligible for regional innovation grants.

Mr. Sainsbury: From 18 May 1992, regional innovation grants have been available in all inner-city task force and city challenge areas. It is a discretionary grant and all applicants must satisfy the criteria of the scheme to be eligible for support.

Malaysia (Exports)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of British exports to Malaysia in each year since 1987.

Mr. Needham: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) on 31 January, *Official Report*, column *588*.

Stolen Equipment

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* Details of equipment stolen from the Department during the three financial years in question are:

Item	*Amount* £
1990-91	
Panasonic answering machine	100·00
Panasonic answering machine	60·80
Panasonic answering machine	60·80
Video cassette recorder and remote control and remote control for TV	506·25
Panasonic answering machine	52·50
Dictating machine	51·33
SPO31 single channel IEEE to analogue unit	716·00
Digital multimeter model 168/1688	127·00
M300 base unit	1,964·00
Three desktop personal computers	2,800·00
Three printers	800·00

Item	Amount £
Keyboard for PC	50·00
Mouse for PC	25·00
Monitor for PC	250·00
Removable hard disc for PC	400·00
Software package	unknown
1991-92	
TV-video presenter	643·50
JVC recorder-player model No. HRD 9520EK	255·00
Computer (keyboard, monitor, printer) plus manuals	4,000·00
Liberator printer	800·00
Eight telephones	200·00
Answerphone	120·00
Two wall clocks	30·00
Photocopier	1,500·00
Phillips pocket memo dictaphone	90·00
Video cassette recorder	312·91
Cannon photocopier model no. QUA 05127	386·00
Multifax image master F30 no. X016 0004165	891·00
Multifax image master F30 no. N 312463 J 6006	891·00
Toshiba T1000 portable computer (inc mains adaptor)	391·00
WP diskette	196·00
Sony 21" TV and stand	536·59
VHS video recorder	272·26
Panasonic VHS video recorder and tripod	986·14
Video cassettes	20·00
Swan jug kettle	20·00
Toshiba radio cassette player	60·00
Wall clock	20·00
2 pictures	60·00
Tefal toaster	5·00
Moulinex microwave oven	158·00
Mirror	10·00
Canon fax no. E0407824	469·00
Phillips pocket calculator no. LSH 0292	41·00
Phillips dictating machine no. 98614	63·00
Answerphone (Panasonic Easaphone)	60·00
2 Sonyo mini cassette recorders model no. TRC 3570A	138·00
2 Phillips 0185 pocket dictating machines and 1 Decimo 50311 pocket dictating machine	156·10
HP 85 Calculator	2,984·00
Ealing Beck electric control equipment	3,125·00
Tektronix oscilloscope model No. TEX 2213	769·00
Barr and Stroud helium non-laser	398·00
Liberator portable text processor	187·50
Dictaphone model No. 1240	41·00
Panasonic Easaphone	60·00
Brother M-2518 printer	1,200·00
Apricot microcomputer	1,875·00
Telephone	15·00
Compaq personal computer	2,500·00
Toshiba lap-top computer	750·00
Arcnet passive hubs	149·50
Telephone answering machine	60·00
Answer machine No. 81CHA 17684	60·00
NEC Pinwriter P200 printer	173·00
Answer machine No. 8CB HB/6900	60·00
Toshiba computer 1000	450·00
Panasonic Easaphone	60·00
Pitney Bowes transcriber No. 1704	130·00
Compaq deskpro 286E	217·00
RML Puffin computer	1,125·00
ICL model No. M40 PC	263·00
5 TDK floppy discs	8·00
Toshiba T5200-100 computer	2,700·00
Panasonic video recorder	399·00
Nimbus AX/2 hard disc and Wordperfect 5·0 manual	650·00
Lotus 1-2-3 software	187·00
Widows software	48·00
Panasonic Easaphone	52·83
Olympia typewriter	60·00
3 Hand-held dictating machines	127·50
3 Pictures	146·25
3 Portable personal computers	8,600·00
4 Software packages	1,000·00
3 Hard discs	2,000·00
Software manual	200·00
Year 1992-93	
Phillips dictating machine model number LFH 0285	49·35
Toshiba 3100 personal computer	1,725·00
Telecom ivory hand held phone	254·00
Telecom ivory hand held phone	210·62
Briefcase	28·00
2 Portable printers	500·00
2 printers	1,500·00
Hard disc	400·00
4 Portable personal computers	6,750·00
3 PC base units	4,000·00
Printer switching box	150·00
Software discs	400·00

EDUCATION

Student Grants

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from students over the age of 50 years about the difficulty in acquiring grants.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has received no representations on this subject. The same conditions of eligibility for mandatory awards apply to students of all ages.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to increase the amount of money available for grants.

Mr. Boswell: I refer to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 18 January, *Official Report*, column *542*. Decisions for years after 1994-95 will be taken at the appropriate time.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to increase student grants annually in line with inflation.

Mr. Boswell: Support for students is provided through grants and loans. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the House on 30 November, *Official Report*, column 929, the total support available to students through the main rates of grant and loan will be increased by 4 per cent. in 1994-95. Within this total, the main grant rates will be reduced by around 10 per cent. a year from 1994-95 to 1996-97, and corresponding increases made in the loan facility. The total support available in subsequent years will be for decision at the appropriate time.

Student Loans

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from students in Coventry about the hardships caused by the student loans scheme.

Mr. Boswell: In the last year I have received one representation about the level of the student grant forwarded from an hon. Member for a Coventry constituency. Information about other representations received in the last year could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Inter-city Schools

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what measures his Department has taken since 1992 to ensure that more schools in the inner cities have the opportunity to develop their technological expertise;

(2) what measures his Department has taken since 1992 to seek opportunities to open new city technology colleges in deprived inner-city areas.

Mr. Robin Squire: In 1992-93 and 1993-94, 70 secondary schools in inner London and metropolitan authority areas have received technology schools initiative awards, enabling them to enhance their technology facilities. Self-governing and voluntary-aided secondary schools, including those in inner cities, are eligible to become technology colleges, which will have the backing of private sponsors and receive Government grants to develop their teaching of technology, science and mathematics.

One city technology college has opened since 1992, the John Cabot CTC in Bristol, bringing the total to 15. No further CTCs are planned, but sponsors are welcome to come forward with new proposals.

The Department continues to provide substantial financial support for the use of information technology in schools, both in inner cities and elsewhere. Most recently we announced a £4·5 million scheme to equip some primary schools with CD-ROM equipment and software, with funding allocated to take account of the needs of urban areas.

Student Unions

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to safeguard the funding by student unions of student newspapers in his proposals for the reform of student unions.

Mr. Boswell: The Government are determined to reform student unions and to secure choice, democracy and accountability in their activities. It is not our intention to jeopardise student services, for which funding will remain available in institutions' budgets.

London Education Budget

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money has been made available for spending on primary and secondary education in each of the London boroughs in each of the last three financial years; what is the figure for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: For the purpose of determining standard spending assessments, the education component of standard spending, net of specific grants, is divided into five sub-blocks—under fives, five to 10, 11 to 15, 16 plus, and other education. The table sets out the year-on-year changes in the level of five to 10, 11 to 15 and 16 plus sub-blocks within the education standard spending assessment for London boroughs over the last three financial years, together with the figure for 1994-95. Education standard spending assessments are not ear-marked for local authority spending on primary and secondary education, as each authority is free to determine its spending priorities between and within services.

Local Education Authority	*Sub-block*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
City	5 to 10	0·124	0·097	0·090	0·094
	11 to 15	0·176	0·066	0·101	0·101
	16+	0·398	0·380	0·032	0·031
Camden	5 to 10	20·246	21·475	23·975	24·152
	11 to 15	19·312	20·136	23·245	22·977
	16+	11·071	12·235	5·622	5·350
Greenwich	5 to 10	35·906	38·868	40·168	42·898
	11 to 15	37·160	40·732	41·430	43·179
	16+	13·624	15·555	6·729	7·055
Hackney	5 to 10	37·247	39·525	42·859	41·212
	11 to 15	35·653	38·589	43·327	39·377
	16+	17·571	21·986	4·972	4·436
Hammersmith	5 to 10	16·610	18·177	20·220	19·909
	11 to 15	16·329	18·276	19·298	18·683
	16+	9·577	11·579	2·837	2·337
Islington	5 to 10	26·384	29·051	30·858	32·033
	11 to 15	25·471	28·968	30·647	30·587
	16+	13·174	15·936	2·255	2·571
Kensington	5 to 10	10·312	11·052	11·492	11·129
	11 to 15	9·684	11·246	11·034	10·547
	16+	6·743	7·569	1·921	1·979
Lambeth	5 to 10	43·414	48·456	51·761	48·450
	11 to 15	40·112	42·817	46·347	42·096
	16+	21·862	27·323	4·410	3·791
Lewisham	5 to 10	36·852	40·911	43·614	45·488
	11 to 15	35·545	38·655	39·369	40·062
	16+	16·361	19·699	5·882	5·969

Local Education Authority	Sub-block	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95
Southwark	5 to 10	38·487	41·387	43·362	45·266
	11 to 15	34·588	37·845	36·754	37·341
	16+	14·037	16·153	3·208	3·018
Tower Hamlets	5 to 10	43·265	46·753	48·908	49·500
	11 to 15	42·145	44·380	46·576	47·207
	16+	12·533	17·158	5·034	5·739
Wandsworth	5 to 10	30·936	32·763	33·645	31·997
	11 to 15	31·270	32·299	32·809	30·232
	16+	19·749	19·226	5·433	5·292
Westminster	5 to 10	14·933	16·462	17·331	16·547
	11 to 15	14·506	16·154	17·939	16·571
	16+	10·12	11·981	3·624	3·327
Barking	5 to 10	21·269	23·264	23·593	25·569
	11 to 15	22·609	23·854	24·695	25·895
	16+	6·784	7·762	3·949	4·058
Barnet	5 to 10	34·086	36·665	37·795	38·812
	11 to 15	35·987	38·609	39·692	40·647
	16+	21·339	24·450	10·867	9·748
Bexley	5 to 10	27·617	29·816	30·909	32·909
	11 to 15	32·276	34·024	35·212	35·877
	16+	13·085	14·685	7·199	7·226
Brent	5 to 10	40·947	43·417	45·334	44·443
	11 to 15	40·669	44·134	46·986	45·755
	16+	27·486	30·021	10·520	10·505
Bromley	5 to 10	30·871	32·465	33·638	35·706
	11 to 15	34·203	35·663	36·528	38·303
	16+	17·403	19·393	9·542	9·288
Croydon	5 to 10	40·524	43·747	44·859	47·043
	11 to 15	42·354	44·630	46·039	47·340
	16+	23·907	26·291	4·092	4·370
Ealing	5 to 10	40·774	44·026	45·570	45·098
	11 to 15	40·083	43·941	47·377	46·379
	16+	23·909	26·720	8·951	6·324
Enfield	5 to 15	35·323	37·993	38·761	41·031
	11 to 15	39·440	42·063	43·651	44·749
	16+	19·619	21·703	9·902	10·318
Haringey	5 to 10	30·613	33·849	36·896	36·637
	11 to 15	30·110	34·433	36·517	35·789
	16+	20·322	21·588	7·087	7·011
Harrow	5 to 10	25·072	26·934	27·349	28·778
	11 to 15	26·863	28·602	29·430	30·487
	16+	15·821	16·413	2·245	2·492
Havering	5 to 10	28·705	30·190	30·701	33·636
	11 to 15	34·845	36·620	37·094	39·474
	16+	13·966	15·007	4·691	3·777
Hillingdon	5 to 10	28·892	30·719	31·707	34·686
	11 to 15	30·770	33·014	34·558	36·478
	16+	14·408	15·446	7·431	7·426
Hounslow	5 to 10	28·948	31·184	31·733	33·114
	11 to 15	30·031	33·006	33·487	35·249
	16+	14·385	16·337	6·611	6·988
Kingston	5 to 10	13·932	14·835	15·524	16·351
	11 to 15	15·503	16·532	16·870	17·033
	16+	9·232	9·849	3·964	3·938
Merton	5 to 10	18·361	19·873	20·953	22·086
	11 to 15	19·151	20·468	21·568	21·610
	16+	10·402	11·668	2·811	3·023
Newham	5 to 10	43·062	49·438	51·128	53·402

Local Education Authority	Sub-block	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95
	11 to 15	41·282	46·315	49·563	49·902
	16+	19·451	21·902	3·609	4·489
Redbridge	5 to 10	28·450	30·601	32·124	34·201
	11 to 15	32·026	33·051	36·902	37·892
	16+	16·016	17·333	9·168	9·676
Richmond	5 to 10	14·027	14·966	15·127	15·504
	11 to 15	13·463	14·185	14·774	15·037
	16+	8·654	9·080	1·082	0·886
Sutton	5 to 10	19·262	20·966	21·955	23·551
	11 to 15	21·681	23·105	24·185	25·614
	16+	10·127	11·214	5·391	5·421
Waltham Forest	5 to 10	32·972	36·117	37·897	39·212
	11 to 15	34·961	37·754	39·557	39·973
	16+	17·085	18·526	2·656	3·063

Notes:
1. 1993-94 figures for the 16+ sub-block reflects the LEAs' loss of responsibility for most further education.
2. 1994-95 figures reflect LEAs loss of responsibility for the careers service and school inspections.

Further Education Funding Council

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education who made the decision to appoint Mr. Philip Head as property controller for the Further Education Funding Council.

Mr. Boswell: Short-listed candidates for the post of the Further Education Funding Council's head of property services were interviewed by a panel chaired by Mr. Roger McClure, the council's director of finance and the senior line manager with overall responsibility for the property services team. Subsequent discussions leading to the offer of appointment to the post were conducted by Mr. McClure.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what criteria the approval of the Secretary of State was given to the appointment of Mr. Philip Head as property controller for the Further Education Funding Council.

Mr. Boswell: The Secretary of State's approval is not required for the appointment of staff of the Further Education Funding Council below the level of chief executive.

Environmental Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to implement the recommendations for environmental education in further education contained in the report of the Toyne committee.

Mr. Boswell: It is primarily for the further education institutions and the Further Education Funding Council to decide how to respond to the recommendations of the Toyne committee report, "Environmental Responsibility: an Agenda for Further and Higher Education". The Department wrote to the funding council and further education institutions drawing their attention to the committee's recommendations.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of claimants of incapacity benefit who will be eligible for income support for the period *(a)* between the 28th and 52nd week of incapacity and *(b)* from the end of the first year; and what are the estimated savings in each case.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that around 25 per cent. of people awarded incapacity benefit after April 1995 will also be entitled to income support between the 28th and 52nd weeks of incapacity; and that around 30 per cent. will be entitled to income support after 52 weeks. We estimate that the introduction of the higher rate of short-term incapacity benefit between the 28th and 52nd weeks of incapacity will produce net savings of around £110 million in 1995-96, and around £150 milliion in 1996-97; and that the introduction of long-term incapacity benefit after 52 weeks will produce net savings of around £20 million in 1995-96, and around £170 million in 1996-97.

Notes:
i. All estimates are expressed in constant 1993-94 prices, rounded to the nearest £10 million, and net of offsetting changes in income-related benefit expenditure.
ii. Estimates take account of the effect on incapacity benefit recipients of the planned changes in the qualifying conditions for the disability premium paid with the income-related benefit.

Pensioners Living Abroad

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost to the Exchequer if the pensions payable to British citizens now living abroad were indexed for the cost of living in the same way as if these people had remained living in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hague: The estimated additional cost of paying fully indexed benefits to all state retirement and widow pensioners living abroad is £275 million a year. Separate figures are not available on the cost of indexing benefits only for those who are British citizens.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in which areas in the United Kingdom cold weather payments have been triggered since the start of the present severe weather in February; and if he will relax the regulations in order that such payments can now be made to all those eligible.

Mr. Scott: Payments have been triggered for the area covered by the Wilsden weather station for 10 to 16 February; and by the Meterological Office forecast for the area covered by Eskdalemuir, for the period 16 to 22 February.

All those eligible already receive automatic payments.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people in receipt of invalidity benefit in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, and in Wales, in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1987 and *(d)* 1992.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Ted Rowlands, dated 17 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the number of people in receipt of Invalidity Benefit in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, and in Wales, in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992.

The information is not available in the exact format requested. This is because statistics for the years in question are only available for the standard statistical regions of the Benefits Agency, one of which is Wales, but are not broken down into individual Districts.

The areas of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney are dealt with by the Agency's Merthyr Tydfil District. This District deals with areas other than Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and so the statistics provided will include people not living in the area in question. Also statistics are not retained by Districts for longer than two years; I have therefore only provided figures for March 1992.

There were a total of 11,946 people claiming Invalidity Benefit in the Merthyr Tydfil District at the last working day of March 1992. The figures were obtained from a 100 per cent. clerical count of cases in the Office, and include a small number of people who have claimed but are not receiving Invalidity Benefit, eg. because there is underlying entitlement which has been extinguished by the payment of a higher overlapping benefit. The table shows the number of customers in receipt of Invalidity Benefit in Wales at a point in time in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992. The statistics are based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants.

Number of IVB beneficiaries at a point in time in Wales

	Number
2 June 1979	69,000
2 April 1983	87,000
4 April 1987	122,000
4 April 1992	159,000

Note: The table figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients currently in receipt of invalidity benefit are over the age of 58 years in *(a)* Merthyr Tydfil, *(b)* Rhymney and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Ted Rowlands, dated 17 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary question about recipients of Invalidity Benefit who are over the age of 58 in Merthyr Tydfil, Rhymney and Wales.

The information is not available in the exact format requested. This is because statistics are only available for the standard statistical regions, one of which is Wales, but are not broken down into individual Districts.

The latest available information for Wales is based on a 1 per cent. sample of claims to Invalidity Benefit in Great Britain. At 4 April 1992, there were approximately 69,000 Invalidity Benefit recipients aged 59 and over in Wales.

Statistics for the specific areas of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney are not readily available and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. This is because statistics are maintained by Benefits Agency Districts whose boundaries do not correspond with those of constituencies; and the statistics are not kept by age. To obtain the information you request would require a manual inspection of each individual claim within the Merthyr Tydfil District which covers Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Child Support Agency

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time for the Child Support Agency to *(a)* acknowledge a letter from a member of the public, *(b)* answer any questions raised and reply in writing, and what is the current amount of correspondence awaiting *(c)* an acknowledgement and *(d)* a full reply; and what is the overall backlog of correspondence at the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 17 February 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the time taken by the Child Support Agency to reply to letters from members of the public.

The Agency's Charter contains a stated aim to respond to correspondence within 10 working days of receipt. Although general correspondence is not routinely acknowledged, the Agency does aim to acknowledge written complaints within two days of receipt. Because the Agency is a new organisation providing a completely new service, it will not be possible to state with confidence before the end of the first year the average length of time taken to reply to correspondence.

As the first year of the Agency's operations has stimulated a great deal of correspondence, I am afraid that the targets for answering correspondence are not currently being met. The necessary steps are being taken to ensure that letters are answered as promptly as possible. The Agency remains committed, however, to publish its performance against Charter standards in April, and thereafter monthly.

I hope that you find this reply useful.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the total salary costs for the Child Support Agency for the current year broken down by grade.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mrs. Llin Golding, dated 18 February 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for details about the salary costs of staff in the Child Support Agency.

The forecast total salary costs for the Agency for the current year are £74 million.

Staffing costs by grade are not currently available.

I hope you find this information useful.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how long on average it takes the Child Support Agency to carry out the whole maintenance application process, broken down by area CSAC.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is the responsibility of its chief executive, Ros Hepplewhite. She will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 18 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions about the time taken to complete the maintenance application process by each regional centre of the Child Support Agency.

For the period from the 5 April to 31 December 1993, information is available on the percentage of cases cleared by individual Agency Centres within given time bands; under 40 days, between 40 and 100 days, and over 100 days. This data is tabulated at Annex A.

I hope you find this reply useful.

CSAC	*<40 Days*	*>40 Days but <100 Days*	*>100 Days*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
Belfast	52·11	8·20	39·70
Birkenhead	41·20	15·80	43·00
Dudley	45·02	12·96	42·02
Falkirk	46·30	11·86	41·83
Hastings	45·64	11·77	42·59
Plymouth	42·82	11·85	45·32
TOTAL	45·51	12·14	42·34

The times are measured from the receipt of the maintenance application form by the Agency, to the day after the assessment is completed.

All data is from the Child Support Computer System, and is provisional.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the Child Support Agency's staff are on performance-related pay.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mrs. Llin Golding, dated 18 February 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your Question to the Secretary of State about the number of staff in the Child Support Agency who receive performance related pay.

The Agency operates its performance related pay scheme within the terms of the new national pay arrangements agreed by the Treasury and the Civil Service Trade Unions. These new arrangements have created a stronger link between pay and performance by replacing automatic annual increments with performance related progression. The level of any individual's performance related progression is governed by the Agency's personal review system.

In this system, each individual is set a number of challenging work and personal objectives, tailored to meet each person's experience and ability. Performance related pay is awarded in recognition of the level of individual performance achieved over the previous twelve months.

The Agency now employs 4,937 staff all of whom are eligible for consideration for an award of performance related pay based upon the agreed arrangements which are available for inspection in the Library.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

EMPLOYMENT

North Norfolk Action

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons were employed in North Norfolk Action after six months of operation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: One hundred and twenty-five people have participated in the North Norfolk Action work experience scheme during its first six months of operation. At the end of that period there were 60 participants.

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons had moved into regular employment following participation in North Norfolk Action.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In its first six months of operation, 16 people have gone directly into work from the North Norfolk Action work experience scheme.

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evaluation has been made of the first six months of North Norfolk Action.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Evaluation of the North Norfolk Action scheme is currently under way. Results are expected in the summer.

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons had ceased to claim benefit immediately following interview for North Norfolk Action.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A variety of opportunities are offered at Restart interviews in Cromer and North Walsham jobcentres. Since May 1993 North Norfolk Action has been one of them. By mid-February 1994 a total of 82 people had signed off after their restart interview without giving a reason.

Channel Tunnel (Accidents)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when his Department was first notified of an incident which occurred in the channel tunnel in January in which two channel tunnel workers were taken to hospital for treatment after a bolt of electricity arced across from the main cable; what is the standard procedure for notifying his Department of accidents in the channel tunnel; if he will publish a table giving a full list of accidents in or around the channel tunnel notified to his Department, including dates, nature and injuries sustained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive was notified of this incident on 18 January. It notified the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority on 19 January.

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases, and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 apply to the United

Kingdom side of the channel tunnel, and reportable accidents and dangerous occurrences must be notified to HSE. HSE informs the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority immediately of any fatal accidents or incidents with potential for major consequences. HSE also reports regularly to the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority other accident information to assist accident prevention on the French side of the project.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who is the commissioner for the rights of trade union members.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The commissioner for the rights of trade union members is Mrs. Gill Rowlands. I have arranged for the hon. Member to receive a personal copy of her latest annual report.

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current criteria for eligibility for the job interview guarantee scheme; and by what percentage the number of eligible persons has increased since 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. David Rendel, dated 18 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the Job Interview Guarantee Scheme.

The current criteria for eligibility for the Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) scheme were introduced by the Employment Department in April 1993 as part of an overall review of eligibility for all the Group's programmes. The aim of the review was to streamline and bring together the criteria which had been developed over time for individual programmes.

The following are entitled to help through the JIG:—

—people aged 18+ who are unemployed for six months or more and in receipt of unemployment benefit, Income Support, Invalidity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Sickness Benefit or National Insurance credits.
—people with disabilities.
—indirect benefit recipients—the partner of a person who is unemployed and claiming unemployment benefit or Income Support where both partners are unemployed for 26 weeks or more.
—ex-prisoners.
—ex-regulars.
—people involved in designated large scale redundancies.
—people living in areas where a colliery has closed.
—people with literacy and numeracy needs.
—people needing basic training in English.
—people returning to the labour market after being away for a continuous period of two years or more and who have not received unemployment benefit or National Insurance credits through the Employment Service.

The number of clients unemployed and in receipt of benefits or National Insurance credits for six months or more in Great Britain and therefore eligible for JIG, as well as other programmes and initiatives, are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1992	1,269,000
1993	1,548,000
1994	1,545,000

These long-term unemployed people make up our main target group, although they may also fall into one or more of the other categories. We do not have specific information on numbers of clients within each of these other categories.

JIG continues to be an effective way of helping our priority clients out of unemployment and back to work. Through it we expect to place around 160,000 people into jobs in 1993/94, more than ever before.

I hope this is helpful.

Social Policy

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *725*, in what form he will respond to the EU's Green Paper on social policy before 31 March.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State will be sending a paper to the Commissioner for Social Affairs setting out the Government's views.

Health and Safety (Children)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the adequacy of health and safety protection for school-age children while engaged in employment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am satisified that the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and its relevant statutory provisions ensures that employers offer adequate protection for all those engaged in work activities including school-age children. Local byelaws further regulate their employment.

The provisions of HSWA were extended by the Health and Safety (Training for Employment) Regulations 1990 to ensure that pupils taking part in work experience were fully protected.

Mrs. Clywd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with *(a)* the Child Accident Prevention Trust and *(b)* other agencies concerning the incidence of accidents involving school-age children at work.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None, but officials of the Health and Safety Executive are represented on the council of the Child Accident Prevention Trust and have good contacts with a number of other relevant safety agencies.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the information available on the number of accidents involving children at work.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 require employers and others to report to the Health and Safety Executive or to local authorities all accidents which involve employees and makes no exception for employees of school age. All fatalities at work become known to HSE either through accident reports, or through a coroner's office.

HSE has no evidence to suggest that employers vary their approach to reporting according to the age of their employees.

Foyer Concept

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what pilot projects have been carried out since 1992 of the foyer concept, whereby young people are given a place in a hostel if in exchange they give a commitment to train and look for work.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department is supporting five pilot foyers based in YMCA hostels in Nottingham, Norwich, St. Helens, Wimbledon and Romford. The pilots are being evaluated, with results expected later this year.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which body is responsible for investigating complaints against the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration—the ombudsman—will investigate any complaints referred to him against the Health and Safety Executive—HSE—by Members of Parliament on behalf of their constituents. Further details are published in the Health and Safety Executive's citizens charter leaflets.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints were *(a)* lodged and *(b)* substantiated against the Health and Safety Executive in each year since 1983.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Complaints lodged with the ombudsman and substantiated against the Health and Safety Executive since 1983 are as follows:

	Lodged	*Partially upheld*	*Upheld*
1983	1	1	—
1984	—	—	—
1985	—	—	—
1986	—	—	—
1987	2	—	1
1988	1	—	1
1989	—	—	—
1990	1	—	1
1991	1	1	—
1992	—	—	—
1993	[1]1	—	—

[1] Decision pending.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. Rehman Suleman Ekhalwaya

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects his Department's inquiries into the application by Mr. Rehman Suleman Ekhalwaya—Ref: 29/12/128—to join his wife in the United Kingdom, and referred by the high commission in Bombay will be complete; when he expects a recommendation to be passed to Bombay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mr. Ekhalway's fiancee will be invited for interview in March. A report of that interview will be sent to the entry clearance officer in Bombay for consideration.

European Parliament

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list those member states of the European Union whose armed forces will be qualified to stand as candidates for United Kingdom seats for the European Parliament;

(2) which European Union member states' civil servants will be qualified to stand as candidates for United Kingdom seats in the European Parliament.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not readily available and I will write to the hon. Member.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which Ministers, and on what occasion and for what reasons, have signed public interest immunity certificates since 1979.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is not held centrally.

Deportation (Use of Gags)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library his previous and present guidelines for the use of gags in deportation cases *(a)* on board aircraft and *(b)* on the mainland of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are no such guidelines, but the recent joint Home Office/police review of removal procedures concluded that the use of mouth restraints—which had been suspended in August 1993—should not be resumed. My right hon. and learned Friend indicated in reply to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) on 12 January at columns *212-13* that he accepted that conclusion. A copy of the report of the joint review has already been placed in the Library of the House.

Vandalism

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many instances of vandalism his Department estimates have occurred in each year between 1983 and 1993 as a result of drilling ventilation holes through the front doors of council homes in the north-east for the purposes of ensuring adequate combustion in natural gas fires.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested in not collected centrally.

Safer Cities Scheme

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what date he expects the safer cities scheme to cover 40 urban areas.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Ten new projects were announced on 29 December 1993 and announcements on further projects are planned for 1994-95. As funding for the programme is to be included in the single regeneration budget—to be administered by the Department of the Environment—from 1 April 1994, the precise timetable for later projects will be drawn up in conjunction with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Sexual Offences (Anonymity)

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has reached of his examination of the criminal law on anonymity in sexual offence cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have given careful consideration to this matter in the light of considerable public concern that was apparent towards the end of last year. I am satisfied, however, that the present law, which affords anonymity for complainants in sexual offence cases but offers no special protection for defendants, strikes a proper balance between the principle of open justice on the one hand and the need to ensure that victims of sexual offences are encouraged to come forward on the other. I therefore have no plans to alter the law in this area.

I believe that victims must continue to benefit from the current level of protection. Even with anonymity, criminal trial is a particularly harrowing process for the victim of a sexual offence and I believe that any diminution in the protection currently available, or doubts about the certainty of the protection, would be likely to increase the number of sexual offences that go unreported and unpunished. The law already allows for the prosecution of complainants whose accusations amount to perjury or an attempt to pervert the course of justice, and in those circumstances the rules relating to anonymity no longer apply.

So far as defendants in sexual offences cases are concerned, I am not persuaded that they should be treated differently from those charged with other serious crimes, who may also fear a loss of reputation. In a system of open justice some discomfort for defendants who are subsequently acquitted is inevitable. But openness is essential to the maintenance of public confidence in the criminal justice system and ensures that information that might encourage further witnesses to come forward is publicly available. I do not consider that there is a special case for infringing that principle in relation to defendants in sexual offences cases, as a matter either of general application or of judicial discretion in the individual case.

Voluntary Services Unit

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the national organisations dealing exclusively or primarily with women that are funded by the Voluntary Services Unit;

(2) if he will list the umbrella organisations dealing exclusively or primarily with women that are funded by the Voluntary Services Unit;

(3) if he will list the Merseyside organisations dealing exclusively or primarily with women that are funded by the Voluntary Services Unit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Voluntary Services Unit does not fund any organisation which deals exclusively or primarily with women.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect on the economy of the tax increases scheduled during April 1994.

Mr. Dorrell: The 1994-95 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" takes full account of these measures, and sets out the Government's latest economic forecast. The tax increases and public expenditure savings announced in the two 1993 Budgets put the public finances on a sound footing, and they help create the conditions for sustainable economic growth combined with low inflation.

Inland Revenue (Shipley)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are being made to exclude the tax affairs of the royal family and hon. Members, currently administered by the Inland Revenue at Shipley in west Yorkshire, from being administered by a third party under the market-testing arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No such arrangements are necessary. If activities involving the processing, handling or holding of tax information at Shipley or elsewhere, were to be transferred to a private sector organisation, the Inland Revenue would remain responsible for continuing to ensure proper standards of privacy and confidentiality for all citizens including the royal family and hon. Members. In addition to contractual safeguards, the contracting organisation and its employees would be subject, in the same way as Inland Revenue employees, to the criminal sanctions—a fine or imprisonment or both—provided by section 182 of the Finance Act 1989 for unauthorised disclosure of taxpayer personal information.

Confidentiality is not a bar to market testing; a lot of highly sensitive Government work is done by the private sector. But the Inland Revenue would need to be sure that an outside contractor could replicate existing security procedures and conditions.

Priests (Income Tax)

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Roman Catholic priests in Northern Ireland pay income tax; and how many are exempt.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that this information is not available. There are no special exemptions from income tax for Roman Catholic priests.

Carbon Savings

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimates had originally been made in March 1993 of the likely carbon savings in the year 2000 from the imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel; and what revision has been made to this estimate following the announcement by the Chancellor in December of compensatory packages regarding the imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel.

Sir John Cope: At the time of the Budget speech in March 1993 it was estimated that imposing VAT on domestic fuel and power should reduce carbon dioxide emissions by around 1.5 million tonnes of carbon by the end of the century. It is not expected that the compensation package would substantially affect the original broad estimate.

Car Phones

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made as to the effect of the imposition of tax on car phones supplied by employers on the safety of motorists.

Mr. Dorrell: I am not aware of any evidence which suggests that the introduction in 1991 of the standard tax charge of £200 for the private use of mobile telephones provided by employers to their employees has affected the safety of motorists.

Income Tax

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people paid income tax for each year since 1978-79 *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the economically active adult population of working age; and what are the estimated figures for the next three years.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The information is given in the table.

Year	Individuals paying tax[1] (a) Thousands	Civilian labour force population of working age (b) Thousands	Taxpayers expressed as a percentage of the civilian labour force population of working age (a)/(b) Per cent.
1978-79	25,900	25,200	103
1979-80	25,900	25,400	102
1980-81	24,900	25,500	98
1981-82	24,800	25,500	97
1982-83	24,600	25,400	97
1983-84	24,000	25,300	95
1984-85	23,800	25,800	92
1985-86	23,700	26,100	91
1986-87	23,900	26,200	91
1987-88	24,300	26,500	92
1988-89	25,200	26,800	94
1989-90	25,000	27,200	92
1990-91	26,100	27,400	95
1991-92	25,700	27,300	94
1992-93	[2]25,100	27,100	93
1993-94	[2]25,100	27,100	93
1994-95	[2]25,400	27,100	94
1995-96	[2]26,000	27,300	95
1996-97	[2]26,300	27,400	96

[1] Including taxpayers above working age.
[2] Provisional.

National Audit Office

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer by the President of the Board of Trade to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *589*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 17 February 1994]:* The most recent statement on the long-standing convention on the use of the marking "Not for NAO Eyes" is contained in a Treasury letter of 15 July 1988 which was agreed with NAO. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Members' Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency.

Mr. Ancram: The current members are:

Dr. J. B. Hawthorne *(chairman)*
Dr. D. M. C. Boyle *(vice chairman)*
Mrs. S. E. Comerton
Mr. J. Cooper
Dr. D. Courtney
Professor R. Ellis
Mrs. A. Hailes
Dr. M. P. J. Kilbane
Mrs. G. M. Loughran
Professor A. H. G. Love
Mr. R. Mairs
Dr. C. O. McAteer
Dr. W. W. M. McConnell
Miss E. McNair
Sr. Genevieve O'Farral

Opinion Polls

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on recent public opinion poll findings about the way forward in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Recent opinion polls have shown that there is a strong desire for peace following the signing of the joint declaration on 15 December. The opportunity for peace remains and is one that should be taken. In order for there to be long-term stability in Northern Ireland, there needs to be a comprehensive settlement embracing all the main relationships and so the Government will continue to progress the talks process with the main constitutional parties and the Irish Government on the basis of the statement of 26 March 1991.

Peace

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress there has been towards seeking a lasting peace since the Prime Minister's statement to the House on 15 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *1071-93*.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friends the Members for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) and for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) on 17 February, *Official Report*, column *1051*.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many invalidity benefit applications were *(a)* reviewed and *(b)* appealed during the period July to December 1993.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Clifford Forsythe, dated 17 February 1994:

As Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question on the number of Invalidity Benefit reviews and appeals.

During the period 1 July 1993 to 31 December 1993 a total of 786 applications were reviewed and 1,392 were appealed.

I hope you find this helpful.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many disability living allowance applications were *(a)* reviewed and *(b)* appealed during the period July to December 1993.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Clifford Forsythe, dated 17 February 1994:

As Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question on the number of Disability Living Allowance applications reviewed and appealed.

During the period 1 July 1993 to 31 December 1993, 9,578 Disability Living Allowance applications were reviewed and 359 review decisions were appealed.

I hope you find this helpful.

Benefits (Debt Repayment)

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons in receipt of benefit during the period July to December 1993 had direct deductions made for debt repayment.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Clifford Forsythe, dated 17 February 1994.

I have been asked to reply to your recent parliamentary question on the number of people that are having deductions made from their benefit for debt recovery.

The information is not available in the form you have requested, however, I have provided details in the table below of the number of deductions made from benefits for each type of debt.

Total number of deductions from benefit at 31 December 1993

	Number
Northern Ireland electricity	12,364
Northern Ireland housing executive	15,020
Rates collection agency	1,171
Private landlord	18
Housing association	342
Estate agent	15
Building society	875
Others	89

I hope you find this information helpful.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which Ministers, and on what occasion and for what reasons, have signed public interest immunity certificates since 1979.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is not held centrally.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* his Office and *(b)* his agencies (1) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectivness of the advertising.

Sir John Wheeler: The information has been placed in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Wilton Park Conferences

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conferences his Department's Wilton Park conference agency is holding this year on nuclear proliferation issues; how hon. Members are kept informed of conferences held in the Wiston house centre: and if he will make a statement on the role and value of the Wilton Park conferences.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Responsibility for the first two parts of the question has been delegated to Wilton Park under its chief executive, Professor Richard Langhorne, who has on my instructions written to the hon. Member.

Through its series of international conferences in which senior politicars, officials, businessmen, academics and other professionals participate, Wilton Park aims to contribute to the solution of international problems.

Letter from R. T. B. Langhorne to Mr. Llew Smith, dated 15 February 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your question concerning Wilton Park.

As it happens, the conference most directly related to the subject of your interest is in progress at Wilton House this week.

I am therefore enclosing the programme and the list of participants for your information. There are other conferences in the 1994 list during which, although their titles are not directly related to the question of proliferation, the matter either has or will come up tangentially. The enclosed list of the year's topics will show you where this is likely to occur.

The Annual Report is laid before the House and it contains a detailed list of conferences held by Wilton Park. We have not in the past sent the list of forthcoming conferences to Members of Parliament, except to those MPs who sit on the Wilton Park Academic Council. I propose to ask the Council at its next meeting whether this should be done for next year and thereafter.

The conferences are designed above all to stimulate off-the-record discussion, and participants are encouraged not to be unduly diplomatic, but to express disagreement frankly. The aim is not so much to exchange information, or even opinions, as to influence attitudes. More and more Wilton Park acts as a forum for those involved in regional and other international conflicts, in such diverse places as Southern Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, to explore their differences and seek through dialogue a better mutual understanding which could contribute to eventual resolution of conflicts.

Wilton Park conferences bring together people from many countries coming from diverse professional backgrounds and holding positions of responsibility in different fields of activity. The international and interprofessional composition of each conference guarantees that all learn much from each other.

Finally, I would make two very particular points about Wilton Park. It frequently brings together a mixture of participants from states who cannot sustain largescale foreign services of their own and provides a forum in which their politicians and officials can meet not only their opposite numbers from other states of all kinds, but also the officers of international organisations and their agencies. Secondly, at a time when there are acute new stresses on the foreign representation of the United Kingdom arising from the increased numbers of states and the rising number of acute crises in international affairs, Wilton Park is able to perform an increasingly significant role in bringing relevant people and information directly into the United Kingdom.

Sarajevo

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *708-10*, if he will make it his policy that air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs will be delayed until the special representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Yasushi Akashi, has reported on the findings of the investigative team on the massacre at Sarajevo market on 5 February; and what effect the findings of the team will have on his policy in respect of air strikes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations team investigating the mortar attack on Sarajevo on 5 February has now published its report. It concludes that there is insufficient evidence to attribute the attack to either party. The decisions of the North Atlantic Council are designed not to punish, but to secure an end to the bombardment and siege of Sarajevo.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Greek Government with regard to the NATO ultimatum concerned with the demilitarisation of Sarajevo and the possibility of air strikes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No representations have been received from the Greek Government since their dissociation from the 9 February NATO decision.

European Parliament

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that the necessary procedures in the United Kingdom to bring into effect the agreement reached at the Edinburgh Economic Council regarding the number of Members of the European Parliament will not be completed before the withdrawal by France of the demand that the new European Parliament building be built in Strasbourg.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. A Council decision of 1 February 1993 calls for member states to complete the necessary procedures to bring into effect the agreement reached at the Edinburgh European Council increasing the number of MEPs in time for the elections in June this year.

The legislative procedures required to fulfil this obligation in the United Kingdom are expected to be completed shortly.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Ministers, and on what occasion and for what reasons, have signed public interest immunity certificates since 1979.

Mr. Goodlad: No central records have been kept of public interest immunity certificates signed by Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers. I regret that to compile a list of such certificates going back to 1979 would involve disproportionate cost.

Bosnia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the likely implications for British-Russian and British-Greek relations of NATO air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed the question of NATO air strikes with Mr. Kozyrev, the Russian Foreign Minister, during his recent visit to Moscow with the Prime Minister. Mr. Kozyrev shares our underlying objective of lifting the siege and bringing the conflict to a peaceful end. My right hon. Friend made it clear that we understand Russian concerns about the need for consultation. We and our NATO allies will remain in close touch with them.

We regret Greece's decision to dissociate itself from the 9 February NATO decision. But NATO's determination to carry through that decision, and to help the UN put an end to the bombardment of Sarajevo, is clear.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what difference of view exists between the United Kingdom and *(a)* France and *(b)* the United States of America in interpreting the NATO ultimatum on Sarajevo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The NATO decision of 9 February is clear—any heavy weapons remaining within 20 km of Sarajevo and not under UN control after midnight GMT on 20 February will be subject to air strikes. The United Kingdom, France and the United States, along with other NATO partners, are fully committed to carrying this decision through.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the definition of control in respect of heavy weaponry in the latest NATO ultimatum to warring factions in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The NATO decision of 9 February requires all heavy weapons remaining within 20 km of Sarajevo after midnight on 20 February to be placed unde UNPROFOR control. It is for UNPROFOR commanders to determine the nature of that control.

Cyprus

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will request the United Nations Secretary-General to instigate an inquiry into the recent allegations made by the former United States ambassador to Turkey, Mr. Crawford, that Turkish Government officials knew of the whereabouts of a number of persons detained against their will who subsequently disappeared following the invasion of Cyprus by Turkish forces in 1974;

(2) if he will now consider suggesting an inquiry to be executed by the European Union's competent agencies into the fate of the Greek Cypriots missing since 1974;

(3) if he will request the Turkish Government to respond to the allegations made by the former United States ambassador to Turkey, Mr. Crawford, that the Turkish authorities had in their custody a number of persons subsequently classified as missing following the invasion of Cyrpus by Turkey in 1974;

(4) if he will request the present Turkish ambassador to the United Nations to give details of his personal knowledge of the whereabouts of the Greek Cypriots classified as missing persons since the invasion of Cyprus by Turkish forces in 1974;

(5) if he will investigate the recent claims of the former United States ambassador to Turkey, Mr. Crawford, that persons classified as missing since the 1974 invasion of Cyprus by Turkish troops, were alive and in Turkish custody.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Mr. Crawford was United States ambassador to Cyprus from 1974 to 1978. His remarks do not seem to constitute recent evidence about the fate of missing persons. We consider that the United Nations Committee on Missing Persons remains the best instrument for pursuing the question of those missing from both communities. The committee's effectiveness depends on full co-operation from both sides.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he raised the question of the missing Greek Cypriots during his recent visit to Turkey.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if Her Majesty's Government will ask the Turkish Government if they will allow the United Nations Committee on Missing Persons to carry out its inquiries *(a)* inside the occupied areas of Cyprus, without controls, and *(b)* inside Turkey;

(2) what appropriations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Turkish Government on co-operation with the United Nations special committee on the missing persons of Cyprus;

(3) what is the latest information in the possession of Her Majesty's Government concerning the whereabouts of the Greek Cypriot persons, classified as missing since 1974.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We consider that the United Nations Committee on Missing Persons remains the best instrument for pursuing the question of those missing from both communities. The committee's effectiveness depends on full co-operation from both sides. The United Nations has had cause to complain of the level of co-operation from both sides.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining the present policy of Her Majesty's Government on the occupation of part of the island of Cyprus by Turkish armed forces.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are committed to the search for a settlement to the Cyprus problem acceptable to both Cypriot communities. The United Nations Secretary-General's mission of good offices remains the best hope for a just and lasting solution. This should be based on a single, bi-communal, bi-zonal federal republic.

HEALTH

Nurses and Carers

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the ratio of trained nurses to carers working in *(a)* London and *(b)* England's national health service hospitals in (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table.

Qualified and unqualified nurses and midwives for England and London, September 1992 (whole time equivalents)

	Qualified nursing and midwifery staff	*Unqualified nursing and midwifery staff*	*Ratio*
England	246,570	90,850	1:0·4
London	39,970	10,240	1:0·3

Pre registration and Project 2000 nursing students have not been included within the figures. As they are in training, they cannot be classified as qualified or unqualified staff.

Private Patients' Income

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much income has been received from private patients' income, by district health authority, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: This information will be placed in the Library. Some district health authorities show a decline in private patient income for 1991-92 and 1992-93 because figures for national health service trusts are excluded.

Guy's Hospital

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest proposals for the future of Guy's hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the statement my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave on 10 February at columns *458-61* about health services in London.

Salaries

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the highest salary paid for *(a)* a unit general manager and *(b)* a trust chief executive, including bonuses, in 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 2 February at column *717*.

Toxoplasmosis

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if the survey into toxoplasmosis in pregnancy will be a material factor in determining whether or not a United Kingdom wide screening programme for toxoplasmosis in pregnancy is to be undertaken;

(2) what are the terms of reference of the survey being undertaken by the public health laboratory service into toxoplasmosis in pregnancy; what is the extent of the survey; how many pregnant women are involved; how the service is funded; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This survey began as a study of antenatal sera for the presence of antibodies to toxoplasmosis, but since 1992 has followed up the level of compliance with antenatal screening offered to pregnant women. The survey invites reports from other public health laboratories. The public health laboratory service is funded by the Department of Health.

Results from the survey will not alone determine whether a United Kingdom-wide screening programme for toxoplasmosis in pregnancy should be introduced, but they will help to provide some of the information required in assessing whether such a programme might be appropriate. Other factors are important and are subject to a reliable screening test being developed.

Down's Syndrome

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate has been made of the number of children suffering from Down's syndrome who require spectacles.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department produces no such estimates.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate has been made of the number of children suffering from Down's syndrome who have applied for a supplementary voucher for the fitting of specially made spectacle frames.

Dr. Mawhinney: Centrally collected information covers only the number and type of vouchers issued, not patient details such as age.

Sir James Ackers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the sum paid to Sir James Ackers, following his resignation as chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority, was subject to the deduction of tax.

Dr. Mawhinney: Payments under paragraph 9(3) of schedule 5 to the National Health Service Act 1977 are not liable to the deduction of tax.

Folic Acid

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how often the national health service and Health Education Authority monitor *(a)* the intake and *(b)* the knowledge of the need to take in folic acid before and during pregnancy.

Mr. Sackville: National average intakes of folic acid have been monitored routinely by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as part of the national food survey since the late 1970s. In addition the 1986-87 Dietary and Nutritional Survey of British Adults provided detailed estimates of folic acid intakes by women based on records of actual food consumption. Copies of these surveys are available in the Library. Trends in folic intake for women are expected to be measured again in 1998 as part of the next national diet and nutrition survey covering adults.

The Health Education Authority, which has incorporated advice on folic acid and neural tube defects in its public and professional educational materials covering nutrition and pregnancy, regularly monitors the effectiveness of its publications.

Health Service, London

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement giving details of the implications for south-west London hospital facilities, in particular the St. Helier NHS trust and its renal unit, of her statement to the House of 10 February, *Official Report*, columns *458-72*, on the health service in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: As indicated in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's statement, it will now be for those locally charged with assessing and meeting health needs to take into consideration the effects, over time, of proposed changes in central London and the views of those living in the area served, before deciding whether local service changes should be proposed for public consultation.

Prescriptions

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of prescription costs the national health service less than (i) £4·75 and (ii) £4·50.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is for 1992. In that year an estimated 53 per cent. of all prescribed items had a total cost to the national health service of less than £4·75; 51 per cent. cost less than £4·50.

GPs (Night Visits)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to require the model claim form for general practitioners night visit fees to be amended to show the time the patient requested care in addition to the time of the visit.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

HIV

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many HIV family medical units there are in each region and nationally.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. However, all regional health authorities have been asked to consider the special needs of families affected by HIV when carrying out their needs assessments for service developments.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the budget in real terms in each of the last five years for the treatment and investigation of HIV in babies.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the rates of HIV in *(a)* babies and *(b)* pregnant women in each EC country.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for HIV infection are not kept by all European Union countries. However, the number of AIDS cases resulting from transmission of HIV from mother to baby are reported and up to 31 March 1993 the cumulative numbers are as follows:

Country	*Number*
Belgium	58
Denmark	10
France	345
Germany	66
Greece	7
Ireland	9
Italy	321
Luxembourg	0
Netherlands	11
Portugal	18
Spain	412
United Kingdom	83

Infertility

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision is made for infertility treatment in the Bristol and district health authority area.

Mr. Sackville: Bristol and district health authority purchases, for its resident population, a range of services for the investigation and treatment of sub-fertility. The outline of the services are:

United Bristol Health Care Trust:—
St. Michael's hospital:—
seven consultant-led sub-fertility clinics each week and five nurse-led clinics each week.
Southmead Health Services Trust:—
five consultant-led sub-fertility clinics each week and one nurse-led clinic each week.

A limited number of in-vitro fertilisation and gamete intra-fallopian transfer procedures are undertaken at Southmead hospital. Other follow up in-patient or day case work is undertaken as part of the general gynaecology service at both hospitals.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is Government policy on the provision of infertility treatment to be provided in the private health sector.

Mr. Sackville: District health authorities and general practitioner fundholders have the freedom to purchase services from any health authority, from national health service trusts or from the private sector. They are encouraged to seek provision of services from those who can best ensure that quality and value for money are achieved, irrespective of whether they are in the public or the private sector.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now publish the Government's response to the fundamental review of dental remuneration and the oral health strategy for England.

Dr. Mawhinney: Our proposals will be announced in due course.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental practitioners there are currently offering dental treatment on the NHS in England to new patients seeking to be registered with them for NHS dental purposes; and what was the corresponding figure in October 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: Dentists are independent contractors and free to choose whether or not to accept any individual patient, or category of patients, for national health service treatment and to review their decisions at any time.

At 30 September 1993 there were 15,773 dentists, including principals, assistants and vocational trainees, in contract with family health services authorities. The corresponding number at 30 September 1990 was 15,480.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists in England have left the national health service since October 1990, but who are continuing to offer dental services on a private basis.

Dr. Mawhinney: Dentists are not required to disclose their intentions on termination of their contracts with family health services authorities.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental patients have been removed from the NHS dentists' lists since the introduction of the dental contract in October 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: During the period 1 October 1990 to 30 November 1993 there were 50·9 million registrations and 21·7 million deletions from the dental register. The number of patients registered at 30 November 1994 was therefore 29·2 million.

Pigs (Radiation)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been sponsored by her Department into radiation risks using live pigs.

Mr. Sackville: Currently the Department of Health does not sponsor any research into radiation risks using live pigs.

Psychiatric Patients

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the new guidance about the discharge of psychiatric patients from hospital will be sent to health and local authorities.

Mr. Bowis: The draft guidance was issued for consultation on 12 January with a request for comments by 25 February. We shall issue the substantive guidance when we have considered and taken account of the comments received.

Hyperlipidaemia

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes she plans to ensure that sufferers from hyperlipidaemia are entitled to free prescriptions on the same basis as diabetics.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Colostomy Bags

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what standard is set by her Department for colostomy bags; what work is being undertaken to improve the standard of such bags; and what consideration has been given to the need for an expiry date for their use.

Mr. Sackville: Colostomy bags should conform to British standard 7127, although some older products on the market will pre-date this standard. The Department contributed to the drafting of this standard, which was published in 1991. Discussions are proceeding with several independent testing laboratories, with the objective of increasing the number of facilities for compliance testing.

The standard stipulates that products which have a shelf life of less than five years shoud be labelled with the expiry date.

Youth Treatment Service

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has yet reached a decision on the future siting of the youth treatment service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: I have today informed the chief executive of the youth treatment service of my decision that the service should continue to operate from the existing two sites, Glenthorne in Birmingham and St. Charles at Brentwood, Essex, for at least the next four years.

I have told the chief executive that consideration will be given to capital expenditure to carry out necessary work at the two centres.

I hope that this decision will remove some of the obstacles to short-term planning which have faced the youth treatment service for so long as a result of the uncertainties surrounding the site issue.

Children's Rights

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children's organisations were consulted on the draft first report from the United Kingdom on implementation of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child; on what date consultation documents were posted; what was the deadline for receipt of comments by his Department; and how many of those organisations responded within his deadline.

Mr. Bowis: Consultation on reports of this kind is not normal practice, however, in the circumstances a short consultation exercise was undertaken. Of 65 organisations given the opportunity to comment on the draft report, some 35 were children's organisations. Copies of the report went out from 13 December and comments were requested by 31 December. Nine organisations responded before the deadline, but we did offer to extend this slightly.

London Hospitals

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) is she will publish the evidence upon which she based her decision that the St. Thomas's site offers a better location and environment than Guy's hospital;

(2) if she will place in the Library all the information which informed her decision to concentrate acute and specialist services at St. Thomas's hospital;

(3) what evidence she has that Guy's hospital is more efficient or cost-effective than St. Thomas's.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Guy's and St. Thomas's national health service trust has been asked to pursue proposals that will concentrate patient services, over time, at the St. Thomas's site. The decision to ask the trust to do so was based upon an assessment of its outline business case. The documentation forms management information and includes operational and financial detail about the trust's business which it would not be appropriate to release. All information necessary for statutory public consultation will be made available before a final decision is made on any significant service changes.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are employed within the public relations office of St. Thamas's hospital; and what is its annual budget for 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for Guy's and St. Thomas's hospital trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact Lord Hayhoe, the chairman, for details.

Health Care Provision

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what replies she has received to the questions she posed to chairmen of purchasing health authorities concerning wide consultation and the provision of health care; and if she will list the replies she has received according to district.

Dr. Mawhinney: Replies have been received from all districts and these are currently being evaluated.

Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the membership of the former independent scientific committee on smoking and health.

Mr. Sackville: The terms of appointment of the members of the independent scientific committee on smoking and health expired at the end of 1991. In the light of the strategy for health then being developed, and the fact that some of the functions of the committee had been superseded by the adoption of European Community directives on tar yield of cigarettes and the labelling of tobacco products, it was decided to review the range of scientific advice required on smoking issues. As a result of that assessment, a new scientific committee on tobacco and health was announced on 7 February 1994.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members of the scientific committee on tobacco and health, with their place of work and qualifications for appointment.

Mr. Sackville: Details of the scientific committee on smoking and health were announced on 7 February and the information is as follows:

MEMBERSHIP—SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON SMOKING AND HEALTH

Chairman

Professor David Poswillo, CBE DDS DSc MDhc FRC Path
Formerly Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery,
Guy's Hospital, London

Members

Professor Richard Carter, MA DM DSc FRCPath
Department of Histopathology,
Royal Marsden Hospital, Sutton, Surrey

Dr. Godfrey Fowler, OBE BM FRCGP DCH DRCOG
Clinical Reader in General Practice and Honorary Director,
Imperial Cancer Research Fund General Practice Research Group, Department of Public Health and Primary Care,
University of Oxford

Professor Roger Greenhalgh, MA MD MChir FRCS
Department of Surgery,
Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School, London

Dr. Marion Hall, MD FRCOG
Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist,
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals,
Aberdeen Maternity Hospital

Mr. Martin Jarvis, MPhil
Clinical Psychologist,
Imperial Cancer Research Fund Health Behaviour Unit,
National Addiction Centre,
Maudsley Hospital, London

Dr. Aidan Macfarlane, FRCP
Consultant Community Paediatrician,
Consultant in Public Health Medicine,
Clinical Lecturer in Paediatrics,
Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford

Professor David Marks, BSc PhD CPsychol FBPsS
Director of Health Research Centre,
Faculty of Social Science,
Middlesex University

Professor Anthony Newman-Taylor, OBE FRCP FFOM
Consultant Physician,
Royal Brompton National Heart and Lung Hospital,
London

Professor Richard Peto, FRS
Clinical Trial Service Unit and ICRF Cancer Studies Unit,
Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford

Professor Nicholas Wald, MBBS DSc FRCP FFPHM FRCOG
Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine,
Department of Environmental and Preventive Medicine,
St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, London

Ex-officio:

Dr. Eileen D. Rubery MB ChB PhD FRCR MRCPath
Head of Health Promotion (Medical) Division,
Department of Health, London

Ivan Biddle

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will instruct that Ivan Biddle be re-employed by the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

AIDS (Education)

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her assessment of the importance of the Health Education Authority's role in providing national public education campaigns to promote safer sex, with particular reference to the rate of heterosexual transmission of AIDS.

Mr. Sackville: The Health Education Authority has a key role in developing and promoting safer sex advice across the United Kingdom to any people whose behaviour may put them at greater risk of HIV infection. This is underpinned and complemented by contributions from many other local and national agencies, all delivering health education to the whole population.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether her Department has issued any guidelines to NHS trusts in relation to the appointment of senior financial management; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Health fully appreciates the importance to national health service trusts of appointing properly qualified people to senior finance posts. No guidance has been issued specifically to NHS trusts on this issue. However, in November 1992, the Department launched its new finance staff development strategy, which applies to district health authorities and NHS trusts alike. The key points of the strategy were summarised in the booklet "Framework for the Future". This made it clear that senior finance staff in the NHS would be expected to possess, or to be studying for, the appropriate professional qualifications, and to possess the skills and competencies necessary to discharge their duties, as well as displaying various personal qualities desirable in finance staff generally. In addition, the Department launched "The Role of the Director of Finance in the NHS" in February 1994. This provides guidance on the role of the director of finance, relationships with other key NHS officers, personal qualities, professional skills and the qualifications that he or she requires. Copies of the documents will be placed in the Library.

Family Practitioners (Fraud)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline the disciplinary procedures for dealing with accusations of fraud by family practitioners against the national health service; how many allegations have been made against family practitioners in each year since 1991 in *(a)* Coventry and *(b)* elsewhere; how many of these allegations in each category have proved to be true; and what action has been taken against them.

Dr. Mawhinney: Part II of the National Health Service Act 1977 and the National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) Regulations 1992, as amended, set out the disciplinary powers available to family services authorities, which are responsible for managing family health services in their localities. Fraud is a matter for the police. Information about the number of allegations of fraud made against family practitioners is not available centrally.

Amosite

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence her Department has found to link exposure to untreated amosite with serious illness.

Mr. Sackville: The principal diseases caused by exposure to amosite—brown asbestos—are asbestosis—a fibrosis or scarring of the lung causing difficulty in breathing—lung cancer, and malignant mesothelioma—a cancer of the inner lining of the chest or abdominal wall. Asbestosis was prescribed as an industrial disease in 1933 and mesothelioma in 1966. Since then further diseases have been prescribed such as pneumoconiosis, diffuse mesothelioma, primary carcinoma, or bilateral diffuce pleural thickening through working with asbestos.

The import, supply and use of amosite and crocidolite —blue asbestos—and any product that contains them were banned in the United Kingdom in 1985.

Salaries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what salaries are payable to chief executives of *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* district health authorities, *(c)* district family health services authorities and *(d)* hospitals currently and in the previous year.

Dr. Mawhinney: Salary ranges for regional general managers, district general managers, family health services authority general managers and general managers of directly managed hospital and community units are shown in the table. In line with increases made to other groups of public sector staff in 1993 an increase of 1·5 per cent. was made to the salary ranges from 1 September 1993. Individual salaries are dependent on a variety of factors including personal performance against locally set targets. The salaries of chief executives of national health service trusts are matters for trust boards. Information on those emoluments is included in annual accounts available locally. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 13 January that from 1 April 1994 each NHS authority and trust will be required to publish an annual report which includes information on the total emoluments of their general manager or chief executive.

Salary ranges for NHS General Managers

	Group	Range from 1 September 1992 £	Range from 1 September 1993 £
Region	RGM	53,780—77,690	54,590—78,860
District	DGM Group 1	48,400—69,900	49,130—70,950
	DGM Group 2	45,710—66,030	46,400—67,020
	DGM Group 3	41,830—60,650	42,460—61,560
Unit	UGM Group 1	41,830—60,650	42,460—61,560
	UGM Group 2	36,750—53,180	37,300—53,980
	UGM Group 3	33,160—48,110	33,660—48,830
	UGM Group 4	28,690—41,530	29,120—42,150
FHSAs	GM1	41,830—60,650	42,460—61,560
	GM2	36,750—53,180	37,300—53,980
	GM3	33,160—48,110	33,660—48,830

Source:
Health Service Guidelines HSG(92)47 and HSG(93)58.

Meningitis

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of meningitis there were in each year since 1974; how many deaths there were from meningitis in each year since 1974; and what was the mortality rate from meningitis in each year since 1974.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 17 February 1994]:* The information will be placed in the Library.

Contact Lenses

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures her Department has taken following the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to strengthen opticians' guidelines concerning the advice and information to be given to customers about the costs of lens care when customers first opt for contact lenses.

Dr. Mawhinney: Following discussions between the Department of Health and the optical profession, the professional guidelines issued to optometrists by the British College of Optometrists have been strengthened to ensure that the costs of contact lens care regimes are discussed fully with customers before they purchase their contact lenses.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Ms Tessa Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many press and public relations officers were employed by the NHS for each year from 1989 to 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information collected centrally does not separately identify press and public relations staff. At 30 September 1989 and 30 September 1990 some 210 and 240 whole-time equivalent staff respectively were engaged in public relations work in the national health service. Those totals include support staff.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what restriction his Department is planning on the use of national lottery money for revenue funding of organisations.

Mr. Brooke: The section 26(1) directions on which I am today formally consulting the statutory distributing bodies direct them to take into account the need for money to be distributed for capital expenditure and only to be distributed for endowments or revenue grants in order to maintain lottery-funded capital projects where no alternative source of revenue finance is available.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what guidance has been issued to the Sports Council as to how it should distribute moneys from the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: I have today written to the chairman of the Sports Council formally to consult that body on the content of the directions I propose to issue under section 26(1) of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993. I have written in similar terms to each of the other statutory distributing bodies for

which my Department is responsible, and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are conducting a similar exercise in their respective countries.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proportion of the total amount of the proceeds from the national lottery is expected to be distributed through the Sports Council.

Mr. Brooke: The proportion of the total national lottery proceeds going to good causes will not be known until the Director General of the National Lottery announces in May the body corporate which is to be awarded the main licence to run the national lottery. Twenty per cent. of the amount for good causes will go to sport, of which 83·3 per cent. will be distributed through the Sports Council to sports projects in England. The remainder will be distributed by the sports councils for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Independent Television Commission.

Mr. Brooke: The current members of the Independent Television Commission are:

Sir George Russell, CBE *(Chairman)*
Mr. Jocelyn Stevens, CVO *(Vice-Chairman)*
Mrs. Eleri Wynne Jones
Professor John Fulton
The Earl of Dalkeith
Mr. Roy Goddard
Mrs. Pauline Mathias
Lady Popplewell
Professor James Ring
Mr. Pranlal Sheth

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the national museums and galleries on Merseyside.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the national museums and galleries on Merseyside are:

Sir Leslie C. Young CBE *(Chairman)*
Colin Amery, Esq
Nicholas Barber, Esq
Dame Jocelyn Barrow
Prof. Sam Berry
E. John Billington Esq RD
Prof. Anthony Bradshaw PhD FRS
John Entwistle, Esq DL
J. Milton Grundy, Esq
Baroness Hooper
Prof. C. Michael Kauffman, MA PhD RMA
Prof. W. John Last, CBE MA Hon. FMA
Prof. Marilyn Strathern
Alan Swerdlow, Esq
Lady Vaizey
Richard Wilding, Esq CB
Sir David M. Wilson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Historical Buildings and Monuments Commission for England—English Heritage.

Mr. Brooke: The present commissioners of English Heritage are:

Mr. Jocelyn Stevens, CVO *(Chairman)*
Sir Hugh Cubitt, CBE
Mrs. Candida Lycett-Green
Mr. Roger Suddards, CBE
Mr. Geoffrey Wilson
HRH the Duke of Gloucester, GCVO
Dr. Ronald Brunskill, OBE
Sir Neil Cossons, OBE
Lord Cavendish of Furness
Mrs. Bridget Cherry
Mr. Julian Seymour
Miss Jennifer A. Page *(Chief Executive)*
Mr. Terry Farrell, OBE
Sir David Wilson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the national film development fund.

Mr. Brooke: The national film development fund board currently consists of:

The right hon. Lord Barnett *(chairman)*
Mr. Michael Stoddart
Mr. Simon Perry.

DEFENCE

Pathogens (Tests)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what tests of live pathogens have taken place outside of the perimeter of Porton Down since 1964; which pathogens were used in each case; how many (i) animals and (ii) humans were exposed to pathogens in each case; and what studies of the persistence of the pathogens used were carried out *(a)* before and *(b)* after the tests.

Mr. Hanley: These are matters for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down—CBDE. I have asked the chief executive of CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 18 February 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what tests of live pathogens have taken place outside the perimeter of Porton Down since 1964 has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Our records indicate that no open air trials or tests involving the use of live pathogens have taken place outside the perimeter of Porton Down since 1964. However, work has been carried out using pathogens in microbiology laboratories, under carefully contained conditions, in compliance with the Health and Safety Executive's requirements at various universities and other institutions throughout the United Kingdom during the course of research funded by the Ministry of Defence.

3. No humans have been involved. Our records do not provide the information sought on the numbers of animals involved in this work carried out over the past 30 years. The pathogens used are handled safely in accordance with national standards and the question of persistence does not apply as facilities are decontaminated thoroughly at the end of the work.

Frigates

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he will announce the result of the competition for the selection of the common new generation frigate United Kingdom platform prime contractor.

(2) when he expects to place the contract for construction of the first common new generation frigate; and what build programme is expected for the follow-on ships of this class.

Mr. Aitken: Following competition, GEC with a consortium of BAe and others have been selected as the UK member for the Franco-British-Italian international joint venture company which will design and build the three first of class ships which are planned to enter service around the turn of the century. The international contract will include important work on the integration of the various weapons systems into the combat system for the ship as a whole and will involve the companies concerned in taking greater responsibilities for a ship of this complexity than has been possible to achieve in the past. The selection of the consortium will enable the combined strengths of GEC Naval Systems, which includes Yarrow Shipbuilders and BAe Defence Systems, supported by Vosper Thornycroft and BAe/SEMA to be brought to bear on this important project and will enable UK industry to play a full part in association with French and Italian industry.

Our current plans are that the joint venture company will be invited to bid against a specification to be issued later this year with the design contract to be placed in 1995. Subject to satisfactory progress the build of the UK first of class ship will commence in three or four years' time. All UK shipyards will have the opportunity to compete for the build of follow-on ships of this class in five or six years' time, when sufficient progress has been achieved on the first of class ship.

Rosyth (Employment)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library the questionnaire on transfer of military employment handed to Rosyth naval base uniformed service personnel.

Mr. Aitken: A copy of the document has been placed in the Library.

Deal Barracks

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current proposals regarding the Royal Marine barracks at Deal.

Mr. Hanley: The future of the Royal Marines school of music at Deal is under consideration as part of a defence costs study into military music in the armed forces as a whole. The study is due to report to Ministers in March, but it will not be until some time after this that final conclusions will be reached. It is too early to speculate as to the likely outcome of the study.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the visits that have been made by Defence Ministers to *(a)* Ecuador, *(b)* India, *(c)* Indonesia, *(d)* Jordan, *(e)* Malaysia, *(f)* Nigeria, *(g)* Oman, *(h)* Pakistan and *(i)* Thailand since June 1987; and what was the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Aitken: Central records of all official visits by Ministers are not kept. Records available show the following visits:

Ecuador
(Defence Procurement)—1992

India
Secretary of State—1988
Under-Secretary of State—1993

Indonesia
Secretary of State—1989, 1991, 1993
Under-Secretary of State (Armed Forces)—1991
Under-Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)—1987, 1988, 1991

Jordan
Secretary of State—1988

Malaysia
Secretary of State—1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1993
Minister (Armed Forces)—1988, 1990 (twice)
Minister (Defence Procurement)—1991
Under-Secretary of State—1992, 1993
Under-Secretary of State (Armed Forces)—1991
Under-Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)—1988, 1989, 1991

Nigeria
None

Oman
Secretary of State—1987, 1989 (twice), 1990, 1992, 1994
Minister (Armed Forces)—1987, 1990
Minister (Defence Procurement)—1988, 1991, 1992, 1993

Pakistan
Minister (Defence Procurement)—1988

Thailand
Under-Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)—1992

Ministerial visits are generally made to maintain and improve our defence relations with the host country. In each case a broad range of issues was discussed.

Royal Naval Auxiliary Service

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what conclusions have been reached by his Department relating to the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service.

Mr. Hanley: As announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 18 October 1993, *Official Report*, column 39, there is no continuing defence role for the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service. After a properly managed rundown, the RNXS will disband from 31 March 1994.

RAF Brawdy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the number of occasions for each year since 1974, together with the total number of occasions that RAF helicopters have been scrambled from RAF Brawdy to assist people in difficulty.

Mr. Hanley: The statistical information requested, available only from 1977, is as follows:

Year	*Total number of callouts*	*Total number of persons assisted*
1977	78	43
1978	86	32
1979	79	64
1980	101	111
1981	89	75
1982	126	135

Year	Total number of callouts	Total number of persons assisted
1983	73	69
1984	85	111
1985	100	115
1986	98	100
1987	134	87
1988	154	112
1989	148	132
1990	172	177
1991	162	223
1992	158	86
1993	130	124

Married Quarters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *484*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the independent survey on the married quarters estate that has been carried out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I am unable to do so because the report contains information which would be commercially useful to companies tendering to the new housing trust for subcontracting work.

Military Information

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *344*, what proposals he has considered for assisting the United Nations to enhance its ability to marshall and analyse military information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Two of the military personnel attached to the United Nations secretariat work in the UN situation centre. As I said in my answer of 14 January, the United Kingdom is ready to consider requests from the UN for assistance in enhancing its ability to marshall and analyse information. To date no such requests have been received.

Trident

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *505*, what consideration underlies the decision not to make public the number of missiles or warheads actually deployed on Trident submarines; what assessment he has made of the effect of such publication on the effectiveness of the system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: A disclosure of the actual deployed capability of our nuclear deterrent might enable a potential adversary to calculate what counter-measures might diminish or negate its effectiveness. For this reason it has been the practice of successive Governments not to make public the number of missiles or warheads actually deployed on our submarines.

TRACER

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what impact the involvement of British troops in United Nations operations has had on the TRACER—tactical reconnaissance armoured combat vehicle—feasibility studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The feasibility studies for TRACER currently in progress are based on our latest assessment of the capabilities required for future armoured reconnaissance vehicles. This is derived from the whole range of our operational experience. As is normal, we will be re-examining our requirements against all relevant operational experience before embarking on the next phase of the project.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *296*, when he expects the TRACER feasibility studies will be completed; and which companies are involved in the three consortia carrying out the studies.

Mr. Aitken: The industrial feasibility studies for TRACER are due to be completed by end of April 1994. The principal companies involved in the three consortia are British Aerospace royal ordnance division, Alvis, GEC-Marconi, GKN Sankey, Vickers Defence Systems, Texas Instruments, Shorts, Siemens-Plessey and Teledyne. There are numerous other United Kingdom and foreign supporting companies which are also involved to varying extents.

Yugoslavia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to alter the current arrangements for the provision of rations for British service personnel deployed in the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Other troop contributors in the former Yugoslavia already use the United Nations system of supply and we have been asked and have agreed to participate in a two-month trial for a small section of our troops in Bosnia. Whether or not we subsequently change our feeding arrangements will depend on the outcome of the trial.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requests have been made by the United Nations for additional equipment for forces in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom has received a request from the United Nations for mortar-locating radar. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced yesterday, this request has been approved.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the impact on service morale of the quality of rations provided to service personnel deployed in the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The quality and quantity of rations provided for United Kingdom personnel in the former Yugoslavia are carefully monitored to ensure consistently

high standards. We are fully aware of the importance of a varied and nutritious diet for the morale of our armed forces, and every effort is made to maintain the excellent standard of the rations currently provided.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what rations are currently provided to British service personnel deployed in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: British service personnel in the former Yugoslavia currently receive the same scale of rations, provided from the United Kingdom, as the rest of the British Army.

United Nations Standby Forces

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *482*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the formal response he intends to make to the United Nations standby forces planning team; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Consultations between the United Nations standby forces planning team and United Nations member states are being conducted in confidence. It would not therefore be appropriate to place a copy of the United Kingdom's formal response in the Library.

Housing Rents

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *173*, whether the proposed housing trust will have any influence on the level of rents paid by service personnel.

Mr. Hanley: As stated in my answer of 7 December, we have no plans at present to change the arrangements whereby the accommodation charges payable by service personnel are recommended by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body.

Defence Industrial Base

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *177*, what elements of the British defence industrial base he regards as a strategic necessity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *751*.

Royal Ordnance plc

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *517*, if he will place in the Library copies of all files that were returned by Royal Ordnance plc to his Department in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: No. These are public records. Those selected for permanent preservation will be available for examination in due course at the Public Record Office in accordance with the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Ministers, and on what occasion and for what reasons, have signed public interest immunity certificates since 1979.

Mr. Hanley: There is no central record providing the information requested.

UNPROFOR

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many major Army units are currently below peacetime establishment, and by how much; and what reinforcement will be made to 2 Battalion the Royal Anglian Regiment for its planned deployment as part of UNPROFOR.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* It is not our practice to disclose the establishment of units in the Army. There are, however, currently seven major arms and services in the Army which have a shortfall of trained manpower against their manpower planning targets. These are shown, together with the percentage to which they are currently manned. If it is deployed, 2 Royal Anglian would be at its full peacetime establishment but in addition some 35 soldiers would be required as reinforcement from elsewhere in the Queen's Division.

Major Army units currently undermanned against manpower planning targets

Arm-Corps	*Trained strengths per cent.*
Royal Engineers	98·03
Infantry	98·78
Army Air Corps	92·65
Royal Logistic Corps	99·87
Royal Army Chaplains Department	95·00
Royal Army Medical Corps	95·44
QARANC	88·96

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will provide figures for the amount her Department has been reimbursed by the Department of Social Security in respect of statutory sick pay provision for each of the past three years.

Mr. Jack: In the past three years the following sums have been reimbursed by DSS to my Department in respect of statutory sick pay:

Financial Year	*£*
1991-92	302,652
1992-93	248,472
April 1993 to January 1994	246,216

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by her Department *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Jack: Publicity campaigns with a budget cost of over £10,000 in the current year are as follows. Plans for 1994-95 are in the process of being finalised, and detailed budgets, are therefore not yet available.

Campaign	*Objective*	*Mechanisms for assessment*
"At the Farmer's Service"	To generate greater awareness of the Ministry's services to farmers and growers through promotion of the "At the Farmer's Service" publication.	Monitoring take-up of publications ordered or distributed via exhibitions or direct mail.
"Balance in the Countryside" Campaign	To provide factual information and promote better understanding of MAFF's environmental responsibilities.	Market research.
"The Continental Challenge" Conference	To alert British food suppliers to the opportunities on the continent and introduce them to buyers there.	Assessed by the response of attending delegates.
"Don't Import Disease" Campaign	To generate awareness of changes to the regulations for importation of livestock from EC countries among farmers and importers.	Absence of imported cattle with diseases and early identification and isolation of diseased stock.
Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) Campaign	To promote public awareness of MAFF's role in managing ESA's and publicise the availability of grants to farmers.	Market research and uptake of grants by farmers.
"Foodsense" Campaign	To educate and inform the general public about food and food safety.	Market research
Guidance on the Transport of Casualty Animals for Slaughter Campaign.	To improve standards of animal welfare by providing guidance on procedures and regulations for the transport of casualty animals.	Assessment of improvements monitored by veterinary officers and animal health inspectors.
Heat Stress Campaign	To improve animal welfare by increasing livestock farmers' awareness of the conditions which may cause heat stress.	Assessment of improvements monitored by veterinary officers and animal health inspectors.
Joint Imports Campaign	To build and maintain awareness of the regulations on the import of meat and plant materials from abroad.	Market research.
Pesticide Poisoning of Wildlife Campaign.	To stop the illegal poisoning of wildlife. To raise public awareness and support for the campaign istelf.	Monitoring the level of suspected poisoning incidents and use of a campaign telephone number for reporting incidents.
Plant Health Campaigns	To promote awareness to the trade and the public of the regulations on the importation and exportation, for domestic and commercial use, of plants and plant materials.	Qualitative measurement of enquiries to MAFF's plant health and seeds inspectors and uptake of leaflets distributed.
Rabies Campaign	To maintain awareness of quarantine regulations	Market research.
Small Producers of Food	To advise small producers of sources of help available.	Assessed by responses by recipients.
Straw and Stubble Burning Campaign	Aimed primarily at farmers, to remind them that burning has now been banned but also to inform the general public.	Monitoring of levels of prosecution for illegal burning.
Warble Fly Campaign	To promote and build awareness of the lifecycle of the Warble Fly and encourage early detection on cattle.	Animal health officers provide qualitative assessment of the campaign based on uptake of leaflets and responses/feedback from the target audience.
Animal Welfare	Exhibition stands at major livestock events. To support animal welfare campaigns.	Assessment by quantitative means based on uptake of booklets at trade exhibitions/events and resulting enquiries and follow-up action with veterinary staff.
IACS	Advice to the agricultural industry about the requiremens of the IACS scheme.	Monitoring of numbers attending seminars around the country.
Export and Trade Promotion	Promoting the United Kingdom agrifood industry at home and abroad.	Enquiries taken at fairs are disseminated to the trade. Companies subsequently contacted on a 10 per cent. sample basis to assess the effectiveness of the presence at the fair.
National Agricultural Exhibitions	Supporting campaigns directed at the agricultural industry across the board.	Enquiries received and information given out.

Bovine Immunodeficiency

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many cases of bovine immunodeficiency virus disease have been notified to her Department in the last three years; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what evidence she has that the bovine immunodeficiency virus was introduced into the United Kingdom in infected cattle; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: It is not compulsory to notify cases of bovine immunodeficiency virus to the Department or other authority. A limited investigation in 1990 by the Department's central veterinary laboratory—CVL—suggested there had been a low prevalence of infection in cattle in Great Britain for some time. We have no information on the original source of infection in Great Britian. No cases of disease caused by bovine immunodeficiency virus have been confirmed by the Department in the last three years. It is too early to speculate what role, if any, bovine immunodeficiency virus has played on a particular farm under investigation in Cheshire.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will answer the questions from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton tabled for answer on 28 January regarding appointments to public bodies.

Mr. Jack: All of the hon. Member's questions have now been answered.

SCOTLAND

Limb Defects

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the incidence of upper limb defects in the Ayrshire and Arran health board area;

(2) what discussions his Department has held with the Ayrshire and Arran health board concerning the incidence of upper limb defects in children within the Ayrshire and Arran health board area;

(3) which agencies in Scotland are charged with monitoring the incidence of limb defects in children born in Scotland;

(4) what contact took place during the investigation of limb defects in the area of the Ayrshire and Arran health board between the board, the General Register Office for Scotland and the Medical Research Council;

(5) how many *(a)* upper limb and *(b)* lower limb defects occurred in children born within each health board area in Scotland since 1986.

Mr. Stewart: On the basis of the investigation undertaken by Ayrshire and Arran health board and the discussions which the Scottish Office Home and Health Department has had with that board, I am satisfied that there is no cause for concern in relation to the incidence of upper limb reduction defects in the board's area. Since there was no evidence of clustering and the numbers recorded in Ayrshire and Arran were not significantly different from those in other parts of Scotland, the health board saw no need for contact with the General Register Office for Scotland or the Medical Research Council.

Since 1988, the information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency of the NHS in Scotland has collected and published data on the incidence of congenital anomalies discovered by the end of the first year of life. Data sources include the neonatal discharge record, information from the Scottish stillbirth and neonatal death inquiry, post-neonatal death certificates and admissions to hospital in the first year of life.

The table shows the number of reduction deformities of limbs which occurred in children born in each health board area from 1986 to 1992.

	1986		
	Upper limb	*Lower limb*	*Unspecified limb*
Argyll and Clyde	—	—	—
Ayrshire and Arran	—	—	1
Borders	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—
Fife	2	2	1
Forth Valley	—	1	—
Grampian	3	2	1
Glasgow	3	—	1
Highland	—	1	—
Lanarkshire	2	—	1
Lothian	2	4	1
Tayside	1	1	2
Scotland	13	11	8

	1987		
	Upper limb	*Lower limb*	*Unspecified limb*
Argyll and Clyde	—	—	—
Ayrshire and Arran	2	—	—
Borders	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	1	—	—
Fife	1	—	1
Forth Valley	1	—	—
Grampian	3	3	—
Glasgow	3	—	1
Highland	3	—	1
Lanarkshire	—	—	1
Lothian	2	—	1
Tayside	1	1	1
Scotland	16	4	5

	1988		
	Upper limb	*Lower limb*	*Unspecified limb*
Argyll and Clyde	2	—	—
Ayrshire and Arran	3	1	2
Borders	1	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	1
Fife	2	3	—
Forth Valley	1	—	1
Grampian	3	1	—
Glasgow	1	1	—
Highland	—	—	—
Lanarkshire	1	—	1
Lothian	1	—	—
Tayside	1	—	—
Scotland	16	6	5

1989

	Upper limb	Lower limb	Unspecified limb
Argyll and Clyde	3	—	—
Ayrshire and Arran	1	1	—
Borders	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—
Fife	1	—	2
Forth Valley	—	—	—
Grampian	3	2	—
Glasgow	2	1	—
Highland	2	—	—
Lanarkshire	2	—	—
Lothian	1	2	1
Tayside	—	—	—
Scotland	15	6	3

1990

	Upper limb	Lower limb	Unspecified limb
Argyll and Clyde	1	1	—
Ayrshire and Arran	1	—	—
Borders	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—
Fife	—	—	2
Forth Valley	—	—	—
Grampian	3	2	—
Glasgow	1	2	—
Highland	—	1	—
Lanarkshire	1	—	—
Lothian	1	—	—
Tayside	2	—	—
Scotland	10	6	2

1991

	Upper limb	Lower limb	Unspecified limb
Argyll and Clyde	—	2	—
Ayrshire and Arran	3	1	—
Borders	2	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	1	—
Fife	1	1	1
Forth Valley	1	1	1
Grampian	5	2	—
Glasgow	3	1	1
Highland	—	—	—
Lanarkshire	2	—	—
Lothian	2	3	1
Tayside	3	—	—
Scotland	22	12	4

1992

	Upper limb	Lower limb	Unspecified limb
Argyll and Clyde	1	—	—
Ayrshire and Arran	—	—	1
Borders	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—
Fife	1	—	1
Forth Valley	—	—	1
Grampian	1	1	—
Glasgow	2	—	—
Highland	—	—	1
Lanarkshire	3	1	1
Lothian	1	2	1
Tayside	—	—	—
Scotland	9	4	6

Source:—1986, 1987, 1992—SMR11 neonatal record
1988, 1989, 1990, 1991—congenital anomaly register.

Timex Dispute

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total costs of policing the Timex dispute situation up to the latest date; and what finance was provided by the Government to Tayside police in relation to these policing costs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand from Tayside police that the total cost of policing the Timex dispute was £332,335. Fifty-one per cent. of the cost will be financed by police specific grant paid by the Secretary of State, and the remainder will qualify for the usual central support for local government expenditure.

Brain Tumours

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many brain tumours have been diagnosed in children aged *(a)* five years or under, *(b)* between five and 10 years and *(c)* aged between 10 and 15 years within each of the health board areas in Scotland during each of the last 10 years;

(2) what research has been undertaken by *(a)* the Scottish Office and *(b)* the Ayrshire and Arran health board or the Scottish Office into the incidence of brain tumours or the incidence of cancers within the Ayrshire and Arran, and Dumfries and Galloway health board areas.

Mr. Stewart: The tables show the numbers of malignant tumours of the brain and the central nervous system diagnosed in each of the Scottish health board areas during each of the 10 years from 1983 to 1992 for *(a)* children aged under five years at diagnosis *(b)* children aged five to nine years and *(c)* children aged 10 to 14 years.

The Scottish Office has not undertaken any research on the incidence of brain tumours either in Scotland as a whole or in the Ayrshire and Arran and Dumfries and Galloway health board areas. The cancer registration system provides comprehensive information on the incidence of all types of cancer throughout Scotland, and that information is monitored constantly by the Scottish Office.

The Ayrshire and Arran health board undertook a study on the incidence of brain tumours in 1992. For monitoring of cancer incidence generally, within and outwith its area, it too relies on the cancer registration system.

Age 0-4 years

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Argyll and Clyde	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	1
Ayrshire and Arran	0	1	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	1
Borders	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Fife	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0
Forth Valley	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Grampian	0	1	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	1
Greater Glasgow	3	3	3	1	3	0	0	3	0	0
Highland	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Lanarkshire	3	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	0
Lothian	0	4	3	1	3	4	1	2	0	3
Orkney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tayside	1	2	0	0	3	1	1	0	3	0
Western Isles	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
All Health Boards	14	17	12	8	13	11	9	12	10	7

Age 5 to 9 years

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Argyll and Clyde	2	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	3	1
Ayrshire and Arran	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Borders	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Fife	1	0	1	4	2	1	1	2	1	1
Forth Valley	2	4	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Grampian	2	1	0	1	2	1	1	3	0	1
Greater Glasgow	0	3	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	2
Highland	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
Lanarkshire	1	2	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	0
Lothian	5	3	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	2
Orkney	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tayside	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All health boards	15	15	7	12	12	8	7	13	11	9

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Age 10-14 years										
Argyll and Clyde	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Ayrshire and Arran	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
Borders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fife	1	0	0	2	0	2	1	2	0	0
Forth Valley	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Grampian	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	2
Greater Glasgow	2	2	5	1	4	1	1	1	3	1
Highland	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Lanarkshire	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	2	0	2
Lothian	2	2	2	1	0	1	2	3	1	1
Orkney	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tayside	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All health boards	10	6	11	10	5	7	10	13	6	10

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what expansion there has been in the facilities during the last three years at the Southern General hospital unit national health service trust for treating children with brain tumours and other cancers.

Mr. Stewart: Improvements related specifically to the treatment of children with brain tumours are: replacement and upgrading of magnetic resonance imaging equipment; acquisition of a neurosurgical laser, an ultrasound cavitron and a flexible ventricular endoscope; and upgrading of the paediatric neurosurgery ward. The trust does not treat paediatric cancer patients.

Childhood Cancer

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the progress of the Scottish case control study of childhood cancer; and whether he can indicate any provisional findings;

(2) what studies are being carried out by the Scottish Office following the recommendations by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment in its report on leukaemia in the Dounreay area; and what is the remit of each of these studies and the areas covered by the studies.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish case control study is one of two studies currently being carried out following the recommendations of the second report of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment—COMARE. The study is investigating the role of possible risk factors in the causation of childhood cancers. Information is being collected from the parents of children registered with cancer in the period 1991 to 1995, and from the parents of a comparison group of healthy children. The study, which covers the whole of Scotland, has links with similar studies in England and Wales, thus forming part of the largest epidemiological study of childhood cancer ever undertaken. All the Scottish study information so far obtained is currently being computerised in preparation for analysis. Until that analysis has been completed, it is not possible to indicate even provisional findings.

The other study seeks to confirm all childhood cancers diagnosed in Scotland in the period 1975 to 1990. The validated database will then be used in an analysis of the incidence of childhood cancer in relation to all nuclear sites in Scotland.

Forestry

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effect any privatisation of the Forestry Commission would have on the Government's stated aim of extending forestry by 3,300 hectares per annum.

Mr. Lang: Ministers have asked the forestry review group to review the options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands, and the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment, and to make proposals for changes which would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives, having regard to the Government's other economic and environmental policies.

Privatisation is only one of the many options which the group is considering. My fellow forestry Ministers and I will give careful consideration to the advice which the review group offers, before deciding what action, if any, should be taken.

Dementia

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has made to the report published on 9 February by Scottish Action on Dementia, Alzheimer's Scotland, Dementia Services Development Centre and Age Concern Scotland on long-stay care for people with dementia in Scotland; and what action he intends to take to deal with the concerns raised in the report about the provision of national health service funded long-stay care for frail elderly people and those with dementia.

Mr. Stewart: This report will be studied with interest. The White Paper "Caring for People" made it clear that the Government's policy for the frail elderly with dementia remains that all health boards must secure continuing care for people who need it for reasons of ill-health. Boards must carry out health needs assessments of their resident population and draw up a local health strategy to meet those needs. As purchasers, boards are also encouraged to consider the range of services which may be available for the long-term care needs of their resident populations provided by directly managed units, NHS trusts, or the independent sector.

Sheriff Courts

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the Sheriff Court Fees Amendment (No. 2) Order 1993; and what was the content of those representations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A number of representations regarding the Sheriff Court Fees Amendment (No. 2) Order have been received from the Law Society of Scotland and others. These mainly concern the possible effects of the fees on potential litigants. As my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State has made clear, and as I explained in debate on the order in Standing Committee on 9 February, court fees form only a small proportion of the costs of taking a case in the sheriff courts.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much was spent by *(a)* Ayrshire and Arran health board, *(b)* the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust, *(c)* the Community health care trust and *(d)* the South Ayrshire trust in consultancy fees during the current financial year; and if he will list the companies involved;

(2) how much was spent by *(a)* Ayrshire and Arran health board, *(b)* the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust *(c)* the Community health care trust and *(d)* the South Ayrshire trust in hospitality costs during the current financial year;

(3) if he will list the publications produced by *(a)* Ayrshire and Arran health board, *(b)* the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust, *(c)* the Community health care trust and *(d)* the South Ayrshire trust during the current financial year; and if he will indicate the costs involved in each of these.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* This information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the respective chairmen for the health board and the individual trusts.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been deregistered by their dentists in each of the Scottish health board areas during each of the last five years; and how many dentists in each of the Scottish health board areas have been involved in the deregistration.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* Formal arrangements for patients to be registered with a specific dentist were introduced under the new contract for general dental services on 1 October 1990. Information about deregistrations since 1 October 1990 supplied by health boards for their area is contained in the table.

Health Board	October 1990-March 1991		April 1991-March 1992		April 1992-March 1993		April 1993-February 1994	
	Number of patients deregistered	Number of dentists[1] involved	Number of patients deregistered	Number of dentists[1] involved	Number of patients deregistered	Number of dentists[1] involved	Number of patients deregistered	Number of dentists[1] involved
Argyll and Clyde	3	1	25	2	2,241	14	42	7
Ayrshire and Arran	Nil	Nil	14	10	1,309	11	373	13
Borders	1	1	11	4	1,432	9	661	9
Dumfries and Galloway	Nil	Nil	11	2	4,518	10	1,309	10
Fife	1	1	Nil	Nil	295	32	116	21
Forth Valley	Nil	Nil	42	12	201	23	63	18
Grampian	Nil	Nil	9	5	257	21	178	18
Greater Glasgow	7	5	41	36	579	45	305	44
Highland	4	3	19	12	210	24	67	23
Lanarkshire	4	4	70	10	252	29	123	23
Lothian	18	2	101	21	483	23	1,446	17
Orkney	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Shetland	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Tayside	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	[2]206	[2]29	36	8
Western Isles	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	37	4	16	4

n/a=Not available.
[1] Number of dentists involved in deregistration in a particular year.
[2] From July 1992.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional revenues he has made available to Scottish health boards to enable them to respond to patients needing emergency NHS dental treatment.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* Health boards are responsible for the provision of general dental services including emergency dental services where necessary. Since 1990, general dental practitioners have been responsible for providing emergency dental services for their registered patients. All legitimate costs incurred in providing general dental services are met from central funds.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment the Scottish Office has made of increases in the costs of dental treatment in Scotland as a result of the Government's changes in the payment framework for dentists treating NHS patients.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* There have been no recent changes in the system for paying NHS dentists. The Government will publish their response to the Bloomfield report and its proposals for the future in due course.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment the Scottish Office has made of the impact of dentists deregistering their patients on the level of dental health in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The number of patients registered with general dental practitioners has decreased by less than 2 per cent. over the last 18 months from 2,700,874 to 2,650,925. Patients can be deregistered by their dentists for a variety of reasons. It is not possible to relate this information directly to the level of dental health in Scotland.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Government will respond to the Bloomfield report; and what the Scottish Office's involvement will be in this response.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The Government will publish its response to the Bloomfield report in due course. Scottish Office Ministers and officials have been closely involved in developing the Government's response which will apply equally to the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Scotland's health boards regarding the Government's response to the Bloomfield report.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The Government will publish their response to the Bloomfield report in due course. No representations have been received from health boards.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

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Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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